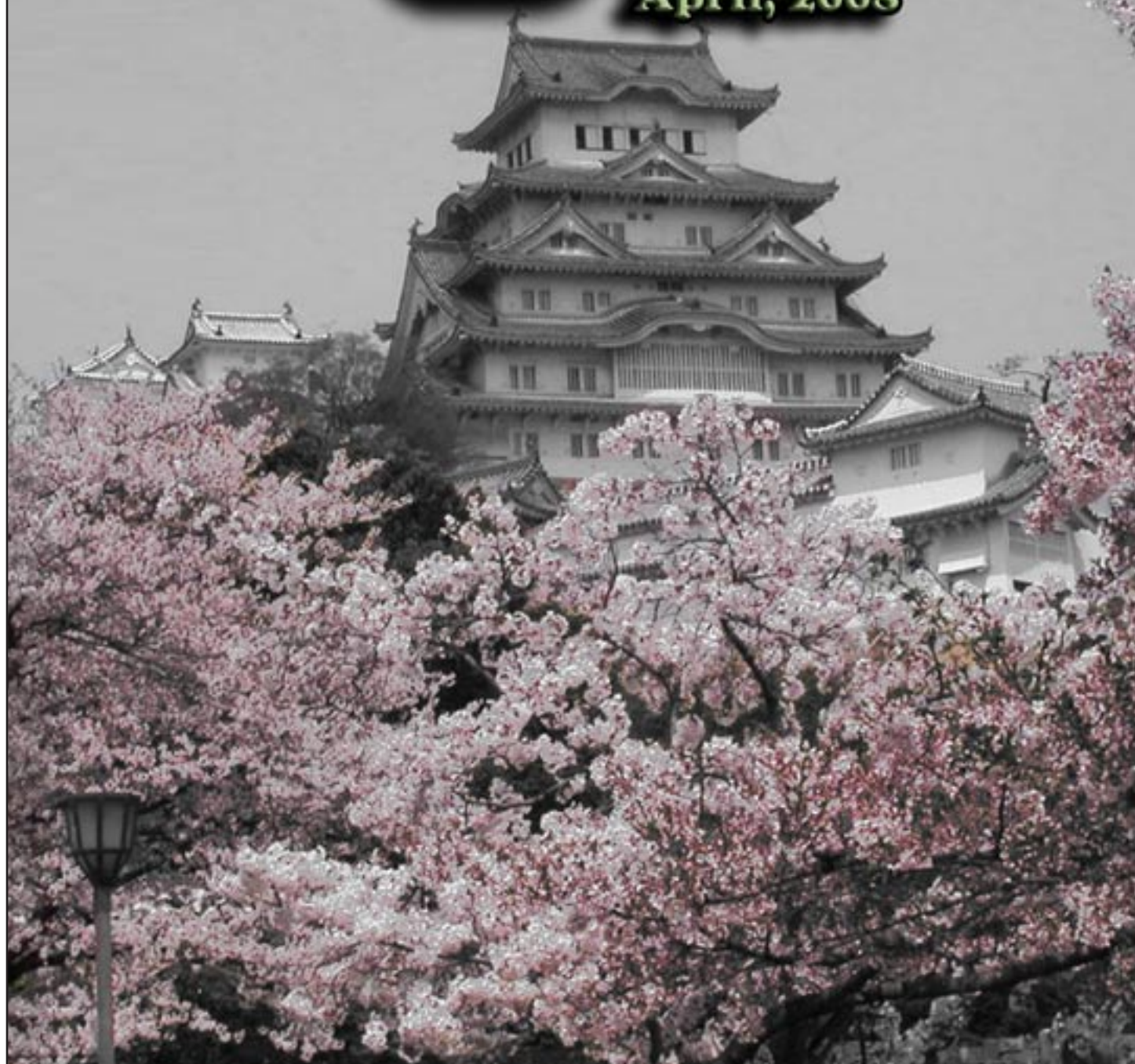


hilo times

April, 2008



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On the cover...



Cover illustration by Jeff Morrice

April marks the coming of the Sakura, and Himeji-jo is hosting a sakura viewing party on April 5 on the castle grounds. Cheap sake, plenty of people and of course the cherry blossoms are all more than reason enough to come down and check out the AJET tent!

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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, photos, musings, poetry, prose and any ideas to contribute or improve the *Hyogo Times* for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community.

Submit by the 15th of each month to:

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From The Editor...

A big thank you goes out to all those wonderful people who took time out from their busy (no laughing) schedules to write an article for this edition.

Obviously we have our usual blessings of wisdom from our regular writers, including a thought-provoking comment on ethnic labels from stealth gaijin and an article from MacKenzie which should be read by all. In addition to them we have some really wonderful articles in our features section. Amy Baker writes a brave article expressing some thoughts and opinions which are often just below the surface in the JET community but rarely expressed openly, while our English Department provides its usual gems from the students. I'm sure you will all have your own favourites but I personally think that it was Rupa's article which *excited* me the most.

As the winter finally finishes and the warm weather arrives (I set a new record of getting sunburnt on March 21 – the joys of being Irish!) I've suddenly found that my time on JET is flying by. It's been eight months and it feels like three. Before I know it the time to leave JET and move on will be upon me. Sometimes it makes me sad and sometimes I feel excited at the new challenges that await me. None of us can stay on JET forever and nobody can freeze time. It is both the curse and beauty of life that it is forever changing and moving.

Perhaps it is the fact that it is spring vacation and I've less work to do and more time to ponder life, but the old-worn clichés of 'live in the moment' and 'you can't go back to the good old days – so go on and make better ones' seem to play heavily on my mind. In the daily drudgery of school life it is easy to forget how precious time is and spend the days watching TV, surfing the net or other ways of just killing time. But though we talk of killing time



it will eventually be time that kills us. So to all the Hyogo JETs out there I once more urge you to make the most of your time here. Don't turn down those invitations to random festivals or decline that trip to Korea because you are too busy or want to save your money for a rainy day. You never know what will happen in the future and once you leave Japan life may never bring you back again.

Anyway that is all from me for now. Maybe next month I'll go back to my usual shallow self or just give in and talk about the weather like every good Irish person does! We'll have to wait and see.

Hope you enjoy this issue and remember that if you want to write a comment (short or long) on any article or other topic we'd love to read it. Happy reading (and writing!)

—Kevin

And From The PR...

G'day happy campers! I hope you survived the national phenomenon known as White Day (aka the best marketing campaign in the world) and got/gave as much as you gave/received (wow, what a doozy — work out the grammar on that, let alone the double entendre!)

As you may have noticed, another exciting thing that has just happened is spring! Japan's well oiled seasonal machine has kicked in exactly on time, catapulting us into the world's favourite season of warmth, happiness and, of course, sakura. And so, at long last, the ice age that many people here in Japan mistakenly refer to as "winter" has ended. Three cheers, and RIP, winter!

With this marvellous season that is spring comes a whole horde of excellent things to make your life as a JET even better than normal — spring break, bulging sakura buds, birds and bees getting busy at every opportunity and so on. It truly is a season of happy and, if you watch closely, you might even notice that the hardest, grumpiest PE teacher at school will be walking with a spring in his step as he cracks heads and bursts eardrums, and that office assistant with the perpetual frown will be dancing and smiling as she takes out the rubbish. Ah, the good times, the good times.

Before I run off on a complete spring-induced happy-tangent though, let me introduce myself! My name is Daniel Carter, and I'm taking over from Brandon as the Hyogo PR for this coming year. Brandon's shoes are big shoes indeed to fill, but 'ganbarimasu' is the word of the year and that's exactly what I'm going to do to make sure that the good times keep on coming to you.

While we're on the topic of AJET, it's looking like it'll be a huge year for Hyogo and other AJET chapters all around Japan. Aside from our own fantastic Hyogo AJET events, I want to keep a special eye this year on local events both inside and outside Hyogo, as well as on what our buddies in

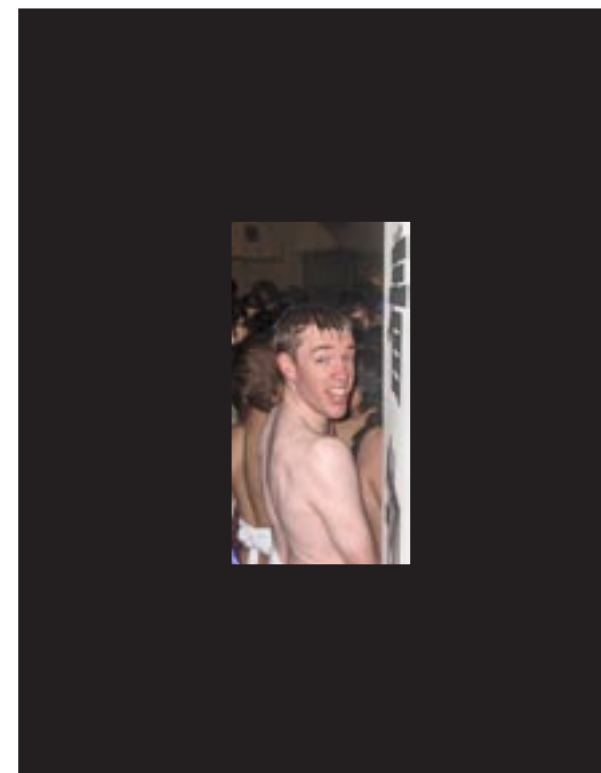
the other AJET chapters are getting up to. It's my job to keep you up to date with the very best of the best events from all over Japan, and that's exactly what I'm going to do — so stay tuned!

To kick off this year's events, your friendly HAJET committee are in the process of organising another of their famous hanami parties at none other than the best castle in Japan, Himeji-jo. Details to follow soon, but in the meantime, get your special flower viewing glasses and sake drinking hats and keep them at the ready!

There'll also be the usual suspects that you've come to know and love throughout the year — beer gardens, rafting trips, sports teams, "getting to know the bars in Sannomiya," teaching the new JETs how to part-ay in Japan and so on. And of course, any new events that we can think up are guaranteed to keep the fun running through your veins.

That's about it from me for this time! Enjoy the spring, chase the good times and I'll see you all at hanami. In the meantime, if there's anything you'd like to chat to me about (events you hear of, problems you're having, etc.), you can hit me up at clownba0t@gmail.com. I'm here to help.

—Daniel



Love and Relationships:

Only the Good Die Young

By MacKenzie Roebuck-Walsh

Disclaimer: I am not a doctor or even a medical student. The following is based on internet research and information from the Drake University Health Center in Des Moines, IA.

Only the good die young. Five years ago this cliché became a bittersweet reminder to me that we do not all live to see old age. No matter how kind or wicked we may be — if we do not take care of our bodies they may give out.

This is a publication with adult contributors and an adult readership. As such I will not insult your intelligence in the lines to follow. Safe

sex includes knowing your partner's sexual history or, at the not-so-bare minimum, always wearing a condom. Sadly, though this is common knowledge, there is an STD that has spread to over 80 percent of our generation (18-35yr olds). It is called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and four of its strains are a known contributor to ovarian cancer, the cancer which claimed the life of my 49 year-old aunt.

My aunt Julie Ann worked as a lead pharmacist for a large Mid-western company. Daily she gave out medical advice and helped people to live healthier lives. She married late, at the age of 41. Before the marriage she made sure that my uncle was tested for all STDs, including

AIDS, even though he was the father of two nearly grown boys, an upstanding citizen, etc. Later, before I became sexually active, she lectured me on the importance of STD testing as well as birth control and other niceties science has provided that allow us to couple in relative mental peace.

However, at the time no one really talked about HPV. Nor, it turns out, did her doctor take the time to read about it in school. Aunt Julie Ann went in for her yearly check-up and her doctor told her that he saw something abnormal but it was probably just the result of menopause. This was in December. By May cervical cancer had claimed her life.

Today, we know much more about the disease and its long-term effects. You are all at risk. HPV can not be detected in men. Men carry the virus but never have any symptoms. Men, do NOT stop reading! Even though you may not get ill yourself, if you have (or have had) any women in your life you are affected. First and foremost, if a partner tells you she has HPV, you need to pass along the information that you are a carrier to all future partners. Secondly, please educate women in your life. Tell them to get regular check-ups and advise them to get the HPV vaccination.

Ladies, if you do indeed find out you that are HPV positive it is not the end of the world, nor should you run out and beat-up any ex or current lovers (at least

not for that reason!). HPV can be transmitted through any kind of skin to skin contact. HPV can also lie undetected for up to 12 years.

I know all of this only makes it scarier right? However all is not lost. There is a cure. Currently, a three shot vaccination is available. This will prevent the four types of cancerous HPV. Unfortunately, if you are already positive for one or more types it will not cure you, but it will prevent further infections. Having HPV does not mean you will die from ovarian cancer. It simply increases your chances. Many doctors will just recommend bi-yearly check-ups for HPV positive women to continuously monitor and catch any cancerous cells at early on-set.

For more information on HPV and general STD testing in Japan please see the following sites: <www.hivkensa.com/shosai/2785.html> and <www.cdc.gov/STD/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm>.

As the new relationship columnist, I am taking the opportunity to explore many avenues of relationships. Please let me know if you would like to see this column go in one direction or another.

MacKenzie's Quickie

For those of you who thumb your noses at all of the above-mentioned safe sex you may be able to enjoy even more than you are now! Many people I've come across swear by the "pull-out method." If you are one such one then keep old rags near the bed no more! Put waste socks, undershirts and other clothing on something else and go it skin to skin until the end! If you are going to abstain from love with a glove you might as well ride it out for the whole show! Men's pre-cum (medical term) is just as potent, if not more so, than the full shebang. Stopping intercourse just at his climatic moment does nothing for the safety of your future childless world (plus of course you have already caught any diseases your partner has). So carpe diem!



An Exclusive Hyogo Times Book Review:

The Greatest Book Ever Written? Yes.

By Chip Boles

101 Ways to Kill Time at Work
by Cleopatra Burkowitz

I'll admit: I was intimidated by the prospect of teaching English to roomfuls of Japanese teenagers, forming successful professional relationship with my co-workers, transcending functional illiteracy by acquiring even a working knowledge of an alien language, and adapting to life in a culture vastly different from my own.

But luckily, the Hyogo Prefectural Board of Education, in cooperation with the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, has completely provided for every situation and conflict that any ALT could possibly encounter. Through their dozens of handouts, manuals, and example lesson plans, combined with endless hours of fascinating and relevant orientations, conferences, and lectures, these twin guardian angels of every ALT have both perfected English education in Japan and managed to anticipate every problem any ALT has or will ever face. I, for one, have never spoken to an even *slightly* dissatisfied ALT, and I challenge any reader to find one.

However, at the risk of appearing *even slightly* critical of the Hyogo BOE or CLAIR, I must confess — they left something out. Luckily, this hole has been filled by a forthcoming work by one of our own: Cleopatra Burkowitz, fourth-year high school ALT and reclusive author of the new, groundbreaking **101 Ways to Kill Time at Work**, has tapped into the last unanswered question for the average ALT.

"Well, it started because I was just sitting around... you know? I figured 'Why not write a damn book?'" says Burkowitz.

In this penetrating new work, the author begins by addressing many of

the more obvious solutions, in chapters like *Stop Feeling Guilty if you have Nothing to Do: Inside the Art of Looking Busy*, and *No One Will Miss You: The Extended Lunch Break & Getting to Know the Neighbourhood*, but still manages to add a surprising depth to these tried and true strategies. Have you ever tried mixing sake and caffeine? You'll learn how in *Coffee... Wonderful Coffee*.

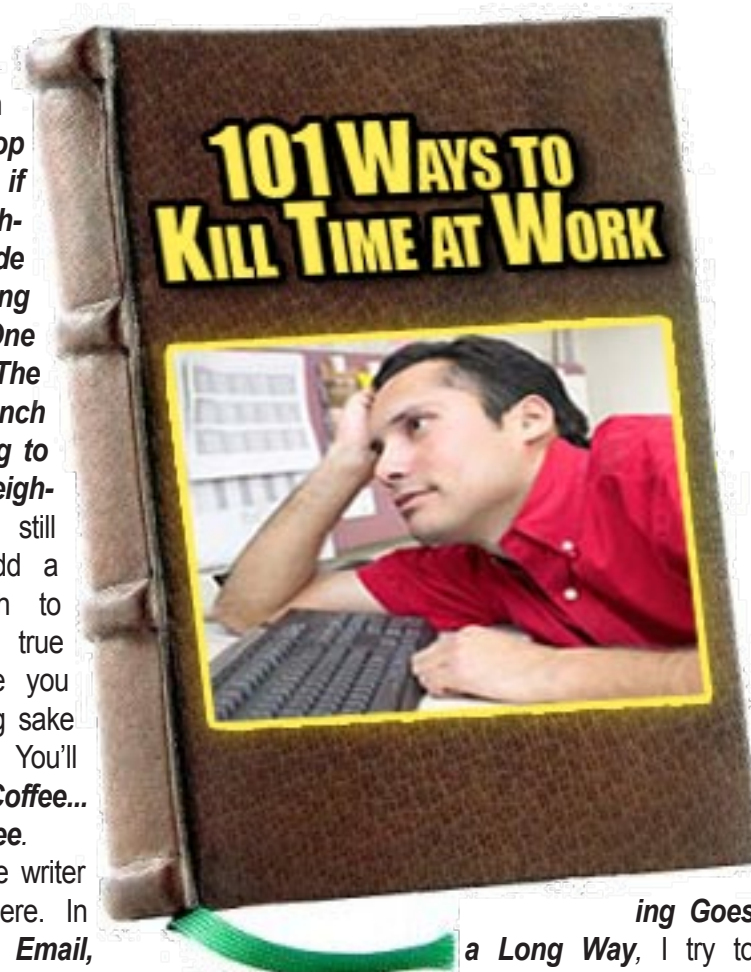
However, the writer doesn't stop there. In *The Computer: Email, Facebook and Beyond*, we find a manifesto for the 21st Century JET. Burkowitz explains, "Sometimes I think the internet was made for ALTs. I mean, seriously — if Facebook shut down tomorrow, how long do you think the JET Program(me) would last? Like, a day or two? If that."

Readers are guaranteed some surprises as well, in chapters like *Little-Used Rooms at Your Workplace that Can be Exploited for Entertainment*.

"My favorite is, of course, the Language Lab," Burkowitz shares.

Combined with the insights from *An Hour at a Time: The Quintessential Nap*, the possibilities seem endless. *Eavesdropping and other ways to Secretly Amuse Yourself at the Expense of your Coworkers* takes the reader on an important journey into cultural inter- and internationalization.

She continues, "In *A Little Clean-*



ing Goes a Long Way, I try to share some innovative techniques that have really been working for me. Sometimes, I get purposely sloppy with my chopstick-to-bento action just so I have something to clean up."

And I can personally attest to the truth contained in Burkowitz's chapter *Writing Long, Not-So-Subtle Articles for the Hyogo Times*.

But the writer's genius is never more apparent than in the groundbreaking *Making Full Use of Toilet Time: Getting Paid to Poo*, in which I learned more than I ever thought possible about confined spaces and their potential for time-consumption.

I can confidently say that every reader will benefit from the strategies explored in this book, and I cannot recommend it highly enough to every single ALT in the vast, beautiful world of Japanese Exchange Teaching.

Ironicon Chef

The Chef is back, and she's brought tuna!

Miso and Sesame Seared Tuna

By Jojo Jackson

The home economics teacher at my school speaks very little English but after a few beers at our Bonenkai we got talking and discovered a shared appreciation for food. I asked her all about the different types of miso and about how daishi (the stock used in Japanese cooking) is made. The following week she brought a bag to my desk. Inside was my very own miso soup making kit. There were ingredients and hand written instructions on how to make daishi and three different types of miso; white (which was homemade), normal and red, each labeled with mini post-its.

For the last two weeks I have been pretty sick with bronchitis. However, my school wouldn't let me take more than two days sick leave (yes, really) and I was being stingy with nenkyu. So I came to work and just about coughed a lung up onto my desk (eeew). My new friend (bless her) brought me a care package containing daishi, udon, tofu, home pickled daikon, orange juice and apples (which we all know cost a small fortune). So this recipe is inspired by the wonderful Nakatani Sensei. It sounds a bit posh but it's actually really easy to prepare and is relatively inexpensive. And best of all, all the ingredients are easily obtainable.

I say sashimi grade because the tuna should be raw on the inside. Sashimi grade is usually indicated by a lovely little green plastic leaf in the packet (I'm not even sure you can get tuna that's not sashimi grade in



Japan). If raw fish doesn't do it for you, cook it through and it will still be delicious. Salmon also works well in the place of tuna and is best slightly under cooked.

Any veggies can work with this recipe (carrots, baby corn, leafy greens, broccoli etc) - just buy what looks the freshest. Also feel free to replace brown rice with white rice. I prefer the texture of brown - it has a bit of crunch. A nice way to jazz up the rice is to add a packet of jyu rokkoku mai, which you will find in the rice section of the supermarket. It has a blend of black rice, sesame seeds, azuki beans and other interesting grains and pulses (actually sixteen in total, hence jyu rokkoku!)

Happy cooking, friends!

Miso and sesame seared tuna with ginger soy greens and brown rice.

Miso and Sesame Seared Tuna

Ingredients:

- 2 pieces of sashimi-grade tuna
- 2 tablespoons of miso paste (any type)
- 3 tablespoons sesame seeds
- A thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger (finely chopped)
- 1 large clove of garlic (finely chopped)
- Half a bunch of bok choy (chopped)
- Some snow peas
- 3 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 1/2 cup brown rice

To prepare:

- Cook rice (brown rice needs about 25 mins).
- Coat the tuna with miso (you may add some water to loosen it slightly).
- Put the sesame seeds onto a plate and press it onto the tuna to cover.
- In a wok heat some oil on a medium-to-high heat, add ginger and garlic (fry for 30 secs) add bok choy (fry for 2 mins), add snow peas and soy sauce (fry for 1 min or until cooked).
- Sear the tuna in a separate oiled frying pan on a high heat for 30-60 secs per side. Cooking time depends on thickness.



Stealth Gaijin

Life as an ASIAN JET

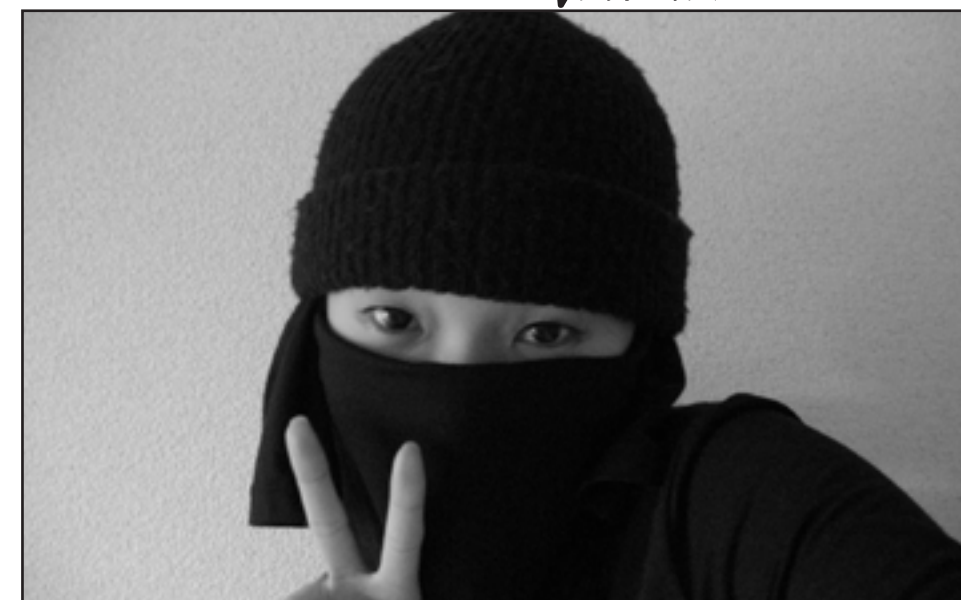
The question of my ethnic background has been the start of a similar conversation I've had with many teachers and a great deal more students. Explaining it doesn't bother me, although it gets old really quickly. Telling a Japanese person I'm from the United States, even though I don't look like a typical American/what they think a typical American looks like, probably broadens their point of view. It breaks down the stereotype of the blonde-haired, blue-eyed American they see in the media.

The shock on people's faces when they realise that I speak English coupled with the phrase, "*Ajia-jin desu!* (She's Asian!)" is a constant source of amusement to me. My appearance also causes confusion for some of the elementary school students I teach at. Since I am from the U.S. but look Japanese (which I don't think I do), the kids scream "Hafu!" or "Daburu!" when they meet me. Half Japanese, double the culture. Interesting. At least I haven't been called a half-breed or something.

Ethnicity can be a complicated issue wherever you go. In the west Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Malaysian, etc, are all just part of an "Asian" race, and if broken down, "East Asian," "Southeast Asian," etc. Only when dealing with specific people is ethnicity or country of origin used.

I'm hardly considered "Asian" among Asians. We are all isolated back to the country our parents came from, but not the continent because that would be too obvious (Duh!). Even in Japan, the word "Asia" is written in katakana because the Japanese people were most certainly not describing themselves as "Asian" in the good old days.

Then you have the question of whether or not "Asia" exists. Broadly, the answer is yes. Find a world map and you can lo-



Stealth Gaijin come in many ethnic forms, which only increases their camouflage skills.

cate the continent of Asia. However, the concept of Asia and before that, the "Orient," is a western, Euro-centric one. The East was seen as exotic, decadent, and as different as it could be from the West. To a certain extent, the West was defined because of what the East was thought to be. (In a funny reversal of roles, the East thought the West to be just as decadent and unruly.) In Biblical Times, the Orient was only as far as what is the Middle East today. Beyond that was unknown territory even though society had existed there long before there was Western society.

My parents are from the newer boundaries of the Orient/Asia. What would I have been considered before the discovery of the rest of the world? (Probably an alien since it hadn't been discovered yet.) So am I Asian? Am I American? Do I have to be labeled or can I just claim what I want?

Here, it is easy for someone to mistake me for a Japanese person since, "All Asians look alike." Even back home, I have been mistaken for Korean, Japanese, Singaporean, Thai, Vietnamese, as well as half-Asian/half-white, even though the last three are a total stretch. I know in

America I'm not solely "American," nor will I ever be. There will always be an ethnic or racial description preceding that word and I will always be a hyphenated American. I do not have a problem with that because it does describe my upbringing and lends itself to who I am, even if there are those who don't see past it.

Nowadays when people ask me, I tell them I'm Chinese-American simply because it's easier, lest I get repeatedly asked why I speak English so well (sadly, I have also been asked why I am able to speak American-accented English fluently by a few participants of the JET program. I say, "No commento desu!") In the classrooms, I am just *amerika-jin* because I don't feel like spurring any more racial insults from my students. (Maybe more on that next time.)

I end up choosing my labels, which might be good for me in the long run. I don't think I should be defined by what other people project on me. I choose who I am and who I want to be. If I say I'm a second-generation Japanese person, people would believe me. I'd just have to pick a Japanese name to go with the persona!

English Sensei Spirit

Our monthly guide to better lesson planning

By Angela Nicholson

This activity works best for small groups and is probably only for more advanced students. For many of you this may not be something you can do at school but it might be an activity for ESS club or a night class.

If anyone has seen the show or played the game then the concept of this game should be familiar to them. Basically you are going to make a card version of the murder mystery game Cluedo (Clue in North America). The idea is to get students to ask indirect questions to find out what cards other people have, and from that figure out who was the murderer, what was the murder weapon and where the murder took place.

To start with you need 18 blank cards — blank meishi cards work well. Next you need to come up with six places, six people and six weapons. For example; People: Nurse Nancy, Professor Plum, Greg the Gardener, Clancy the Cook, Bob

To help the students keep track of who has what cards, you can also give them a sheet like this:

People

Professor Plum				
Nurse Nancy				
Bob the butler				
Clancy the Cook				
Greg the gardener				
Andrea the actress				

Weapon

Gun				
Rope				
Frying pan				
Poison				
Lead pipe				
Knife				

Place

Closet				
Bedroom				
Dining room				
Bathroom				
Library				
Kitchen				



If you haven't seen Clue - The Movie, then your life is empty.

the Builder, Andrea the Actress; Weapons: rope, knife, gun, poison, frying-pan, lead pipe; Places: kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, library, closet, dining room.

Start the game by explaining to your students that someone has killed Hello Kitty (or whoever you would like to die!). Show them all the cards and explain that these are the possible murderers, weapons and places. Then take one card from each of the three groups (people, weapons and places) and put them into an envelope. Don't let anybody see the cards!

Explain that the cards in the envelope are the murderer, the murder weapon and the site of the murder. Shuffle the rest of the cards and deal them out to the players. Then get the students to take turns asking each other indirect questions about what cards they have.

For example, they cannot say "Do you have Nurse Nancy?" but instead can ask "Do you have a person who works in a hospital?" I find it helpful to write the following basic sentence structures on the board:

"Do you have a person who..."

"Do you have a weapon/thing that/which..."

"Do you have a place where..."

If a student decides that they want to solve the mystery they can say "I think it was ... in the ... with the ..." (I write this on the board too). If you run out of time or you want to stop the game then get all the students to guess the three murder elements and then check the cards and see who got it right.

I often have a little trouble getting the students to start but once they get used to the sentence structure they seem to do it well. Give them lots of help at the beginning, maybe even run through and make an example question for each of the 18 cards and then they should be fine. This game is very good for practicing indirect questions and prepositions as well as being good fun.

"Let's having fun playing Engrish games!!!"

From Miss Johol to Amar-sensei

A comparison between teaching in Canada and Japan

By Amar Johal

Okay, why did I leave wonderful Vancouver, B.C. and my enthusiastic students of the Surrey School District to come to Japan? Basically I needed a break from the daily grind of life — I had been teaching elementary school children in Canada for the last six years and wanted to see what it would be like to teach abroad. Of course the chance to travel and to meet new people also influenced my decision!

Teaching in Japan certainly hasn't been what I expected. My base high school on Tues.-Thurs is not known for having the most enthusiastic students. This was a rude awakening for me because I had been under the impression that the students in Japan would be keen to learn. This, however, is only one of a number of challenges that teaching in Japan presents.

Teaching in Japan and Canada differs in numerous ways. For example, in Canada you have smaller class sizes. My classes in Canada would have a maximum of 30 students and even that is pushing it. In Japan my largest class had 49 students (thankfully they have now graduated!) and these large class sizes really affected the type of teaching strategies I could use.

When I first started I was thinking that pair and group work activities would work, which is not the case at all. Those students who were awake in class were very reluctant to get up and do pair work. Also the JTEs did not encourage this type of teaching. The students were not interested in speaking English at all. At this point I was thinking, "Oh, my God!" I don't think I could have handled a whole year of me just talking and the JTE translating and not really getting to know the students. After many failed attempts I gave up on group/pair work activities. As the weeks progressed I found out the students would rather listen to dictation and fill in clozed activities than do pair work, and that they loved doing crosswords and puzzles.



Amar and her Canadian students pose for a picture without peace signs... weird...

In Canada, the students often talk too much, whereas in Japan the students are deathly silent (except when the teachers are talking) which I found surprising. Back home if a student misbehaves there is some sort of punishment, but at my high school the students are not encouraged to reform their behaviour. Instead, it's up to the teachers to change their method of teaching. Therefore, I have found myself constantly revising worksheets for the different needs of the students. I also teach with three JTEs so my lessons vary depending on with whom I teach.

I have enjoyed the rare times when I have taught by myself because the students appreciated the informal and relaxed style. I also noticed the students' willingness to participate in class discussion increased because they were given opportunities to talk without the fear of making a mistake. I think if the JTEs encouraged the students to talk more the students would have a more positive experience with learning English. I am sick and tired of hearing from my JTEs that the students do not talk because they are "tired" or "shy." Smaller classes with a conversational focus would be the key to more successful learning.

I also find that in Japan it is difficult to develop a rapport with the students because lessons are started precisely when the bell

rings and there is no time for conversation with the students. I have an opportunity to chat with a few students from 3:15-4:00 p.m. and they have started writing letters to my previous students in Canada. During that time I have also invited some of them to join me when I am running, which is nice.

On Mondays and Fridays I have the opportunity to teach with Rupa Patel, a JET at Mihara High School. I always love going there to team teach with her because it gives me a break from my high school. It's great to have another person to bounce ideas off and see what types of teaching strategies are being used with more enthusiastic students. Furthermore, during English Club there I have opportunities to teach lessons that I would normally teach in Canada.

Even though I do not find my job as rewarding as I would have hoped, I still enjoy planning the lessons (even if implementing them is another story!) Despite all the challenges of teaching in Japan, I have developed an incredible amount of patience which I hope to take back with me when I encounter ESL students at my school in Canada. In addition, teaching in Awaji has made me realize just how much I enjoy teaching back home. I look forward to sharing my trials and tribulations about teaching in Japan when I go back home in August!

Politics with Paul

On Inter-Asian Racism

By Paul O'Shea

Recently, I spent a long weekend in Seoul, Korea, and was fortunate enough to enjoy kimchi for breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as kimchi in chocolate form and even kimchi beer (ok I made up that last one, but it would be interesting!).

Back in Japan, the trip was a topic of discussion in my Japanese language class. I was surprised to hear that though our teacher had travelled around the United States, Canada and Europe,

she had never been to Korea and never wanted to go. After a little gentle prodding, it emerged that she was afraid of Koreans and Chinese because, in her words, "nihon-jin ga kirai!" She went on to explain that most Asians hate the Japanese because of the terrible things that Japan did in the Second World War.

Hang on, I thought — British people don't hate the Germans (except when they beat them in football!), neither do the French, the Scandinavians, etc. So why do Asians dislike¹ the Japanese so



Koreans burn Japanese flags at a 2001 anti-Japan rally in downtown Seoul, South Korea.

much? Why can't we all be friends?! Well the answer, of course, is complicated. There are several key factors involved, the most important of which I shall share with you now (aren't you lucky)!

Colonisation

Japan, Korea and China were late bloomers in the international colonisation scene. The West's demands for preferential access to markets (demands made down the barrel of a gun) left these states with two choices: modernise or die. What followed in Japan was the famous Meiji restoration and the creation of a modern state. Korea meanwhile, was slower to emerge, and ended up being swallowed by its expanding neighbour following Japan's victo-

ries over China and Russia.

Over the next thirty years, Korea was subjected to classic colonial rule (be it a century or two later than the rest of the world) including the imposition of the Japanese language and culture, the appropriation of Korean businesses, the suppression of Korean nationalism, etc. The 1930s saw the same events take place in northeast China, in a province called Manchuria. This was eventually followed by an overall take-over attempt. The subsequent Japanese expansion across southern Asia would have involved more of the same, had it succeeded.

So here we find one reason. Germany's occupation of France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia and so on did not last more than a few years, and was never a fait

accompli as it was in Korea or Manchuria. The humiliation of being a colony — much worse a colony of a neighbour — left a bitter taste which lingers to this day, and surely will continue into the future. Can you imagine if the UK was occupied by the Germans for three decades and forced to speak German, or if the United States was occupied by Japan and we all learnt Japanese in high school from our JALTs!

Yet, this does not fully explain the continuing animosity — Ireland was colonised for centuries, the language was lost, nationalism suppressed, etc., but few Irish people harbour any serious bad feelings towards our benevolent big brother! The same is true of many ex-colonies, so we must look for other things to help us understand this anti-Japanese sentiment.

Lack of Contrition

After the Second World War, the Germans were made not only to apologise, but deny their own nationality. Nazism, the Holocaust, Lebensraum — these things made it impossible to have any pride in being German.

The Germans were castigated, and they castigated themselves. There was complete self-loathing and the denial of national identity. This didn't happen in Japan. While the German people knew they themselves were complicit in the Holocaust and other crimes, the Japanese people saw themselves as victims of a war-mongering military which seized control of the state and propelled Japan towards war. The dropping of the two atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima further contributed to this sense of victim-hood.

Thus, while the Germans bared their scarred soul and unconditionally apologised to the world, the Japanese looked around their devastated country and felt sorry



The Commonwealth of Japan and Korea, back in the day...

for themselves. This feeling has led to countless diplomatic headaches, from Prime Ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine (as I've talked about previously) to the Korean Comfort Women to school textbook controversies. The lack of a clear and unequivocal apology has had a lasting effect on Northeast Asian relations — and has been exploited mercilessly for political gain, as we shall now see.

Japan-Bashing

When a Chinese politician badmouths Japan, it is generally not because they feel that Japan has mortally offended the Chinese. Rather, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) founding myth is that it defeated the Japanese Imperialists and saved China. Thus, whenever the CCP needs a little boost in the arm, the Second World War and its legacy is a convenient stick with which to bash Japan, and it usually does the trick. By redirecting negative attention to their neighbour, the CCP has historically been able to gloss over domestic problems — economic failure, anti-democracy crackdowns, even full-scale fam-

ines! The fact that Japan didn't come clean after the war, coupled with the CCP version of history taught in schools and universities, has made Japan bashing an easy option.

Future

The reasons for the general dislike of the Japanese among Asians — particularly Koreans and Chinese — are obviously more complicated than what I have been able to discuss here. There is a racial element (on both sides), a long history of war, and so on, but I hope you get the gist of things. It is a very sensitive topic among many Japanese, and it is not a situation I envy.

They have been lumped with a complicated nationality. It's easy if you're Canadian, Irish, Jamaican, or any other neutral nationality — people don't dislike you just because of your nationality. But being Japanese is different. Seventy years after the Second World War the current generation of Japanese are still paying for their grandfathers' sins. If only their grandfathers had accepted responsibility, things could be so different.



Re-enactment of Japanese suppression of culture in Seoul.

¹ I use dislike rather than hate, hate being a very strong word. Not that I don't think that there aren't people who do hate the Japanese, but I just think those who do are in the minority.

In the Castle with Björk

By Brenda McKinney

Last month I had the pleasure of seeing one of my favorite performers, Björk, live in Osaka as part of her recently-extended Volta tour. The concert, held at the 16,000-seat Osaka Castle Hall, was sold out.

We arrived early, and at 7:30 p.m., the lights went out and Björk's all-female brass band, Wonderbrass, took the stage, marching to the sounds of Icelandic ballad *Brennid Tid Vitar*. The keyboardist, drummer and two electronic musicians soon followed before Björk herself appeared at the center microphone, clad in shimmering gold and bright war paint. Björk opened with *Earth Intruders*, an electric hit off of last year's album, *Volta*, and it was clear from the start she was not going to disappoint.

The first half of the 90-minute set was somewhat of a laid-back affair. The set drew evenly from all six of Björk's albums, and included two of my personal favorites, *Hunter* and the lullaby-like *Joga*. Towards the middle of the show, bright blue lasers shot into the crowd as Björk's soothing voice echoed, filling every inch of the medium-sized arena. The large screen in the center of the arena panned in on the electronic musicians and their lit-



up toys and synthesizers. It was like something out of a sci-fi dream.

The crowd on the main floor swayed back and forth, exploding in movement anytime Björk made slight gestures in their direction. Even on the top throngs of the hall, each row had at least two or three solitary dancers. This was impressive to me, considering "big name" concerts in Japan sometimes carry with them a reputation for more civil crowds (my friend and I were shocked to find ourselves two of the loudest people at the Red Hot Chili Peppers concert in Osaka last year!).

The second-half of the show charged onwards with more powerful beats like *Army of Me*, an obvious crowd favourite, and *Hyperballad*. Meanwhile, Björk teased the audience with her

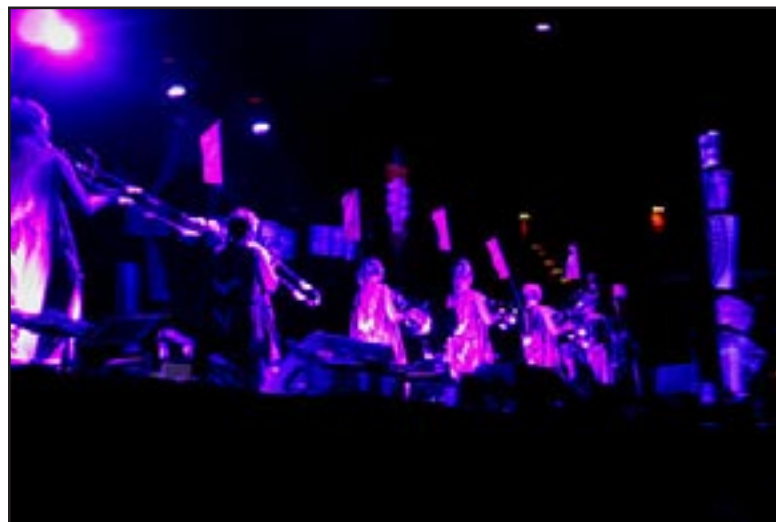
toys, at one point running back and forth across the stage with streamers and always oozing energy and excitement.

For the last song of the set, *Pluto*, the band came down from their platform onto the stage to form a circle around Björk, who joined the all-female brass troupe in jerky, fanatic dancing.

The strobe lights and blue lasers flickered through the crowds as Björk's ethereal vocals and the fast-paced techno beats whipped the house into a furious finale. Björk uttered a small "arigatou," ending her last song with a roll of the tongue (arrrrrrrigatoooo!) and leaving the stage.

After several minutes of pleading, Björk reappeared for a three-song encore. Wonderbrass again led the charge as the evening closed with the single *Declare Independence*.

In one word, the show was AWE-SOME! If you weren't able to catch Björk's monstrous 18-month global tour or don't know much about her music, I highly recommend quenching a thirst for live Björk with the upcoming *Live Sessions Album* or checking out one of her quirky music videos on YouTube. You won't be disappointed!



Kansai Concerts

May Listings

3RD	Back Drop Bomb 3,500 yen, doors @ 6 p.m. Club Quattro, Shinsaibashi, Osaka	11TH	Afirampo 2,500 yen, doors at 6 p.m. Shangri-la, Umeda, Osaka
4TH	Your Song Is Good 3,000 yen, doors @ 5:30 p.m. Club Quattro, Shinsaibashi, Osaka	15TH	Tristan Prettyman 5,800 yen, doors @ 6 p.m. Club Quattro, Shinsaibashi, Osaka
8TH	Extreme the Dojo Vol. 20 feat. At The Gates, Dillinger Escape Plan, Mayhem, Pig Destroyer and Into Eternity 9,000 yen, doors @ 5 p.m. Hatch, Namba, Osaka	22ND	Soilwork 6,000 yen, doors @ 6 p.m. Big Cat, Osaka
8TH	Two Banks of Four w/ DJ Ryota Nozaki 5,000 yen, doors @ 6 p.m. Shangri-la, Umeda, Osaka	27TH	Puddle of Mudd 6,000 yen, doors @ 6 p.m. Club Quattro, Shinsaibashi, Osaka



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Understanding the Wild Gaijin

By Amy Baker

Although I have a somewhat vague idea as to why I came, I cannot fully explain to you why exactly I moved to Japan. What I can do, however, is break down the foreigners I have met into four major categories and explore the motivations that led them to the Land of the Rising Sun.

All-Things-Japan Obsessed Clan

This is the group of individuals who are head over heels in love with anime, picture club, cosplay, manga, j-pop and anything else classified as Japanese popular culture.

They come to Japan for what they believe to be “all the right reasons.” This group includes, but is not limited to, the college-grad computer nerd who spends most of his days alone “gaming” or glued to some other variation of anime. He can recite an entire episode of Ebichu and is continually pinning for the latest Bishojo (beautiful girl).

This group also covers manga-madness. Many manga fans come to Japan to experience first-hand the country that produces their weekly means of escaping reality. Some are disappointed to see that the “real Japan” is often temples and rice paddies, while others become very overwhelmed when they venture into Tokyo or Osaka late at night.

Both situations leave the gaijin feeling distressed and hopeless, because they quickly realise the pages of Manga provide an escape from reality for their Japanese readers, too. Sadly, they will never be able to live the life they obsess over in the beautifully illustrated pages of manga.

Wife Hunters

Onto the second and more scandalous group of gaijin. These are the guys who join the group, “Everyone Loves a Japanese woman”

on Facebook, and have eyes for “Kawaii” women only. Kawaii is a blanket term that describes “cuteness,” a prominent aspect in Japanese culture.

Cuteness can be found in women's hairstyles, mannerisms, clothing or even how they walk, and this group of gaijin goes kawaii-krazy when they arrive in Japan! These men immediately become the local celebrity of their small towns — the Brad Pitt's of the inaka if you will!

I once made the mistake of asking a fellow JET participant why he originally came to Japan. His answer, which I could have recited, based on the amount of times I had over-heard it, was “to meet a nice Japanese woman, settle down and start a family.” Admiring Japan's culture and customs is one thing, but coming to a country solely to seek out a wife is another.

In one online forum I was recently perusing, a foreigner wrote “JAPANESE FLAVOUR IS THE BEST! THEY ARE LIKE ROLLS ROYCE'S AMONG RELIANT ROBINS!” These gaijin have eyes for Japanese women only and there is nothing holding them back. This group of men believes that no other women, of any nationality or ethnicity can ever rival the Japanese Kawaii-



Every year Genki Girl draws more horny Gaijin to Japan than manga, soul searching and adventure combined — it's science!

ness. I have lovingly nicknamed this obsession the “Kawaii-Goggles.”

I don't particularly understand this group of gaijin. Maybe I am simply jealous, or maybe I am unable to fully understand the Kawaii-Goggles. I am in no position to judge. After all, some women here are strikingly beautiful.

Soul Searchers

The next group, equally as interesting as the last is the Soul Searchers. These people come from all over the world hoping to find something. Whether this is learning more about themselves, finding purpose or even just making some new friends, their initial hunt is to seek out something meaningful and find a concrete answer. Some gaijin

are school teachers who come to gain invaluable teaching experience in a foreign country; others seem disillusioned or lost in their home countries and come to Japan hoping to learn more about themselves.

Japan is not only viewed as a country, but a mystical place that can help put your puzzling life back together. This group comes here full of hope, embracing the unknown and searching for their own personal truths. Whatever their reasons, I say: all the more power to them!

Adventure Seekers

The last group and the one I am most familiar with are the avid travelers with a sense of adventure always looking for the next interesting opportunity. After I graduated from University, I was unsure of what to make of myself. Low and behold my answer came in the form of a pamphlet at a career festival. “Graduating this spring but not sure

what to do with yourself?” it read. I nodded. “Interested in teaching English in Japan?” Again, I nodded. “Then this opportunity is for you!” Really? I thought. How perfect!

There was never any real reason why I chose Japan or a teaching position — it was just an incredible opportunity that threw itself into my lap, so to speak. I didn't know much about Japanese culture before arriving here, nor was I ever planning on becoming a teacher. The one thing I did enjoy was traveling and as I spent many long nights filling out the application, I'd daydream about side trips to China and Korea, and spending New Years on some exotic beach.

Now here I am, writing from my desk at one of my Junior High Schools in Hyogo. I've been lucky enough to make wonderful friends here in Japan who can relate to this sense of confusion and bewilderment

as to why exactly we came. We can laugh together at our male peers from back home who came here looking for wives or share our lack of enthusiasm in anime or manga, all the while gossiping over whose school is the best and fantasizing about our next vacation outside of Japan.

This opportunity seemed fitting at the time of applying, so we jumped aboard not really sure of what to expect next. Welcoming the unknown, we wake up every day in these strange surroundings and embrace the fact that we are somewhere new and today will be yet again, another great adventure.

Why am I here you ask? I have no clue. As time passes, maybe I will figure out why I came or maybe, just maybe, deep down inside, I am actually an anime-hungry, manga-obsessed, kawaii-wannabe, Japanese-man-loving, soul-searching foreigner like the rest of them...

Keitei Pictures of the Month

You love keiteis, I love keiteis, we all love keiteis! That's what inspired this new monthly feature — the Keitei Pictures of the Month! Send in your best shots to submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com along with your **name** and a **brief description** to share your best keitei shots! Hey — you can send them directly from your phone! Totemo sugoi!



A street in Osaka — floating puffer fish, golden big foot guy, crazy signs: check, check, check! Yup, we're in Japan!



The illuminated jellyfish tank in the Kaiyukan Aquarium in Osaka.



Thousands of sun-lit Torii at the Fushimi Inari shrine in Kyoto.

Photos by Jeff Morrice

Working for your Dinner

Life as a first-year JET

By Becky Taylor

I'm not sure how many ALT's are given the opportunity to visit their teacher's homes. Apparently it seems that that kind of invitation is quite rare. The Japanese professional relationship is one with quite defined boundaries — especially towards foreigners. Everyone remembers coming to school on Monday to find that the teacher who'd talked your ear off during last week's en-kai is now ignoring you. However, when one of your teachers has a ravenous interest in English language and culture, and is a friendly guy to boot, you may find yourself being invited round for tea and a good old chin wag.

My first visit to Hina-sensei's house was not long after arriving in Japan. I was welcomed wholeheartedly by Hina-sensei and his dainty little wife (Yukio). She was the ultimate hostess — busy in the kitchen preparing all sorts of delicious dishes and sweet delights while I was encouraged to eat and drink as much as humanly possible and chat away in English. It was a very enjoyable evening and a wonderful first visit to a Japanese house.

The next invitation came some months later — this time with conditions! The proposal was to bring Ben, my ALT boyfriend, for a trade of skills — Yukio's fabulous cooking in exchange for a



This picture of Becky dressed as a bunny has little to do with her article, unless this is how she dressed to the dinner... it's not quite clear...

lecture on the British social class system.

It was a fair deal, but it suddenly dawned on us that we didn't really have a clue how we were going to present the topic. In the end we chose to approach it from two different angles. Whilst perusing the internet I stumbled upon an article about Britain's current-day obsession with social class, which proved to be surprisingly relevant. Ben looked into the history of the British social system using the good old reliable archives of wikipedia. Put together we had quite a trove of information! A few hours of editing later and we had a concise collection of information in a digestible size to present to our listeners.

Our audience on the night was Hina-sensei, his wife Yukio (who is a University Professor of English), and their guest Shigei, a younger University colleague. We decided that the best way to present our research was to read in turns to break up the flow and to ask questions at the end of each section, just to check that what we were saying wasn't going over their heads (it's difficult to talk history and politics without using complex English!)

During the talk our eagerly attentive audience didn't ask many questions but as soon as dinner was ready we moved to the dining table and began a conversation as free flowing as Hina-sensei's supply of wine and beer.

There was a classic Japanese moment when our host proposed a toast to our good health and appreciation of our efforts, but his wife was still tucked away in her kitchen working on the main course. I asked if we should call her through to join in the toast but apparently her presence was not necessary — just a little reminder of how the rules of domestic life can differ here.

Then the food began to come through thick and fast. In fact my mouth is beginning to water quite uncontrollably just at the memory of the feast we were presented with. At times the conversation was a rather one-sided affair. It's strange to sit and talk on various subjects while other people obviously just want to listen. You get a little tired of hearing your own voice! But we were definitely there to inform and not ask our

own questions.

As the meal progressed and the alcohol intake increased we often digressed, but an eager Hina-sensei was always quick to announce that he wanted "to get back to the original topic." However it becomes clear when talking on a subject that permeates modern life as much as the class system does, that most ideas are connected, one way or another.

When talking about the attitudes towards the existence and recognition of class systems, the topic of today's younger generations inevitably comes up. It was hard not to digress and it was really interesting to have a young Japanese person's (Shigei's) feedback about the things we were talking about.

Shigei has rather retro tastes — a fan of The Clash, The Kinks, and Mod music and fashion in

general — but his perspective was one of an individual who is part of a generation that does not identify strongly with the Japan of the past. A shift in attitudes is the result, with some positive but many negative consequences. A loss of important values seems to be one of the main problems. There are certainly many similarities between Japan's and the UK's youth culture and their social and economic problems.

However it is a subject that can only be talked about over dinner for so long until everyone realises that, well, that's all you can do. The world changes and although some things stay the same for a while, eventually they will be gone too.

Luckily for us, good cuisine and warm hospitality are still important aspects of Japanese values! You can't beat a bit of home cooking!

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Better Know a Ken: Shizuoka

By Louise Higgins

Part 4 in our ongoing 47-part series highlighting the lives of JETs living in other prefectures. Yes, we blatantly stole the idea from Stephen Colbert's 434-part *Better Know a District*. If you know someone living in another ken, have them send in their story and pics to submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com.

Shizuoka-ken is an elongated prefecture curved around Suruga Bay (the deepest bay in Japan) on the island of Honshu. It borders the four prefectures of Aichi, Nagano, Yamanashi and Kanagawa and has a population of roughly 3.8 million.

Aside from being known for its wonderful (and beautiful) ALTs, Shizuoka's No. 1 claim to fame is the majestic 3,776 metre-high Mt. Fuji, which dominates the skyline and makes Shizuoka a popular prefecture on the tourist trail.

My initial enduring memory of Shizuoka is not that first taste of sushi or the feeling of ancient temple under my socked feet (though they're in my Top 10!).

Nope, the thing that is burned (or maybe soaked) into my consciousness is the disgustingly hot and sticky feeling that comes with wearing business attire in the oppressive August heat.

However this discomfort was gradually replaced by nagging confusion, as I came to realize that something about my new home wasn't quite right — where the hell was Fuji-san?

It would be a whole month before the humid summer haze cleared and I could see the looming silhouette of Mt. Fuji, dominating the landscape and keeping a watchful eye on my town. Seeing it for the first time, and almost every day since, it is still hard to believe that something as trifling as

a bit of moisture in the air managed to obscure something so... well... *big*.

Like the moment of realization that the iconic volcano had been presiding over my first month here all along, living in Shizuoka has been a constant journey of discovery.

Any preconceptions about Japan that I'd had before coming to Shizuoka have been systematically dispelled, or at least tweaked to reflect the complex realities of life in Japan.

Sure Japanese culture is about the robots, the anime and the urban Shibuya kids styled to within an inch of their lives, but small-town Shizuoka has shown me the other side of the coin: the rolling rice fields, where octogenarian women bend over double



Fuji-chan, pride of Shizuoka Prefecture.



Any day now Shiz. ...Any day...

to do their daily toil, the rickety mismatched suburban houses decked with masses of entangled power lines and the jovial community spirit, equally applied to local dance festivals and monthly beach cleanups.

Living in Shizuoka, I have been able to savour these cultural extremes. In my town of Numazu with its 200,000 residents, I can avail of the conveniences of modern Japanese life, from heated toilet seats to karaoke, without the hassle of having to deal with the frantic pace of big city life.

And if I ever feel the urge to experience some of that urban buzz, one hour on the "Shink" gets me into Tokyo station, ready for a night out on the lash. Need to recover from said night of debauchery? No problem — twenty minutes on the train and I'm in the heart of the Izu Peninsula, where I can meditate in the stillness of the Japanese countryside or soak away my woes/hang-over in one of the abundant onsens in the area.

Shizuoka also offers me countless opportunities to indulge in my favourite pastime — stuffing my filthy face with food. Our local

specialities include mikan and navel oranges (largest producer in Japan), strawberries and green tea (again the biggest producer in Japan). And since Shizuoka is built on the flood plain of Suruga Bay, I get to binge on possibly the tastiest and freshest sashimi in the world (yes,

sunny days and stuffing yourself full of oranges. The winters can get pretty cold, the summers are stiflingly humid, and right now the weather can only be described as 'Irish' (yes, that's right, today it is grey, rainy and miserable!). Plus we also have the imminent threat of colossal death to contend with, in the form of the Tokai Earthquake.

Every 100-150 years an earthquake of massive proportions called the Tokai Earthquake hits Shizuoka. The last one was in 1854, so we are expecting one any day now. Unfortunately the next one is predicted to be 16 times stronger than the temblor that struck Kobe in 1995, and will put most of Shizuoka under 12 metres of tsunami thanks to that lovely deep bay of ours. Lucky us.

But once you overcome the urge to never sleep again in case your house falls on you, Shizuoka is a great little corner of Japan to live in. I even have a soft spot now for the local ultra-nationalists who drive around in a black van (which we have fondly named the Fascist Bus), blaring patriotic music from their speakers and

presumably telling us foreigners to go home. And although Shiz is a far cry from the streets of my native Northern Ireland, I am, for now at least, proud to call this place home.



even compared to a 6 a.m breakfast in Tsukiji).

There is even a fantastic local ramen shop in the area, where English teachers from all over the prefecture convene every Monday, to shoot the breeze with Tomo and Yumiko (the wonderful owners) and sample the heavenly gyoza. The restaurant, named Chukatei, has become a refuge for Shizuoka ALTs —

somewhere to share our stories, relax and be cared for by our Mama and Papa-san. This, as they say, is the life.

Of course in Shizuoka it's not all

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Travel Japan

The Wakayama-ken Onsen

By Jeff Weese

While us gaijin may head to the gym or the pub to blow off steam, Japan does so in the form of onsens.

These volcanoes must have some steam to blow because Japan has been blessed with thousands of onsens stretching from the mountain tips of Hokkaido down to the sandy beaches of Okinawa. These relaxing hot springs are the perfect place to go with friends, colleagues, family or by yourself.

Naked bathing, or Hadaka no tsukiai (it actually means getting friendly naked... no, not that kind of friendly!), is very important in Japan as it is seen as a way to break down the barriers and get to know people.

Well, the people of Wakayama want to get to know YOU and they are inviting you to come and visit some of the best onsens in Japan!

While you could spend your entire JET year dripping from onsen to onsen in Wakayama,

there are three onsen towns that are regarded as prime spots, with their waters abundant in minerals that are good for your body both inside and out.

Shirahama

Your first stop on your onsen expedition should be Shirahama, a little beach resort just south of Wakayama City. Don't judge the place by the fact that they im-



Thank heavens for that steam... trust me...

ported sand from Australia, but instead by the fact that there are a plethora of seaside onsens that you can soak in and gaze off into the Pacific Ocean.

In Shirahama the baths range from individual bathtubs, huge group pools and cave onsens to onsens right at the

seashore where waves from the Pacific come up and smack the rock barrier dividing the sea water from the onsen water. There are a variety of minerals at the different onsens in the area, and some of them have sodium chloride and baking

soda in them which is good for locomotor disorder and female disorders. There are also ones with sodium chloride hydrogen carbonate, known to be good for rheumatic disease, and finally, onsen with sodium chloride which is effective for cuts, burns, chronic skin disease and chronic female diseases.

Katsuura:

Directly across the prefecture is Katsuura Onsen Town. There are many onsens around, but one is worth a special mention for its location, uniqueness and medicinal benefits. Bouki-dou is in

a cave just along the ocean and is accessible by a five-minute boat ride to a hotel... then through the lobby and down to the cave! The



whole experience is quite interesting.

The onsen itself has hydrogen sulfuric and sodium chloride making it beneficial for those with chronic arthro-rheumatism or diabetes. There are other fantastic open air baths that sit next

to the ocean or high on rocky ledges where you can watch the waves roll. Some of the waters in these baths contain sulfur which is good for soothing the body, neuralgia and giving you super smooth skin!

Yunomine:

Just a bit north into the hills is a sleepy onsen area that is best called Yunomine (made up of many small towns). It is home to

baths containing sodium bicarbonate hydro sulfuric spring water which is good

for neuralgia and skin disease.

Many of the baths also have sodium bicarbonate which is effective against rheumatic disease and chronic

gastroenteric disorders. The choices here are

great — you can have an onsen that will make your baby healthy (don't worry... a healthy baby will not just automatically appear!), a river onsen that pumps out 73 degree Celsius wa-

ter and the largest open air bath in West Japan! Choices!

Accommodation and Getting There:

Many of these places are in small towns where accommodation can easily be booked, but getting there can prove to be a challenge. The website <<http://kanko.wiwi.co.jp/world/english/relax/hotspring.html>> introduces you to a few select prime spots for soaking and also contains access advice below each entry.

I hope you have a chance (seishun 18 kippu is coming up) to get out to Wakayama for some soaking and relaxing before classes really get into full swing for the new term!



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Getting to know some random JETs

❖ **Name:** Jenai Rogers.

❖ **Please call me:** Jenai.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Shikisai Koko, Himeji.

❖ **How we know you:** "Honey, you don't need Mickey Mouse. What you need is Jesus Christ. Until you find Jesus all roads lead straight to Hell. Mickey Mouse can't save your soul!"

❖ **Birthday:** 7/8/1980

❖ **Born and raised:** Borin in Sonoma, CA, raised on the West Coast, the East Coast, the "North," the "South," and Florida.

❖ **Family:** Oldest of two.

❖ **University and Degree:** Austin Peay State University, English Literature and Creative Writing.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Like all good English majors I have worked in retail: book stores, pizza joints, ice cream parlors, pubs and for the Biltmore Estate Bistro.

I also enjoyed a short stint as a librarian (Ed. Note: Hot!), and as a maid for a Bed & Breakfast (Ed. Note: Double Hot!). Most recently I taught at an inner city school in Minneapolis, MN as an Americorps Promise Fellow.

❖ **Travels:** Currently getting the most of Japan. Visited Thailand. Have also explored most of Western Europe: Scotland, England, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France, Spain.

❖ **Shumi wa nan desuka:** Watching movies, reading, being lazy in my pajamas all day, listening to music. Most recent hobby: knitting.

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: Home grown tomatoes, sweet potato French-fries, mango and sticky rice, strawberry rhubarb pie, good olive oil and crispy bread, hummus, honey comb, tomato soup



and grilled cheese.

Sports: I like solitary sports like climbing trees. I haven't enjoyed sports since the Fifth Grade when boys became retarded about winning.

Music: Nina Nastasia, Nick Cave, Jeff Buckley, Low, Neutral Milk Hotel, Sigor Ros, Bjork, Patty Griffin, Magnetic Fields, Blonde Redhead, The Veils, My Bloody Valentine.

Shop: I get abnormally excited walking through office supply stores. I also enjoy 25 cent sweaters and 5 dollar winter coats from a Salvation Army shop in a geriatric neighborhood.

TV Show: Six Feet Under, The Office, Scrubs, Thirty Rock, The Daily Show, Project Runway.

Movie: I Heart Huckabees, The Straight Story, Thin Red Line,

Paris, Texas, Hannah and Her Sisters, The Mirror, Waking the Dead, Bottle Rocket, The World According to Garp.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** I guess I am working on that everyday.

❖ **Best life experience:** Laughing so hard you can't hold food, drink, or tears in.

❖ **Motto to live by:** I kinda hate mottos. But, from "One Train May Hide Another" by Kenneth Koch: "It can be important to have waited at least a moment to see what was already there."

❖ **I remember when...** I called my sun-burnt little sister Mikhail Gorbachev during a fight.

❖ **What are you drinking?** Water. Should I have said something more exciting? Damn it, how will water explain anything about "who I am?!"

❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** The friends. Awww...

❖ **Why should we elect you King of the World?** I don't really want to be President of the World. I just want to be all-powerful occasionally and secretly when it would be irresistible and fun.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student?** A shy girl from first year sits down. I explain that she can talk about anything she wants, any topic at all. And she starts, "I would like to talk about my lover..."

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** find myself sounding like the economics teacher from Ferris Bueller. Damn it!

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** It is insane to think teenagers will perform with out bribery; wild animals must have their carrots and bananas.

❖ **Name:** Wendy Katharine Boone.

❖ **Please call me:** Wendy

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Miki Kita Senior High and Yokawa Senior High, Miki-shi

❖ **How we know you:** Dancing with Mr. Maeda at Yashiro Orientation!

❖ **Birthday:** 5/9/84.

❖ **Born and raised:** Tennessee, America

❖ **Family:** Two feisty parents, an older brother and a sister-in-law.

❖ **University and Degree:** University of Tennessee, Undergraduate in Biology and Masters in Education.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Waiting tables, lifeguard, counseling kids, teaching.

❖ **Travels:** Mexico, Canada, Thailand, all over Europe and now Japan. Oh yeah, and my country...America.

❖ **Shumi wa nan desuka:** Reading, exercising, finding ways to entertain myself for eight hours a day at my non-challenging job.

❖ **Staying another year?** Hell no!

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: Lasagna (where can I



find good Italian in Japan???).

Sports: Swimming.

Music: The kind that makes me wanna dance.

Shop: H&M (I miss it so much!), and those shops where you can sit in a massage chair for hours.

TV Show: Seinfeld, Scrubs.

Movie: Van Wilder, The Birdcage, Love Actually

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Surviving in this country.

❖ **Best life experience:** Living in the Netherlands.

❖ **Motto to live by:** It's all an adventure.

❖ **I remember when...** Pluto was a planet, cell phones were for the rich and snobby and my whole family shared an email address.

❖ **What are you drinking?** Cheap wine from Coop.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Galileo Galilei.

❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** On-sens.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** I would make medical care affordable, insurance nonexistent... and okonomiyaki a world cuisine.

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** not stop eating.

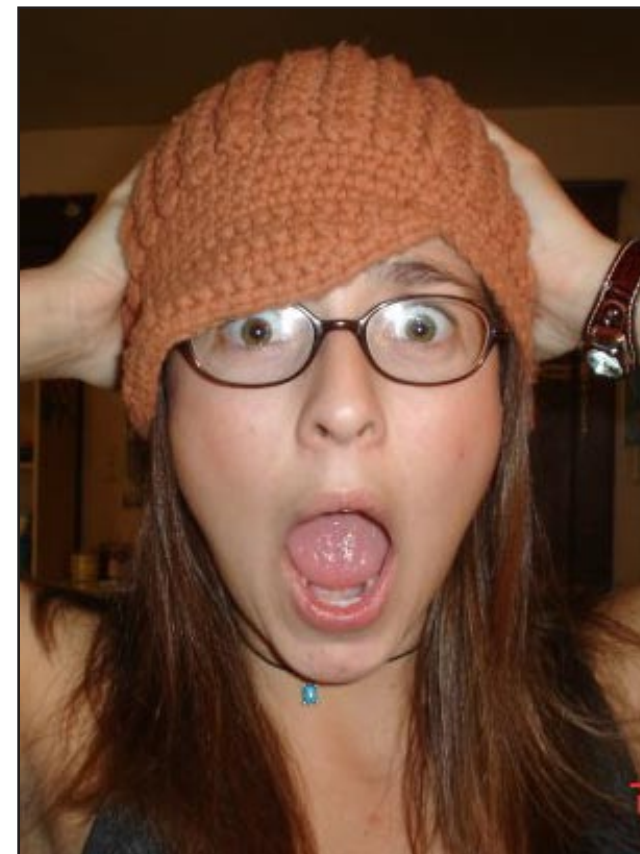
❖ **Interesting Fact:** I have a stripe down the back of both legs and I'm convinced I'm a robot.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Flexibility.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** start talking to myself.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Yay!

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** I was collecting markers from the students after making name cards. I went up to a student, held out my hand and said "can I have the marker?" He (of course) didn't understand me and thought I was trying to shake his hand. So in front of the whole class he shook my hand before he realized what was going on. We all laughed afterwards...



Things to Do in the Inaka When You're Dead

By Gabrielle Bouchard

It happens to all of us once in a while. You're "stuck" in your little town while all of your friends are off having fun. Either you've been scheduled for some sort of activity at your school (in my case, an innocent question about the science club's project turned into an early Saturday morning insect sampling trip. Fun!), or you've realized that student loan re-payments are creeping up and you need to be more frugal with the yen (also something I've realized).

In any case here are some suggestions to keep you occupied during your weekend alone that don't include hours of Facebook stalking.

Explore your town

Osaka and Kyoto have interesting things to see, but who says your town isn't hiding little gems? Hop on your bike or throw on your sneakers and head out. You never know what you'll find. (I found a really pretty little temple near the mountains and a great park to walk in. Who knew?)

Organize your apartment

This is as good a time as any to get down to it and make your apartment your own. If you're a first year JET, get rid of all the random things your predecessor left (why would I ever need a princess crown and four plastic baseball bats?). If you're a returning JET, sort through all the things you may have been holding onto that you don't really need any more. Going through the "junk" will not only bring new life (and perhaps storage space!) to your living quarters, but it can be a lovely trip down memory lane too.

Call Home

The weekend is the best time to have a nice long talk with friends or family. Plan a chat date, and make it happen. The weekend works especially well

if you battle crazy time differences with people back home. Who cares if you stay up until two in the morning talking on Skype? It's free, and you can sleep all you want the next day! (Unless tomorrow is Monday in which case you should at least drag yourself to school before settling down for a nap!)

Write Letters

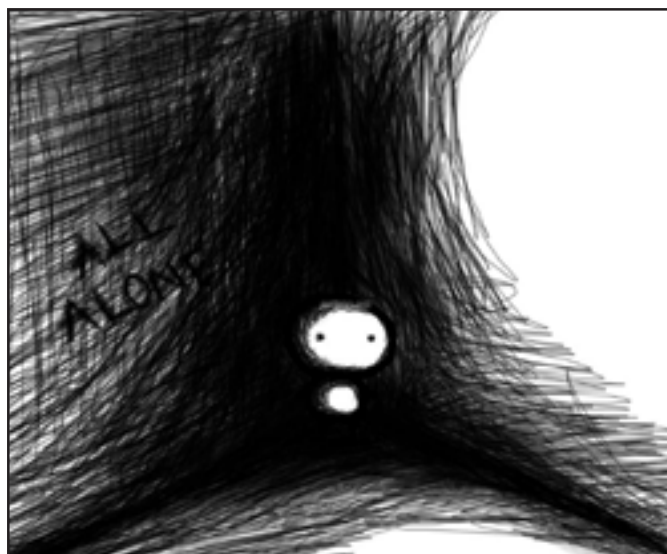
Continuing on the communication theme put pen to paper and write letters! Facebook messages and e-mails are fine but there's something special about a good old fashioned letter. Remember the feeling of seeing non-bill mail in your mailbox? Return the favour and send a little love snail mail style. Don't forget the grandparents - it'll pay off exponentially at holidays and on your birthdays!

Take Pictures

Grab your camera, and take pictures of your daily life in Japan. The shrine at the end of your street may seem a little bland to you, but to your friends at home sitting in labs and libraries working on degrees (Haha! Suckers!) it will most likely be pretty interesting. Include random things, like pictures of what you see on your walk to school, the condom vending machine or the weird buttons on your toilet. Hell, even I'd look at them!

Go to the Grocery Store

This can keep me occupied for hours. Wander down the aisles and try to figure out what in the name of King Kong some of the things are. Try some new things, or splurge on something expensive and imported (800 yen for a box of instant oatmeal packets? Sure - why not?).



Little marshmallow man isn't emo, he's just lonely in the Inaka.

Cook

After the said grocery store trip, put on your old Japanese lady-apron (obviously man-aprons don't exist because Japanese men spontaneously combust if they step into a kitchen) and cook yourself a fantastic meal. Continue your culinary adventures and try to bake something in your rice cooker. My friend makes fantastic rice cooker banana bread, and I've heard rumours of a mystical rice cooker green tea cheesecake. If you are successful, bring some of your creations to share with your teachers and office staff. They'll love you even more/hate you slightly less.

Plan trips

I love my life in Japan, but there are some days when all I want to do is escape. Look through the school calendar and see when you can take nenkyu. Search the net for cheap fares and great things to see. Plan a trip that you will look forward to (even if you don't book it). It will definitely help after those energy draining days at work when you just don't have enough "genki" to share with forty semi-comatose sixteen-year-olds. Sometimes knowing you can leave makes it easier to stay.

Wheel of Jeopardy!

Time for the H.T. Quiz: First-ever Full Page Edition! By Joy Feddes

1. Your favourite way to kill time at school is:
a) ricebowl.com — it's for a good cause.

b) Justin Timberlake
c) Study Japanese?

2. Finish this thought: "Before I came to Japan I never"

a) Saw a cherry tree. Because they only exist in Japan.

b) Thought I'd see so much naked Japanese ass.

c) Ate so much flippin rice.

3. Once upon a time...

a) I lived in a land where I could read the signs.

b) This quiz was worth reading. Wait...no it wasn't.

c) In a marmalade forest, between the make-believe trees...

4. What language do you speak?

a) A hybrid of English, Japanese and that foreign language I studied in university. Oh yeah, Spanish is way helpful in Japan.

b) Nihongo, bitch!

c) Irish. Not quite English, but almost, so.

5. You think White Day is:

a) Lame!

b) Commercialism, boo!

c) Mostly C's, why did you taunt me? Why?



6. It's Spring!

a) Wahooooooooooooooooo!

b) Sweet!

c) Huzzah!

7. Your favourite way to sneak out of school early is:

a) Tell them that, as a Scientologist, you must adhere to the laws of John Travolta, and that means only seven hours of mindless sitting per day.

b) Ninja got skillz!

c) Sneak?

8. It's a new school year!

a) But wait, didn't the kids just leave? Hasn't it been only two weeks?

b) I love the smell of freshly sharpened pencils. Shit, they are all mechanical here.

c) Yes! New minds to warp. I mean educate. Heh heh heh...

What your answers mean:

Mostly As: I recently realized that the trees with the prettiest cherry blossoms do not really produce the tastiest cherries. You are the smartest of the lot, but are you the prettiest?

Mostly Bs: You have an addictive personality. It's the only reason you keep reading this quiz, and it's why you're checking your keitai mail as we speak. Chill Mostly Bs, chill!

Mostly Cs: When life hands you a lemon tree, plant it, wait a few years, and then maybe you can enjoy a lemon. Think of how satisfied you'll be and how much patience you will have learned.

Some Like it *Hard!*

By Rupa Patel

Spring is here. Birds are chirping, cherry blossoms are blooming and willies/ cocks, (whatever euphemism you call the penis), are on public display too!

As if the Naked Man festival wasn't enough for you bare-skin lovers, the Tagata Jingu Hounen Sai (more commonly called the Penis Festival) took place on Saturday, March 15 at the Tagata Shrine in Nagoya. Going down with a bunch of Gero JETS, this wasn't going to be your regular road trip!

When we arrived on that beautiful warm day, small crowds were already growing to form part of this crazy and almost surreal tradition. Waiting in anticipation, I was hoping the build up wasn't going to be an anti-climax and would live up to the expectation.

We got there two hours before the penis carrying would take place, but there was a lot to keep us amused. The food stalls were hilarious — there were willy shaped lollies, penis shaped hot dogs (with incisions made on the head of the dog and a nice helping of mayonnaise for that extra touch). For dessert, there were



chocolate-covered bananas, which I couldn't resist!

This festival is not just for comedy, and its history runs deep. It is an ancient belief in Japan that for a plentiful harvest every year the mother, the earth, has to be impregnated by the father, heaven. Tagata Jingu itself dates back over 1,500 years and is symbolic of fertility, virility and good harvests.

The shrine itself is decorated by many representations of the phallus. I was amazed at the attention to detail and at how every aspect of its design incorporated the phallic theme — even the shrine's bell was in the shape of a penis!

As well as being famous for the biggest and hardest cock you'll ever see in this lifetime, the shrine is frequented by

young couples that come and pray for a child.

The Build-up

Every year a new phallus made out of hinoki wood (cypress tree), is carved by a local master craftsman. Both the tree and the craftsman are 'purified' during a number of sacred rituals over the winter in preparation for the spring occasion. On the actual day of the festival, the procession starts at 2 p.m. and the portable shrine — a giant, protruding, erect wooden cock was accompanied by



Shinto priests, musicians and local women carrying little wooden willies shouting out "wa-shi-I" as the shrine is carried to its final destination, Tagata Shrine.

As the procession commenced the crowds were going wild — all I could see were people frantically waving tiny miniature phalluses in the air. I was in a state of awe as soon as I saw the 300 kg gigantic wooden phallus. Wow, I thought. Is this for real? Is this really a festival dedicated to male genitalia? This was definitely an occasion where I could use the ALT catchphrase, "Only in Japan, ONLY in Japan!"

All that surrounded me during this crazy Saturday afternoon were boisterous crowds of over 100,000 people, (many of whom were sucking on willy shaped lollies and carrying massive flags with the emblematic penis on them), and large groups of men pushing the wooden penis as if they were getting their cannon ready for battle!

Of course it wouldn't have been a Japanese festival without sake.

A cart following the portable shrine freely dispensed cups and cups of it. Personally, I think it was a way to relax and numb any shyness the crowds may have felt so they would listen to the festival's participants and touch the phallus.

Admittedly, I did try and reach out for the woody for whatever prosperity and fortune it may or may not have possessed, but I'm afraid I was beaten by the other crowds and my fellow road-tripper Jim, (Gero JET), who couldn't get enough of it. I'm convinced he has attended in previous years.

The Climax

The day's exertion came to an end around 4 p.m. Exhausted from all the excitement and surprises, I was completely knackered. When



the Japanese people asked us what we thought, there was only one thing left to say: "We were so glad we came." Another mental festival to add to the list and a definite must for those staying on next year.



From the English Department:

The Best of Student Answers

I can't say I haven't (or that I don't continue to) take pleasure in my students' English creations. However, I've known for a while that I am lucky to be placed at an academically high-level school. My students, on average, are pretty good with English.

This is only to say that, as I submit this "best of" student responses to their choice from a list of questions, I am not laughing at them. Sometimes I'm not even laughing with them, because they're sharing actual thoughts, feelings, and taking what seem to be risks in self-expression.

Some are funny, but I'm proud.

1. If you had 100,000,000 yen, what would you do with it? Why?

...If I had 100,000,000yen....I would be very happy! First I am taken a photo with 100,000,000 yen. I place wad on my bed, then I lie down on them!! Because I will dislike to be doubt of the fact that I had had 100,000,000 yen!!! (smiley-winky face followed by a heart)

...It is very unique question. Well...I may lose my moral principles from greed, that is to say, I want to get more and more money. And I gamble heavily... Oh it is very dark life.

2. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be and why?

...If I can change one thing about myself, I want to grow. Because my height is only 160 centimeters. It is nearly as tall as the average of the Japanese women. I'm a man! I want to be a cool guy!! My friends sometimes say to me "If you are more tall, you will be a charmer."

3. If you could choose to be male or female, which would you choose, and why?

...(From a girl) I choose to be male. I want to join the baseball club, and play baseball as I am muddy all over. I am yearning to spend my youth while playing baseball with my companions. And I would like to receive chocolates in Saint Valentine's Day because my favorite sweet is chocolate. I want to position on the side where it is gotten once in the life.

...I am a girl and I want to be a girl if I am born again.



Being a girl is exciting. There are many things loved by girls such as cute stuffed animals, delicious sweets, nice dresses, etc. I love these things, too. I want to wear nice dresses and have sweets and sleep with stuffed animals in my next life. So I'll choose to be female without a moment's hesitation.

...(From a boy) I'll choose female. Because it is easy for girls to give up or refuse to do something that they don't want to do by saying I'm a girl or I'm helpless. I have never been a girl so I don't know if it is right or wrong, but I think that girls can live more easily than boys. When I must do some hard tasks, I often wish I could be a girl.

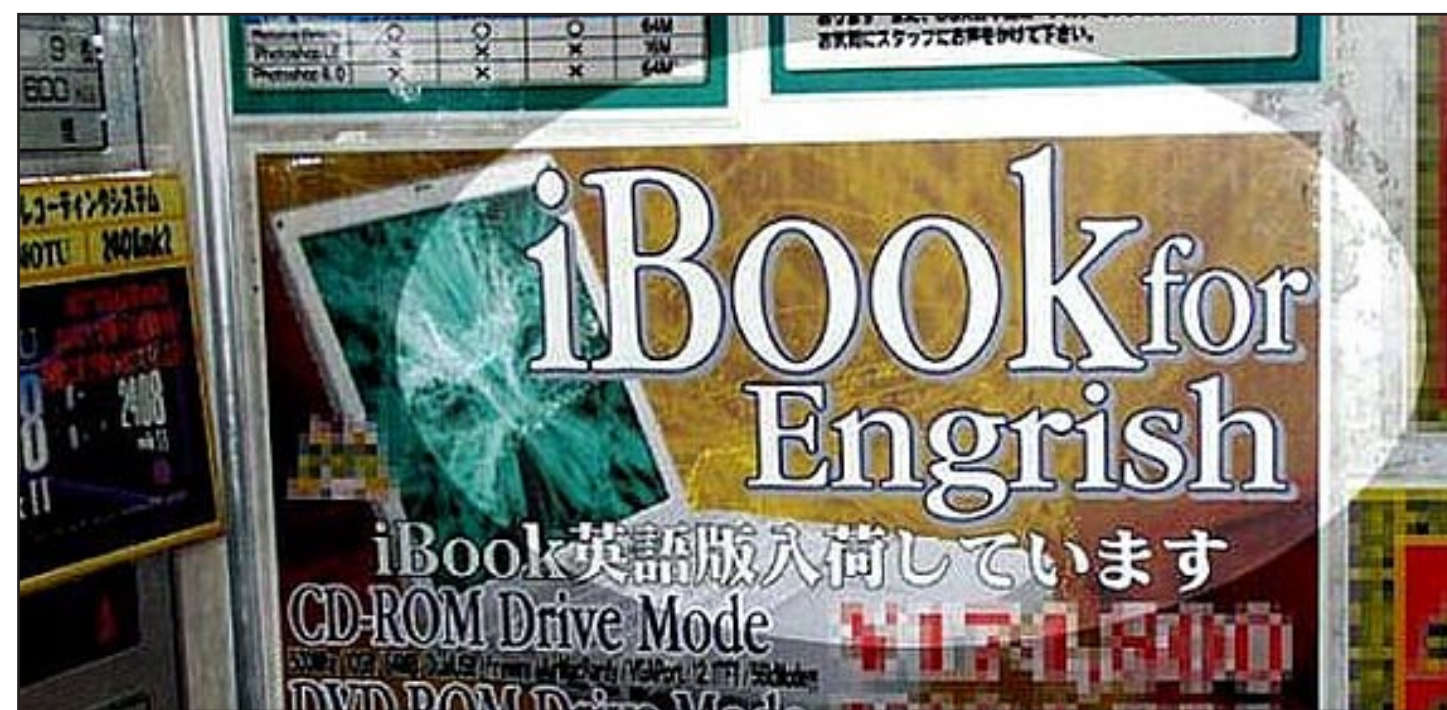
...(From a girl) If I could choose to be male or female, I would naturally choose? Chosen female. Because I am tiny. I am as if Pygmy!! So, if I was male, everyone would mock me for being tiny. But I am female. Everyone always admire my tiny height with the great message "cute" (two hearts follow) So If I were born again over and over again, I would like to be female



over and over again!!!

4. If you could have any job in the world, what would it be and why?

...I want to try to be a _____. If I say this, you think that I am strange or I am mentally ill. But my sanity is beyond doubt. I think that knowing feelings is the best way of improving jobs problem present day. Someone should perform this work. Something will change.



5. If you could have one super-hero power, what would it be? Why?

...If I could have one super-hero power... I want the power to fry very fast!

...If I could have super-hero power, I want to have extraordinary pheromone. Because it can be accompanied by a lot of males. There are many teachers of male at _____ High School. For example, my homeroom teacher is Mr. _____. He is very grim. So I'm very scary of him. But if I have pheromone, he would be sure to become a fond teacher for me.

6. If you could meet anyone in the world today, who would you meet and why?

...I hope to meet Tomohisa Yamashita. I like him a long time ago, but I have never met him. Because he looks good on TV, he must look better if he's original. I want to meet him absolutely and by the death. If I could meet him now, I would get excited too much and maybe die.

...I'd meet Bill Gates. I heard his IQ was over 150 and I'd like to make sure by some quizzes which needs using brain hard and I could solve. If he couldn't solve them, it can be said I am smarter than he and I can be richer than him!

...I want to meet all people in the world. Because, let

us there are six billions people in the world now, and I live to be a hundred. I must meet new two persons of the world a second to meet all people in the world. I will be



unable to meet all people in the world. So I want to meet all people in the world.

7. If you could design a vending machine that sold anything, what would it sell? What would it do?

...I would sell the garbage can, because of the problems for environment. I often see young people throw the garbage away. At the time, I wish there were the garbage can. Surely, in Japan, there are many one. But, I think, there are not enough.

8. If you were invisible for a day, what would you do?

...In common answer is look into the women's bathtub, but I never want to do! Probably... But it is the most wrong longing for puberty boys. So, it is not unnatural to hold such feelings. I'd like to try it!!

9. If you could change one law, what would you change and why?

...In my opinion, to make husbands to household chores is the best way to solve the problem of decreasing population. The problem is often seen developed countries. In these countries, many women want to work as free as men. This is why the birth rate has decreased. To solve it, the government should support companies so that they can allow both men and women to have more free time. If it become so, I want to have more babies.

...If I could change one law, I would change the law of the textbook approval system. Now textbook is inspection by examiners of school textbooks of Ministry of Education. Therefore the history that inconvenient for Japan is not run in the textbooks. It is so wrong. Text books should confess the truth. Even if it is very barbarous. They should abolish the textbook screening system.

KOBE LIGHTS

PHOTOS BY BRAD MORRISON

