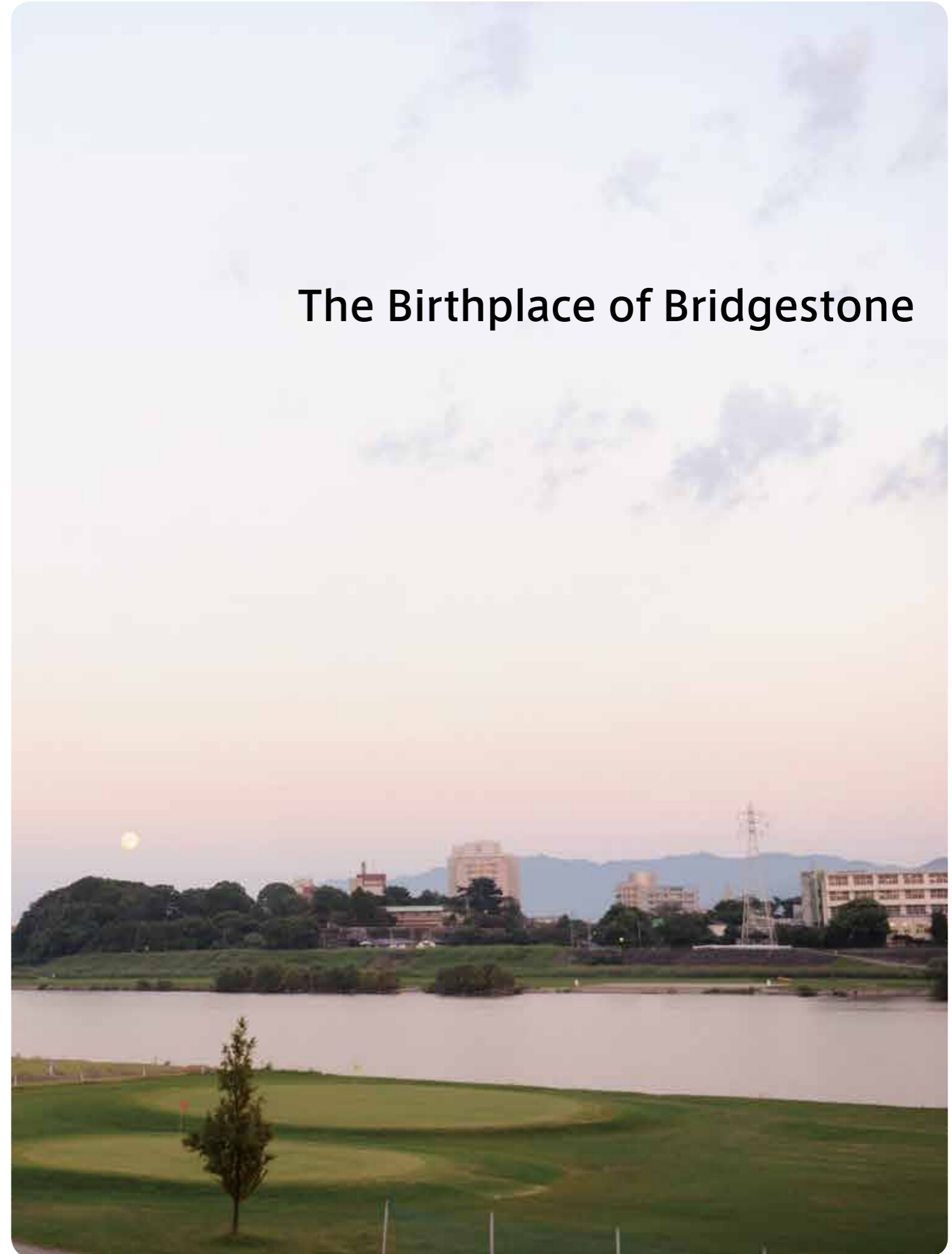


## The Birthplace of Bridgestone



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Shojiro Ishibashi,  
founder of Bridgestone

**For businessmen, making their businesses successful is a way of contributing to society and the nation, but they must not forget to also contribute to public projects.**

Dreams and Creativity (1965)

In 1889, I was born in Kurume, which was incorporated as a city the same year. Also in that year, the first railway opened in Kyushu to cover the distance of about 40 km (25 miles) between Hakata and Kurume. At the time, Kurume was known throughout the country for its Kurume-gasuri fabric and was ranked as the 29th best city in Japan. As it was in the center of Kyushu, if transport connections improved, Kurume would be favorably situated. However, it was far from a port, not in a good location for industry. The people were humble and mild-mannered and the town was slow to develop. Also, it is sad that since the war and particularly recently it has fallen far behind other cities.

Because I loved my hometown, I wanted not only my Company's plants, but also Kurume to flourish. So I wanted to do something to make Kurume impressive too. In competing with other cities, I didn't necessarily want it to have a large population, but I wanted to make it clean and well-ordered, as well as a cultured, flourishing, and exciting city in which people would enjoy living.

After the war I traveled to Europe and the United States three times and found that even in small cities there is consideration of city planning and no great difference in cultural level between larger and smaller cities. Because of this I felt that even small rural cities were relaxed and good places to live.

Kurume is somewhere young people can work steadily with hopes for the future. People gain happiness from the good things in their living environment. The year 1956 would be the 25th anniversary of the founding of Bridgestone and to celebrate I wished to build a cultural center I had long been thinking about. For years prior I had quietly been buying land to use as the potential site. In 1954, I formally made a proposal to the Kurume city government and started construction, while at the same time, began purchasing more than 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of surrounding land we forecasted to be needed.

I selected the land thinking it would become a major site in the development of Kurume. At the time it was desolate, low-lying, and unsuitable for other purposes such as the site of a plant or being used for agriculture.

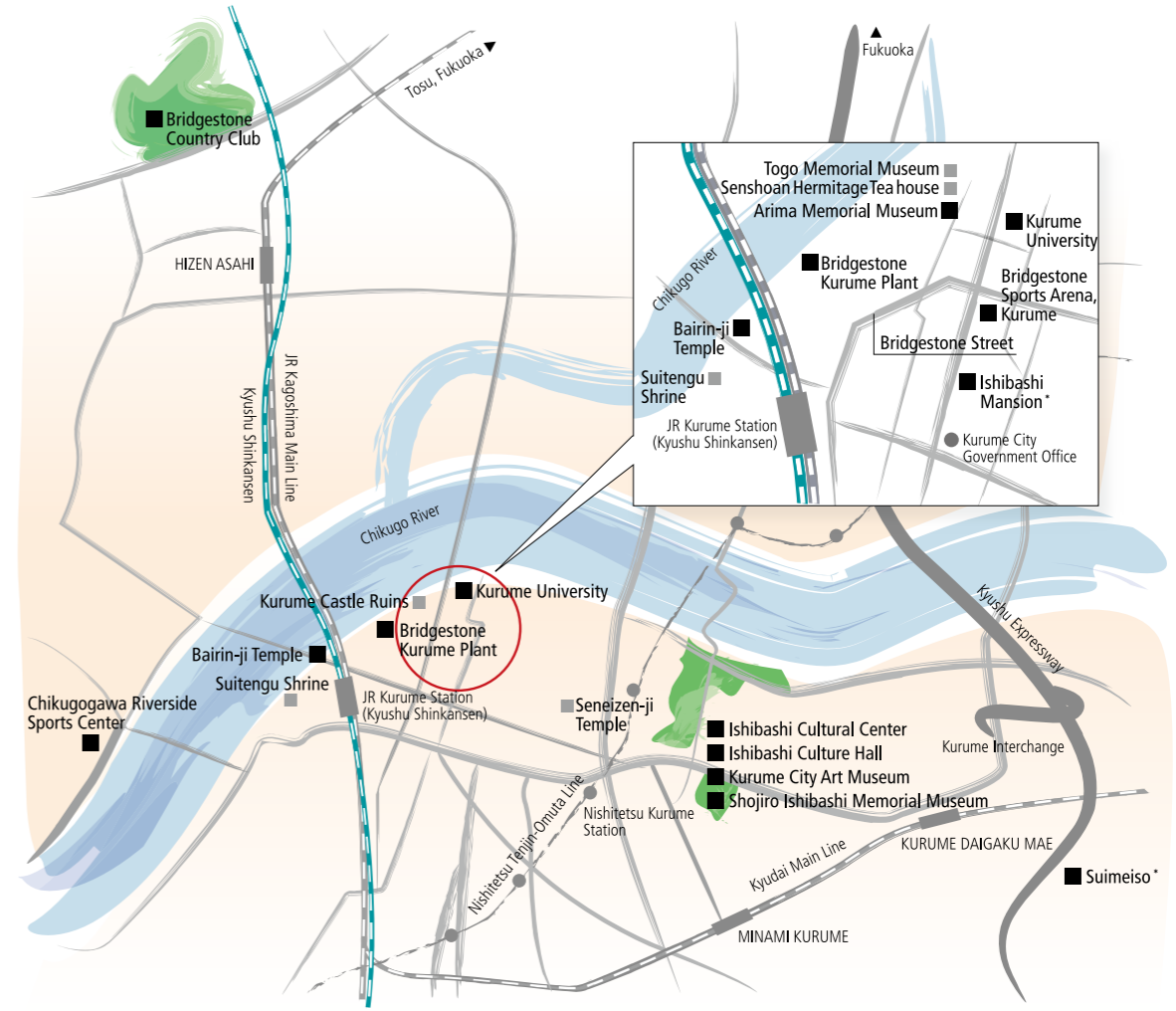
My vision of the culture center was as a place for art, sport, and music with a park including beautiful scenery. I wanted to build a concert hall. To put it even more briefly, as written on the center's main entrance, my aim was to build somewhere "for the pleasure and happiness of all."

Written in 1956

From Posthumous Writings and Remembrances of Shojiro Ishibashi



"For the welfare and happiness of all mankind,"  
written on the wall of the main entrance to  
the Ishibashi Cultural Center



\* These facilities are not open to the public.



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## Bridgestone Kurume Plant



After the first tire using only Japanese technology was produced in 1930, the Bridgestone Kurume Plant began operations as the Company's primary plant in 1931 with the goal of transforming the tire industry from one of imports to its own domestic production. Since then, the plant has been a part of the history of both Bridgestone and the residents of Kurume with high times and challenges being shared. In 2010, Plant 1 was renovated and continues to evolve as a cutting-edge plant. The goal of the plant, cradled in the Chikugogawa River, is to continue its range of activities and for them to be even further integrated with the local community.



Kurume Plant when founded



Bird's eye view of Kurume Plant today

## Bridgestone Street



The road connecting Bridgestone's Kurume Plant to Sasayama and Asahimachi was intended to be funded by the national and local government as a part of Route 5, which traverses the outskirts of Kurume. However, ten years after the end of World War II, inconveniently it was not been decided when construction would start. So in conjunction with the 25th anniversary celebrations of Bridgestone, the tire company laid a 1.2 km (~1 mile) road at a cost of more than ¥50.6 million, including the price of acquisition of 21,125 m<sup>2</sup> of land, removal of buildings, building of bridges and other building work. In 1955, the road was donated to the city and named Bridgestone Street. As a result of this road, the distance needed to travel to Sasayama Shrine, Kurume University, and its attached hospital was halved and it has become much easier to travel between the sights of Kurume.

My Path (1963)



## Ishibashi Cultural Center Ishibashi Culture Hall



People form letters and numbers in the stands beside the pool at Ishibashi Cultural Center to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Bridgestone Tire Company (1956)

Around two-thirds of Kurume was destroyed in the air raid of August 11, 1945, and many people were forced to live in barracks. There was concern about what influence that life would have on how young people thought. In 1953, having been impressed by Western culture on his second trip to the West, Shojiro Ishibashi, the founder of Bridgestone, made a plan to build a cultural center to boost cultural activity in Kurume and in 1956 donated the center to the city. In line with the words written on the main entrance of the cultural center, "for the pleasure and happiness of all," within the 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> site there were features including a museum, gymnasium, 50 m pool, outdoor music stage, sports field, playground, flowerbeds, and relaxing woods. Since foundation, the facilities of the center have been upgraded several times. In 1963, Ishibashi Culture Hall, a concert hall with the best audio systems in Japan at that time, was founded. Also in 1995, the annex to the museum was built on the site of the 50m pool.

## Kurume City Art Museum Shojiro Ishibashi Memorial Museum

Shojiro Ishibashi opened the Ishibashi Museum of Art in 1956 as the central facility at the Ishibashi Cultural Center. It was a donation to Kurume, his hometown, to boost public welfare and culture. At the request of Kurume City in 1977, the Ishibashi Foundation began administering the museum. In October 2016, they returned the administration to Kurume City, and, one month later, the Ishibashi Museum of Art reopened as the Kurume City Art Museum. In 1995, Kanichiro Ishibashi, Shojiro's son and the former President and Chairman of Bridgestone Tire Company, built an annex to display his father's collection of traditional paintings, calligraphy, ceramics, and lacquer ware. He donated the annex to Kurume City in 1996. The Ishibashi Foundation renovated the annex in 2016, and it reopened as the Shojiro Ishibashi Memorial Museum on the same day as the Kurume City Art Museum. The Shojiro Ishibashi Memorial Museum displays a variety of items showcasing Shojiro's biography and personality, as well as the history of the Ishibashi Cultural Center.



Kurume City Art Museum (center) and Shojiro Ishibashi Memorial Museum (right)



Shojiro Ishibashi Memorial Museum display room



Main entrance of Kurume City Art Museum



Front side of Ishibashi Culture Hall



View of Kurume City Art Museum from Ishibashi Cultural Center garden

## Suimeiso



Autumn leaves around the building and entrance



View of the garden from the study on the second floor

I enjoy business, but I also enjoy art, architecture, and landscape gardening. Since I was young, I have enjoyed paintings and enthusiastically worked to build up my art collection, but I haven't particularly studied art. However, after the war, I travelled several times to Europe and the United States and having made my way carefully around a number of famous art galleries I think I have gained some small ability to judge Western art. I also enjoy making many good friends through art, both in Japan and overseas. In architecture I like putting my all into developing ideas from a site's arrangement to its buildings and making rough sketches. This is not only for such luxurious projects as houses and vacation homes but also for plants, commercial buildings, research centers, museums, culture centers, and welfare facilities. Meanwhile, I don't know about the technical side of landscape gardening. It's just that when I see beautiful natural scenery my heart feels cleansed and I can relax without being distracted by stray thoughts. Because of this, I have tried to make gardens by planting trees nearby, arranging stones, and allowing mountains to display themselves in their natural forms. Watching them grow with the seasons is one of my daily pleasures.

\* Owned by Nagasaka Corporation.  
This facility is not open to the public.

## Ishibashi Mansion



Ishibashi Mansion was built as a private residence of Shojiro Ishibashi's brother, Tokujiro Ishibashi, in 1933. It is a 990m<sup>2</sup> Southern European style building within a 9,200 m<sup>2</sup> site. The vast lawn displays a harmonious blend of Western and Japanese aesthetics in its unique design. Through this garden, with its mix of Japanese and Western styles, you can catch a glimpse of Shojiro's landscape gardening philosophy.

In 1968, the then Crown Prince and Princess of Japan stayed in the mansion and it is still used to receive guests, including foreign VIPs who visit Kurume.

\* Owned by Nagasaka Corporation. This facility is not open to the public.

## Kurume University

In late 1927, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture decided to establish new private medical colleges throughout the country, leading to fierce lobbying by various Kyushu cities. Kurume was extremely keen to get a college to improve public health and develop the city, but for that reason it had to apply offering the favorable terms of supplying 33,060 m<sup>2</sup> of land as well as the college buildings. However, as the city government did not have the funds to do this, the mayor and city council requested a donation from Bridgestone's sister company Japan Rubber Company\*.

As there was no time for delay, I agreed immediately, buying 132,240 m<sup>2</sup> of rice fields from Sasayama Shrine, filling in the land, which was two to three meters deep, and providing 33,060 m<sup>2</sup> of land for the college. I had a 3,967 m<sup>2</sup> concrete building constructed and donated. In total, I donated ¥230,000. Before construction of the attached hospital, Mr. Mizoguchi, the university president, Mr. Tanaka, the head of the hospital, and I inspected several hospitals in Tokyo and Osaka. Design of the hospital was entrusted to me, so I made the building 16,530 m<sup>2</sup> in area and four stories high, including one underground level, borrowed ¥450,000 from Japan Rubber Company\*, and the hospital was completed in 1932.

My Path

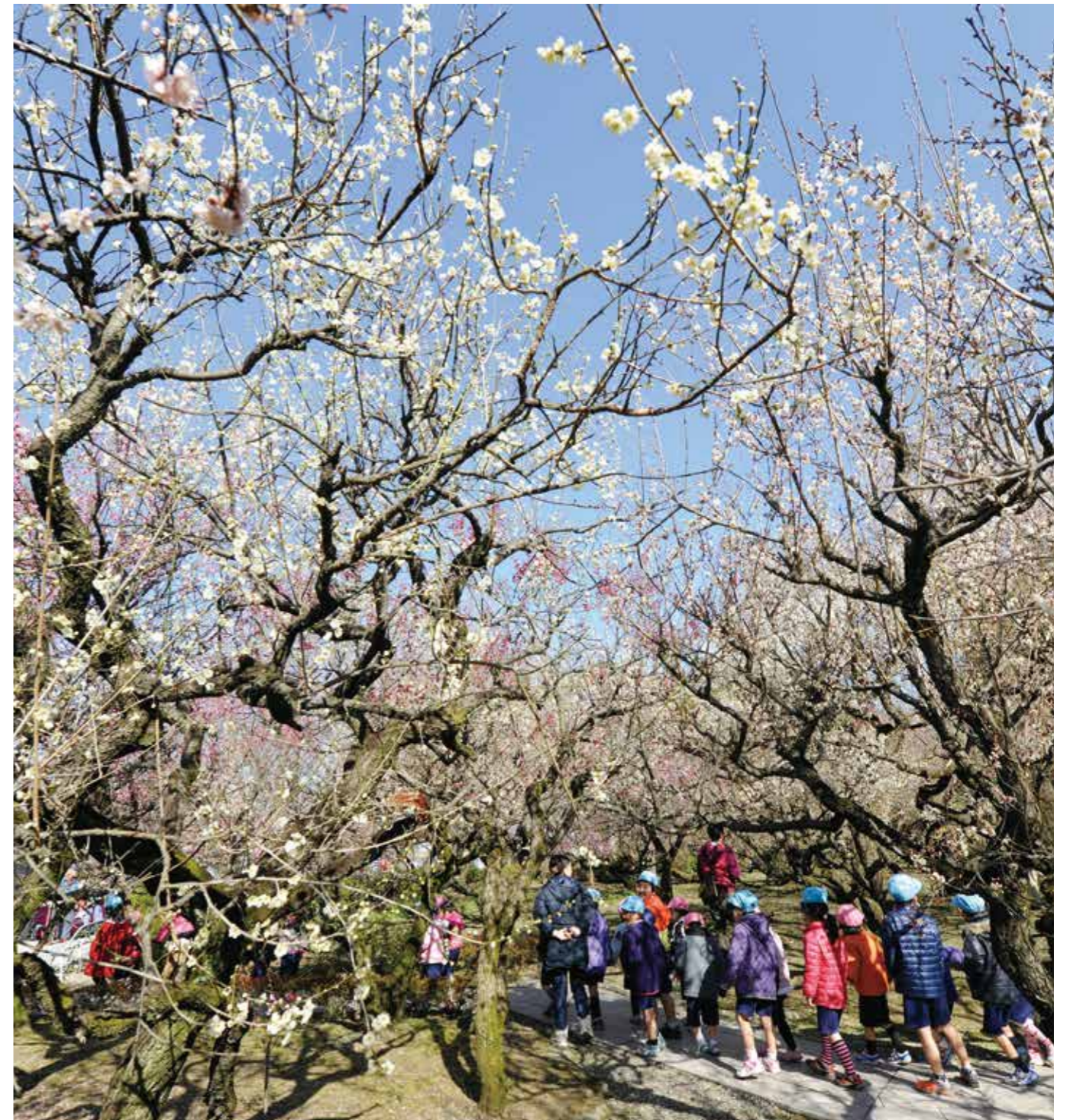
\* Japan Rubber Company was originally Bridgestone's parent company and manufactured and sold traditional Japanese tabi socks with rubber soles and rubber shoes at the time.



## Bairin-ji Temple

Bairin-ji Temple was built 350 years ago as the head temple in Kyushu for the Rinza School of Buddhism and is now a retreat for the study of Zen. The temple grounds are large, with the outer garden alone stretching over 9,918 m<sup>2</sup>, and they overlook the clear waters of Chikugogawa River. With hills and valleys, the temple benefits from a variety of scenery and can be considered a noted place of interest alongside Sasayama Castle for its wonderful views, including the distant Sefuri Mountain Range. However, at first it seemed a dilapidated lonely place not worth looking at, with no sign of visitors. For its 350th anniversary, I thought of making it a tourist spot for people from the city and further afield through such work as renovating the graveyard, filling in dips to build a garden, and providing a place to rest. In 1956, Bridgestone Tire Company began building work, spending a total of ¥15 million before completion in 1958.

My Path



## Arima Memorial Museum



Kurume Castle Ruins (Sasayama Castle) entrance

After the war the ruins of Sasayama Castle in Kurume were desolate and uninviting, so in 1960, as part of celebrations of the 70th anniversary of Kurume becoming a city, it was decided to build a park around the castle. I took the opportunity to demolish the decaying shrine office, treasure house, and other buildings, and replace them with the new 582 m<sup>2</sup> Arima Memorial Museum as somewhere for storage and display of local historical materials and a rest area. At the same time I made further efforts at overall modernization, such as relocating Admiral Togo's study and Senshoan Hermitage Tea house, beautifying the environment, and making the front approach accessible to cars, feeling I would like the castle to become a well-loved spot among residents and thinking it could boost development of the city. Bridgestone Tire Company invested ¥17.5 million for construction.

My Path



## Bridgestone Sports Arena, Kurume

The Chikugogawa River runs through Kurume and swimming had long been popular, but learning that the river was no longer suitable for swimming, Shojiro Ishibashi felt troubled and in 1957 donated swimming pools to all elementary and junior high schools in the city. At the same time, swimming instructors were necessary in the company, so he set up a Swimming Department. After this time, for 23 years, he made great contributions to the achievements of Japanese swimming in the Olympics and Asian Games as well as thirteen consecutive victories in corporate competitions.

Now in Kurume there are combined facilities\* in the two locations of Bridgestone Sports Arena Kurume and East Kurume. They are much enjoyed by residents as places to easily enjoy not only swimming but also aerobics, other sports, and cultural activities.

\* Managed by Bridgestone Sports Arena Corporation



## Bridgestone Country Club



A symbol of Bridgestone Country Club: the 14th hole with Asahi Hill in the background



The 13th hole, overlooking downtown Kurume and the bullet train railway tracks

Shortly after the war, Bridgestone employees enjoyed using a riverside golf course on the bank of the Chikugogawa River. Employees of the old plant that used to be on this Asahi land enjoyed a pitiful form of golf among confusion and poverty, playing rounds on a hand-built course that used open space on the plant. When Shojiro Ishibashi, my father and the then president of Bridgestone, heard about this, he wanted to encourage their fun (in a time when fun was scarce), as well as their health through golf and ordered serious examination into whether it would be possible to build a real golf course. My father moved the plant situated where the golf course now is, which had already begun producing bicycles, to a new building on the opposite side of the national highway. He then converted the land into a vast and pleasant area with almost no slopes and asked Noriyuki Miyoshi to handle design. At the time, Mr. Miyoshi was a golf ball development consultant for Bridgestone. He accepted the request, saying he could make a fine 9-hole course and immediately set to work. Although it wasn't big enough for an 18-hole course, my father wanted Mr. Miyoshi to make his ideal course into reality. My father was a member of Oho Golf Links from when it first opened in 1926, began producing golf balls domestically at Bridgestone in 1935, and then founded the Bridgestone Country Club. He had an extraordinary understanding of golf and made great efforts to achieve the pleasure and happiness of all. This club was first planned for the benefit of employees, but it was soon decided to open it up to the general public who formed the basis for today's membership.

Bridgestone Country Club 30th Anniversary Newsletter Kanichiro Ishibashi, Club Consultant

## Chikugogawa Riverside Sports Center



From the Kurume Plant you can look out at Kyushu's major river, Chikugogawa River. Along the river there is a general sports center with green fields all year round, which has an area of around 110,000 m<sup>2</sup>. With a 9-hole golf course, clubhouse, softball ground, and other facilities it is used throughout the year as a multi-purpose sports center by Kurume residents. The Bridgestone Kurume Plant provides management support, contributing to the physical health of residents through sports.



## Bridgestone Brass Band, Kurume

In 1955, the Bridgestone Brass Band was formed as a cultural activity for employees and to raise the level of musical culture in the area, making its debut in the city parade celebrating the completion of the Ishibashi Cultural Center. In the more than 60 years since then, it has continued its successful activities, gaining the attention of Kurume residents. It has high-quality facilities including a 418m<sup>2</sup> joint rehearsal room as well as rehearsal rooms for sections of the band, recording rooms, and instrument rooms. Members combine practice with work at the plant and for supporting the spread of music, in 1984 the band was

awarded the Kurume Arts Prize and in 1991 the Kurume Order of Culture. Also, in 2003 the band was commended by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for contributions to local culture. The Bridgestone Brass Band has won the gold prize in the All Japan Band Contest more than 30 times, maintaining its position in the top class among corporate brass bands nationwide. Meanwhile, the band is giving back to society through music in such ways as actively participating in the city's various events and holding regular concerts.



## From Kurume to the World

We at the Bridgestone Group, as well as giving back to society through our business, have globally implemented a range of activities to contribute as a corporate citizen to the realization of better communities. The Bridgestone Group conducts social activities in the fields of mobility, people and environment, and intends to steadily go on with these activities over the long term. We will continue to contribute to community development as a good corporate citizen in step with local residents in every region all over the world.



Bridgestone Children's Eco-Art Contest



ECOPIA's Forest



Brake and Tire Watch program (South Africa)



Bridgestone environmental manufacturing classes



Vocational Education Support (Indonesia)



Teen's Drive Smart Program (United States)



Safety & Eco Station



Happy Tangram education-support project (China)

Since its foundation in 1931, Bridgestone Corporation has worked to harmonize itself with local communities. The words of the founder, Shojiro Ishibashi, "for the pleasure and happiness of all," still remain in our hearts.

This pamphlet introduces places connected to Kurume, as much as possible using words written by Shojiro Ishibashi himself, who had a zeal to improve the culture, education, and welfare of the city. Through this document, we want to demonstrate our feeling for Kurume, the Company's birthplace and show how we intend to continue in step with the local community.

Bridgestone Plant, Kurume Castle, and Kurume University on the opposite bank of the Chikugogawa River

