

Hyogo Times

August 2008

Welcome New
JETS!



Contents

Messages

4.....	From the Editor
5.....	From the PR

Every Month

7.....	Recipe of the Month: Summer Stir-fry
16-17.....	Politics Booze with Paul
18-19.....	Better Know a Ken: Toyama
20-21.....	Travel Japan: Exploring the islands of the Seto Inland Sea
22-23.....	Getting to Know Some Random JETs

Features

6.....	A Hyogo Times Review: <i>The Dark Knight</i>
8.....	A Guide to Groan-Worthy Gags
10.....	Animal ARK - Pet Welfare in Japan
11.....	What is AJET
12-13.....	The Fifth Annual Taj Ultimate Tourney
14.....	Why I'm Staying a Third Year
15.....	Words Every JET Should Know
24.....	Beat the Heat! (the cheap way)
26.....	The JET Effect

On the cover...



Cover art by Chip Boles

Chip Boles created a special cover for our shortened summer issue welcoming the new 2008-09 batch of JETs from around the world. Ganbatte indeed newbies!

Hyogo Times Staff

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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:
submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

Visit us online at:
<http://hyogoajet.net>

From The Editor...

Konnichiwa mina-san! I'd like to say a big "welcome" to all the new JETs joining us and a give a cheery "hello" to the ones who stayed on board for another year.

Welcome to the second half of the sweltering summer, where just in case you think there is no end to this ridiculous heat, winter will roll around soon enough and you'll wish you didn't fall asleep under the kotatsu yet again!

Speaking of the heat, both our PR, Daniel, and Kate have some great tips on how to stay cool, and as always, it's very important to keep yourselves hydrated, so drink lots of water! That is evidenced by Paul's grand "research" on beer and happoshu. (Coincidentally, Kansai Scene also did a profile on various beers, but they looked into micro-breweries and local beers.) While we'd all like to reach for a cold one when we can, alcohol dehydrates the body, so please take that into consideration as we sweat off half our weight just by sitting in this heat!

In this month's shortened summer edition, we've got an informative article on what AJET is and does (perfect for the newbies, as well as the oldies who didn't know), an account of how the Taj Ultimate 2008 games went down from both a spectator and a competitor's point of view, and a heartfelt article about how to help abandoned pet animals. We also have our regulars Jeff Weese and Brenda McKinney (who wrote the AJET article) writing for us, as well as a new cook/chef for our Recipe of the Month series, Robert Hollands.

What I'm most excited about is seeing the new "JET Effect" series, and in this issue, none other than the *Hyogo Times'* very own, fantastic, and dare I say, extraordinary Design Editor Jeff Morrice is spotlighted. Congratulations Jeff!

In case you haven't noticed the gender change or



read the July issue of the Hyogo Times (for shame, why didn't you?! No excuses!), I have replaced the brilliant Kevin Shannon as editor of this publication. I am now a second-year JET (that just occurred to me!) and I'm still not sure I know very much about Japan, so I will be taking every opportunity I can to learn more, and so should you. (For example, the Daimonji Festival in Kyoto, on Aug. 16th this year, is one of those cultural events to learn from!)

So go out, have some fun, and take some photos for us! In the meantime, if you find yourself rather idle at school after having prepared your lessons for the next week or two, please send in something before you're busy again. Email us at submit.hyo-gotimes@gmail.com. Have a great summer!!

— Ann

And From The PR...

G'day Hyogo-ites, and welcome to August... how time flies! We're well into the Japanese summer now, which has brought with it lush green rice fields, ridiculous levels of humidity, o-bon, the magical music of the cicadas and, of course, the beginning of another new JET year.

Speaking of which, a very warm (literally!) welcome to the 85 or so new JETs that are joining us in Hyogo prefecture this year, and welcome back to all recontracting JETs who are staying on for another year of Hyogo madness.

I like to think of this as the special Summer Edition of the Hyogo Times, so I've decided to pack this message full of summer survival tips that I've picked up during my time here in Japan. As you may know, Japanese houses are typically not insulated and can sit at an astounding 35°C/95°F, 24 hours a day (like mine) ... so check out the tips below and stay cool this summer!

Health

Drink plenty of water! It's easy to get dehydrated so be sure to keep yourself topped up, especially when playing sports.

As our Aussie friends say, "Slip-slap-slop" when you're outside — slip on a t-shirt, slap on a hat and slop on plenty of sunscreen. The sun still damages your skin, even if you don't burn.

Try not to move between warm and cool areas too much. Frequent changes in temperature/humidity can make you feel sick, especially if they are big differences.

Housing

Keep your windows and curtains/blinds closed while it's hot outside. Open them all up at night to let the cool air in.

Invest in a fan. They're much cheaper to run than air conditioners and can be enough to keep you cool.

That said, if you don't have an air conditioner, consider buying one. They really help with sleeping at night and can be picked up quite cheaply (check your local recycle store).

Mould/Mold

The heat and humidity of the Japanese summer create a perfect breeding ground for mould and other nasties. Remember to keep everything clean, especially your bathroom, kitchen and tatami mats, and keep perishable food in the fridge or freezer.



Hang your towels outside in the sun after showering/bathing.

Consider buying some dehumidifying boxes (desiccant tubs/packets) to help keep the humidity down, especially in your wardrobe, linen closet and around computers and other electrical equipment. You can get these in supermarkets.

And finally, while we're talking about surviving the summer, why not come on down and join us at the two upcoming Hyogo AJET beer garden events? First up we have the annual Welcome Beer Garden, for JETs both new and old, to be held at the Coconuts Beer Garden on top of the Forus Building in Himeji on Saturday 23rd August from 6pm. And to help you ease back into the school year in style we're doubling the fun with the Back 2 Skool Beer Garden at the SOGO Beer Garden in Sannomiya on Saturday 30th August from 6:30pm. There'll be plenty of cool, good times, so come and get involved!

— Daniel

The Dark Knight

By Chip Boles

Warning: Not only does this movie review contain high levels of comic-geek snobbery, but it may also serve as a spoiler for potential viewers.

I really love comics, and have enjoyed many of the movies that spring from them. But it seems that in every film about someone with extraordinary abilities or commitment, there must arise some balancing force, usually an absurd villain that succeeds only in insulting the dignity that film might bring to the archetypal notions conveyed in “superheroes.”

The Dark Knight, thanks to director Christopher Nolan, spots these dangers and sees through them to a place that few creators have ever taken such implausible, fantasy-based notions. He did pretty damn good in *Batman Begins*, but we see that it was only the prelude to this irresistible, devastating film.

The Joker is the perfect foil for Batman at the perfect time. Less a villain than a complimentary force, we truly see that this compelling idea of an incorruptible vigilante (Batman) must create a kind of vacuum where abominations are birthed, someone who is an equivalently inspired and motivated symbol, but of the impulse opposite of Batman's obsession with justice.

Like the Joker says, he is an agent of chaos. He is the ultimate terrorist, but one without a faith. And in the post-9/11 political climate of Homeland-Security-color-coded terror-level warnings that are broadcast like weather reports on the daily news, this idea of a faithless terrorist takes away the last dependable trait of America's officially sanctioned national paranoia.

This surprise gourmet entree tastes a little familiar at times. In Led-

ger's Joker, we catch hints of the dissatisfied Tyler Durden, but taken to a logical, antisocial extreme that makes *Fight Club* look almost silly and escapist. We also see the homicidal poetry of *Se7en*'s biblically literate installation artist/killer, but (again) with his one logic of faith thrown out. (Funny, two Brad Pitt films...)

The Joker has a mania for carnage, but more terrifyingly, a genius' vision into the minds of people and what they want, and how to disassemble them — one of the most compelling “evil geniuses” every portrayed in a movie. During his speech to district attorney Harvey Dent in his hospital bed, he paints a plausible criticism of rationality, though we never know if he speaks from a pre-rational or post-rational perspective. He sees into minds and knows how to disassemble their resolve, their hold on order, all control. You can see him worming his way into them with delicious horror. He presents himself raw and horrible. With no rules, all expectations are dropped and people are forced to see what's before them. It is a terrifying force that cannot be fought by uncompromising values, since it has no values. When these two forces meet, what emerges from the wreckage?

The real spoiler!

Harvey/Two-Face is the perfect horror that results from someone being caught teetering between these two sides. Never has this pulp amal-



gam of clichés ascended into actual existence with such real spirit breathed into him. Never before has this silly wooden, poorly conceived Pinocchio become a real boy. But my, oh, my, this is him, ladies and gentlemen. He has a background, a life, real hopes — and these fuel our understanding of — and investment in — the monstrosity of his transformation.

Other nerdy details

— They even manage (for a while) to give Batman those solid white eyes that every comic artist loves to put on characters like Wolverine, etc., despite its practical implausibility.

— We see the Joker cackling and wailing madly away on Batman with a crowbar, referencing *A Death in the Family* (1991) where the comic's Joker takes a similar approach to Robin.

Final word

This Nolan is a genius and the movie is amazing. It might even be worth the absurd 2,000 yen Japanese ticket price.

Recipe of the Month:

Summer Stir-fry

Spicy Stir-fry with peppers, peas and zucchini

By Robert Hollands

Here's a dish whose beauty is in its simplicity. It's colorful, it's flavorful, it's crisp — the perfect recipe and remedy for these increasingly long, hot, muggy days (though it's just as good any time of year). At its core, it's nothing more than a basic stir-fry — some vegetables and a protein tossed in a wok, heated, and served over rice. But it's so much more than that.

Before you even turn on the gas, you already have an amazing array of seemingly contradictory flavors — salty, sweet, bitter pepper and coriander, warm cumin, soft and fragrant turmeric, sharp ginger — combining for a remarkable dry rub you'll probably want to use on everything from now on. The hot oil “cakes” the spices onto the meat and helps seal in the juices for more tender pieces. The softness of the meat along with the crispness of the vegetables creates a dynamic overall texture — always an integral part of any good stir-fry. Finally, the addition of lime juice is like a splash of sun, lifting and brightening the dish, while the honey serves to temper the saltiness of the spice rub.

Hopefully I was able to whet your collective appetites. Now all that's left is to buy the ingredients. I've never had that much trouble finding any of the ingredients listed, though occasionally I'm forced to do without the zucchini or mangetouts, depending on the day. The important part is the spice mixture, so as long as you have that, you can considerably alter the recipe while still preserving the overall flavor. You might want to consider buying spices in bulk when you have the opportunity. After all, once you make this recipe, and especially if you make it for others, you'll discover that it quickly finds its way into your regular rotation.



Spicy Chicken Stir-fry

Ingredients:

- 500g chicken, cubed
- 2-3 bell peppers, sliced thinly (red and yellow)
- 2 handfulls of mangetouts (green pea pods)
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 1 tbsp clear honey

Spice Mixture:

- 1 tbsp white sugar
- 1 tbsp coriander powder
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp ginger powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground black pepper

To prepare:

- Combine spice mixture in a medium bowl. Add the chicken cubes and toss, making sure each piece of chicken has an even coat of spice.
- Heat the vegetable oil in a deep pan or wok. Transfer the chicken to the oil and fry for 5-7 minutes, or until cooked through, turning the pieces occasionally.
- Remove the chicken from the oil and drain off the excess oil (I use a colander lined with a paper towel). Set aside.
- Using high heat, stir-fry the sliced peppers, mangetouts and zucchini until they begin to soften. Add the chicken again and stir-fry for a few more minutes.
- Remove the wok from the heat and stir in the lime juice and honey. Serve over steamed rice.

You can alter this recipe in many ways without affecting the overall flavor. I often omit the zucchini or mangetouts as I sometimes have trouble finding them at the supermarket. Also, the lime juice and honey aren't essential, but I highly recommend them. I was making this recipe for months without them before finding both, at which point I decided to try it as originally intended. I think you'll find that they help “lift” the overall flavor; without them you might find the dish a little unbalanced and biased towards the salty side of things.

A Guide to Groan-Worthy Gags

By Laura Starnes

I have to say, I pride myself on having a distinctive sense of humour. I can't say it's a "British thing" although I do meet a lot of funny fellow Brits. It's probably more of a "my family" thing. My sense of humour is quite awful, in an over-obvious and incredibly corny way.

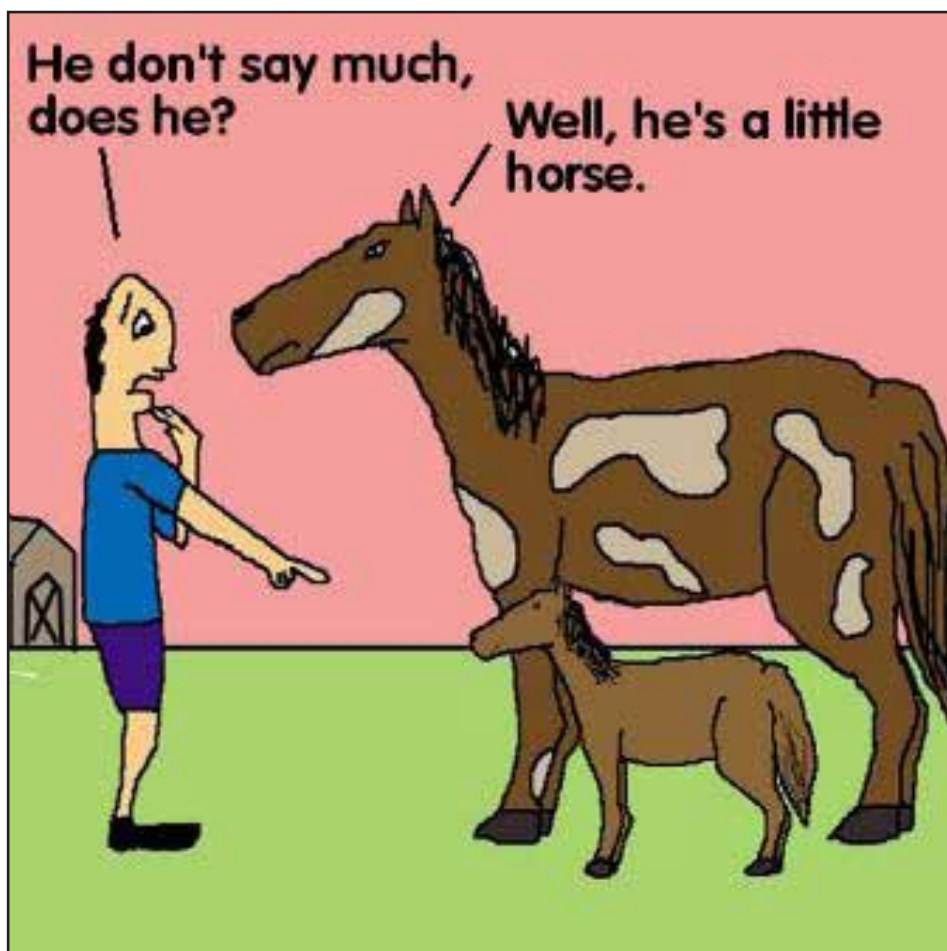
To put it simply, I get a lot of satisfaction from making people groan at my terrible puns. I was raised in a family of jokers who thought of pun-making as a kind of art and we would regularly perform our newest and best jokes and puns.

Then I came to Japan and I found a whole new audience — old men. "Pun" in Japanese can be expressed as "oyaji gag" (literally old man's gag) or more broadly as "da-jare."

In my first year in Japan I was lucky enough to teach with a middle-aged man who simply oozed these silly word rhymes. Those gags would practically fall out of his mouth when he was teaching, walking to class or sitting in the staffroom. Back then though, the old J-go wasn't so hot so I didn't really appreciate his witticisms, but I was able to teach him a few of my classics.

My all-time favourite is probably, "What do you call a three-legged donkey?" "A wonkey." If you're British you've most likely heard it before and if you're not, you probably won't get it. But there are other ones I do with gestures and can't write here (how unfortunate for you!) but I assure you, they're really funny.

Here I'm going to give you a head start with a few of the classic oyaji gags. Entertain your students (junior high seems the best age) and your eikaiwa oldies alike! You may



make some new friends in the process!

Classics that most Japanese people know

Futon ga futtonda — The futon blew away.

Neko ga nekoronda — The cat lay down.

Ones I've heard from my kids

Kouchou-sensei wa zekouchou — Kocho's in a great mood!

Arumikan no ue ni aru mikan — There's a mikan on the aluminium can.

Olanda ni itta toki, daremo oranda! — When I went to Holland, no one was there!

Recent ones

Michael Jordan no joudan wa, maa, ikeru joudan — Michael Jor-

dan's jokes, yeah, they're pretty good jokes.

Neko ga odorita... kyaatto — The cat was surprised... "cat" (also "Eeek!" in Japanese)

Aa! Saboten no mizuyari, saboten! — Ahh! I haven't watered the cacti!

Youkan ha yo-kande tabete ne! — Chew the youkan well when you eat it!

And in case you're wondering how to groan and say, "What an awful joke" in Japanese, it's "Samui" or "Sabui". The joke's turned you cold, I suppose!

Editor's note: I'm being awful by adding this. My students are forever asking how old I am. Students: "Nan sai, nan sai?!" Me: "Urusai!!!"

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Animal ARK - Pet Welfare in Japan

By Laura Starnes

Most of the information in this article has been taken from Animal Ark's website: www.arkbark.net.

How much do you really know about the treatment of animals in Japan?

Did you know that in Japan the welfare of pet animals like cats and dogs come under the Department of Health & Hygiene? There is no separate government department dealing with the welfare of animals. The purpose of this department is to deal with public health matters, which includes the collection and disposal of stray animals. These animals are collected and disposed of in almost the same way as public garbage.

Did you know that veterinary medicine here lags behind Europe and the United States? The attitude towards veterinary medicine is very different here. Many veterinarians become vets because they fail to become doctors; some are actually frightened of animals!

The average pet shop in Japan has a turnover rate of 10-20 per cent. That means 80-90 per cent of kittens and puppies never find a new home. These animals are "disposed of," which means killed on the premises, taken to the gas chambers

of the public authorities (hokensho), or sold to experiment labs. Over 400,000 dogs and 300,000 cats are gassed every year. Over 73,000 pet dogs and 13,500 pet cats are used in laboratory experiments.

In 1973, the Animal Protection and Control Law was hastily put together to coincide with Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Japan. They wanted to show the world they cared about the welfare of animals in Japan. However, this law had no definition of cruelty. The handful of truly terrible cases that have been prosecuted in over 30 years have been let off with a paltry 30,000 yen fine (USD \$250) — less than one would get for stealing a bicycle!

It has even been said that teachers are some of the worst offenders. People leave stray animals at schools in the hope that teachers will take care of them. Except, instead of teaching the children how to deal with this problem or to care for the animals, most teachers immediately call the hokensho. This, of course, teaches the children that animals are disposable objects that can be treated like rubbish.

Two years ago, on the first day of school after the summer, some students came running in from *souji* with a tiny, cold, filthy kitten, still attached to its umbilical cord. It had been found in the outdoor school rubbish bins. I was shocked, but instantly took it into my care. With the blessing of my *kyoto-sensei*, I was allowed to bring it to school every day for the next two months while I fed and played with it between lessons. In

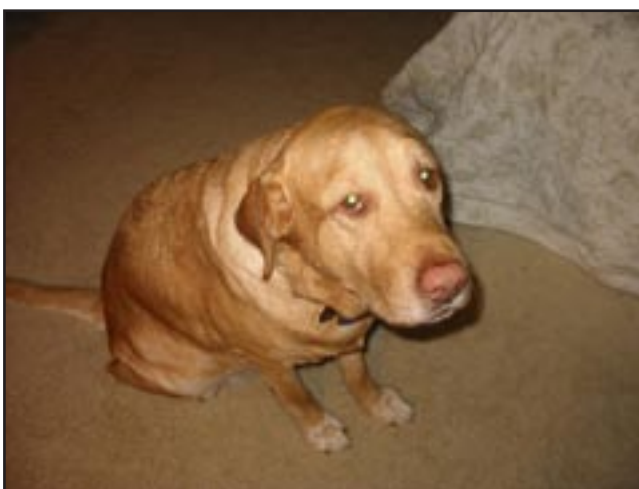
the end, my students made posters to put up around town and we were able to give Yuuki-chan a good home.

The teachers and the students around me kept saying, "Laura, *yasashii naa*" but I don't think it was a particularly unusual thing for someone to do. I love animals and I was brought up to respect them and would never knowingly do something that would bring about harm to any creature. I hope I was able to open my students' eyes to a different attitude towards animals.

There are organizations in Japan that help animals. A couple of weeks ago, I went to donate some things to Animal Refuge Kansai, a non-profit organization founded by a British woman in 1990 in Noda in Osaka-fu. ARK's aim was to form a network of people in Japan who love animals. They also run a re-homing service for unwanted and dumped pets. On the day I went there, they had over 180 dogs and 150 cats waiting for new homes. I was shocked at how lovely the animals at the ARK were! They weren't the untamable, aggressive dogs and territorial cats like you may expect, but were adorable kittens and puppies! How someone could dump a Persian kitten, I'll never know!

If you also feel shocked by the information I've given here and would like to know more, please check out www.arkbark.net (in Japanese and English). Donations can be made directly to ARK or you can donate your unwanted clothing and accessories to "Orange Thrifty" in Rokkomichi, Kobe. A proportion of the money from the sale will go to ARK.

You can visit Orange Thrifty online at: http://kobe-haberdashery.com/othriftyrokkko/ot-e/ark_hurugi-e.html



First-Year Survival Guide:

What is National AJET?

By Brenda McKinney

When my second year as an ALT rolled around, a close friend and I decided to join the Hyogo AJET council as the Charity girls. About halfway through the year, I found out about National AJET, ran for Block 6, and here we are today. The one thing that I often find funny is that most people don't really know what National AJET does.

So here is the answer to that question. AJET does some pretty awesome things, but you wouldn't even realize it's going on because it's all done behind the scenes.

Over the next year, I am going to use the kind offer of the *Hyogo Times* staff to give you more info about AJET and about what is going on in Block 6, but for now, I thought I would tell you a little more about some of the services and events that AJET offers. So here we go:

The Basics

To start with, National AJET is a registered non-profit organization. The National Council consists of 21 elected volunteers from all over Japan (block reps, a chairperson, vice chair, treasurer, two webmasters, translators), all employed by the JET Programme and generally in our second to fourth year in the programme.

The group includes CIRs, SEAs and ALTs and each block representative is also responsible for a liaison position - for example, I do advertising on the corporate team, part of how AJET funds events, publications, etc.

A Closer Look...

Things AJET is involved with or is able to offer:

Tokyo Orientation: Together with CLAIR, the National AJET Council plans the conference at the Keio Plaza Hotel, from the Info Fair and Workshops to several of those smil-

ing red-shirt-clad volunteers that meet you at the airport and help you get around.

Returns' Conference: Again, teaming with CLAIR and our "GAM" Corporate Partners, National AJET is heavily involved in prepping you for your post-JET activities.

Opinion Exchanges: Twice a year, the AJET National Council meets with CLAIR, MOFA & MEXT at the CLAIR office in Tokyo for a two-day opinion exchange and to present reports based on the results of surveys about the state of the JET Programme.

With topics ranging from conferences to team teaching and community involvement, CLAIR is very interested in hearing what JETs' lives are actually like. Filling out the surveys and talking with your AJET rep is one of the most effective ways to have your voice heard by CLAIR. *PLEASE FILL OUT THESE SURVEYS*

National E-Bulletin: Once a month, almost 3,000 of us receive this national electronic bulletin with information on events, discounts and opportunities all over Japan. Email me if you ever have something you think we should advertise!

Peer Support Group (PSG): The only overnight, English-speaking counseling line in Japan, AJET PSG is a listening and referral service available to JETs. While you may never take advantage of this service, it has literally been a lifesaver to some and it is good to know it's there if you ever do need it.

Local AJET Support & Sponsorship: Block Reps works closely with local AJET representatives (like Hyogo AJET) to stay up-to-date on upcoming events, bridge the connection with other prefectures and provide financial support for large events

run at the prefecture-level.

Publications: From Planet Eigo (replaced Team Taught Pizza) and Foxy Phonics to the Hokkaido AJET Kanji Guide, National AJET is dedicated to helping JETs grow professionally in the classroom and socially in the Japanese community

Special Support Groups (SIGs): A great way to find people with similar interests!

Photo and Haiku Contests: Check out the winners on our National AJET Facebook page!

Internationalization and Teaching Awards: Recognizes your hard work.

Tatami Timeshare: Managed by the magical webmasters, a great way to travel Japan for less.

AJET.NET: Currently being updated, check out the website in a few weeks for a sleek new look, more Japanese content and translations, as well as a wiki-based travel guide, "Discover Japan"

And then there are the events, charitable activities, libraries, discounts and publications done at a local-level by Prefectural AJET Chapters (if you're reading this, the *Hyogo Times* is a great example of what AJET has to offer). We are working hard to make your experience in Japan the best it can be.

So that's my not-so-short introduction to what AJET is and does. If you have any questions, want to get involved, want more information, or just want to talk, please don't hesitate to contact me at block6@ajet.net!

I'm looking forward to another great year and am excited to get more inter-prefectural events going within the block (Shiga/Kyoto/Hyogo – including Kobe city). Thanks for reading and see you around this summer!



5th Annual Taj Ultimate



By Chance Newman

The appropriately named two-day event takes place at the Tajima Dome in Hidaka every year, unless forced to relocate by extreme summer rains (which was the case last year). The chance of rain this year was the slightest it had been since 2005, to the relief of the organizers of the July 12-13 event. They had worked well into the night on Friday to prepare the four playing fields and tents for the 304 players that made up 19 teams.

At precisely 10 a.m., an announcement was made on the public address system. "The 2008 Taj Ultimate Tournament will begin in 3...2...1...GO!" The first round of half-hour games had begun. Teams vied for positions in one of four leagues, each hoping to make it into the top bracket for the second day of play. There, the winner of the Taj Cup would be decided.

The Nanman DIVEZ players' pale yellow t-shirts, a sharp contrast to some of the professionally printed jerseys of their competitors, recalled the original tournament to mind. In 2004, only a few teams came to the event, and most donned similar ad hoc uniforms to help identify each other on the field.

Another quality that the DIVEZ and the original teams share is an intense love, not only of the sport, but of having fun. Walking from tent to field and back,

players would break into spontaneous dances with each other, players of other teams, volunteers and tournament organizers. Indeed, players from all the teams made special trips to the main tent to share their own music, make requests, and comment on the songs being played.

With such interest, it is not surprising to note that this year's event was the first to feature live musical entertainment. "Mr Smith," a neo-acoustic fusion duo from Kobe, and "The Hip Replacements," a local band familiar to many of the spectators, were invited to play at the Taj Ultimate BBQ on Saturday night. The audience was treated to renditions of songs from Utada Hikaru and The Police, and the bands were given a taste of Taj Ultimate hospitality.

The BBQ itself is a staple of the Tournament, allowing players from all the teams to mingle and unwind after the long first day. An All-You-Can-Eat affair, the BBQ is held each year at Lodge Utopia, where many of the participants stay the night. Other participants prepared for the second day by camping at the nearby Kannabe Kogen Campground, but almost all of the 304 players made a visit to the BBQ first for food and fun. While this year's live music was a new addition, the dance party that ensued afterward, guided by DJs Squareface and D-Cup, is now just as much a part of the tournament

as the diving catches and stacks that define Ultimate as a sport.

Nanman DIVEZ is no strangers to those skills. Having arrived early on Saturday, the team quickly established themselves as powerful. Top ranking there secured them a chance to add their own ribbon to the cup in the elimination rounds on Sunday. The DIVEZ went undefeated through to the final round of competition where they faced off against last year's second-place finishers, APPARE.

In yet another tournament first, the 40-minute final had to be decided by sudden death overtime. APPARE had pushed the DIVEZ to a 10-10 tie just as the clock ran out. With a single score standing between each team and the Cup, every play counted.

Both teams attempted initial "hail Mary" throws down the field before the DIVEZ settled back into the pass-reset strategy that served them well through the tournament. As one final toss slid into the end zone, players on the sidelines had already begun to rush the field.

A few teams departed soon thereafter, hoping to get a good night sleep at home before the workweek began again, but those who stayed saw this year's prizes awarded to the top three teams from the tournament. While the local curry, sembei, soba and beer were welcome rewards, the Taj Cup was certainly the sweetest prize of all.

A View from the Sidelines

By Kevin Shannon

While the rest of the Taj Gyu team were slaving away on the Friday making all the preparations for the tournament, I was getting drunk at my sayonara enka. Consequently, for me, the tournament started on the Saturday morning at about 9:15 when I found my way to the Tajima Dome.

After we had all sorted out who owned which jerseys, it was time for a little warm-up. For me, this consisted of watching my teammates zip the disk between each other while seeing mine hit the ground 15 yards in front of me and rolling pathetically across the field. I decided I would concentrate on catching and blocking during the game and leave the throwing to somebody else.

After a motivational team talk from captain Lydia Eberly, we all lined up for the first game, which was the grudge match. Tajima Gyu vs. The Wad. If we were going to win any game it had to

be this game! At first, it looked like the athletic abilities of Mark Pasadilla and Kenji Kaneko of The Wad were going to triumph as they took an early lead. However, the months of training hadn't gone to waste and the Gyu soon clawed their way back into the game. It was very close for a long time but eventually when the magnified voice of Chance Newman called time, we were able to celebrate our first victory. We marked the end of the game with a traditional chant and dance, which Gareth Cottam assured us had an ancient heritage (the ancients must have been rather more vulgar than we thought to have come up with that chant!).

We had little time to nurse our injuries because we were playing in the very next game. At this stage, my legs and elbows were already stained by blood as a result of a diving catch. After another motivational team talk, we were off. We dominated the second game with some superb performanc-

es from every member of the team.

The third match was against Appare and as the Frisbee whizzed past us into our end-zone time and time again, they showed us why they were finalists in 2007. Despite recruiting a few ringers from other teams, we simply couldn't match them.

Stinging with humiliation, we needed a big performance in the last game. Though there were some dropped catches and poor throws, there were some moments of magic too. Most notable in the last play of the game was when Mark Andal out-jumped a guy 1 ½ feet taller than him to land possibly the best point of the day.

The games finished late in the day and it had been a great day. However, we were all dirty, smelly and tired. This wasn't how you want to end such a day, so the fantastic organisers (mostly Gyu players) had an awesome BBQ and party planned for us all. It was the perfect way to chill out, relax and prepare to do it all again the next day!

Taj Ultimate By-The-Numbers



Number of players: **304**

Number of teams: **19**

Biggest team: **23 players (Cheez Whiz)**

Smallest team: **7 players (The Wad)**

Players sent to the hospital: **2**

Number of games played: **66**

At the BBQ...

Kilograms of meat: **160**

Kilograms of rice: **20**

Live acts: **4 (2 bands and 2 DJs)**

Landshark sightings: **4**

Final Tournament Rankings

1 - Nanman DIVEZ

2 - 天晴 (APPARE)

3 - CHICKEN HEART

4 - Iku!

5 - Himeji

6 - Cheez Whiz

7 - PFB と K ば隊

8 - さりあんめいせふ (Sallian Joseph)

9 - The Wad

10 - はりまや橋 (Harimaya Bashis)

11 - 但馬牛 (Tajima Gyu)

12 - Fukui Inaka Raptors

13 - Disc-O

14 - Wakayama Wailers

15 - Yashiro Monsters

16 - Yamicus ワル友

17 - Nara Yoshino Goons

18 - HiroShima.ne!!

19 - Nara Shika Fun

Staying a Third Year:

Why I'm Not Getting Out of Here

By Kate Emory

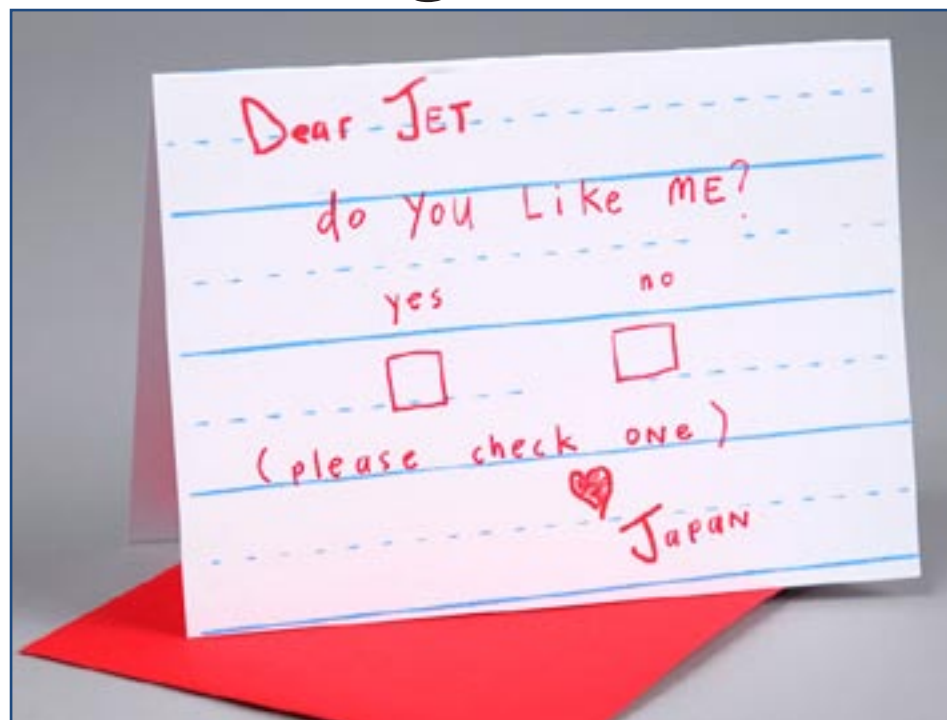
When I came to Japan, the question most people asked me wasn't where I was going or what I was going to do, but "When are you coming back?"

It was depressing to think about people wanting me to stay before I even left! I took it in stride, too caught up in the excitement of moving half-way around the world to a new country and culture. My answer to that question was an unchanged, "A year for sure. Don't know if I'll stay longer or not."

By December of that first year, I decided I hadn't seen nor done enough in Japan. I decided to stay for two years when those innocuous sheets of paper asking for a decision to re-contract or not showed up on all our desks. I didn't once question that choice.

Another year went by, more quickly than expected and suddenly those damned papers were back on my desk. The decision to stay for a third year or seek my fortune elsewhere was one of the most difficult decisions of my stay in Japan. I spent weeks making up pro and con lists and asking everyone their opinion on the matter.

My family wasn't too helpful ("It's your life, do what you want.") and neither were my friends ("Well, it has been awhile since we saw you, but if you stay we can come visit! Sure we haven't for the past two years, but we might!"). The decision fell directly on my shoulders. I checked the box for staying and turned in my sheet. I almost immediately wanted it back to check the other box instead. As the weeks went by, I constantly asked myself, "What the hell are you doing with your life?" and examined my true



It's hard to say no when Japan asks you to re-contract in such a kawaii way!

reasons for staying. Was it the money? Was it the hope to finally master part of the Japanese language? Was it the people who I met here? Was it my students?

As the winter gradually changed to spring and the cherry blossoms came out in full force, I had an epiphany: I'm still not done with Japan.

I love my school, my apartment, my students, my classes, my crappy Japanese sentences, and my inability to fulfill any of the traveling plans I make. As of January, I still had not visited Tokyo, Mt. Fuji, Hokkaido, or Okinawa. Not even Kobe Harbourland! These were things I had to do before I could contemplate leaving! I still want to study Japanese enough to pass level 3 of the JLPT! I want to be there for my third years' graduation!

But tempering the sudden urge to go out immediately and do everything I have put off for two years was the knowledge that as a third year, I am now an outcast (oh no!). Of the people I came to Hyogo with two years

ago, only a handful are hanging on for the Big 3. Of those brave souls, none live on my island. Of the first-years I have befriended this past year, many are leaving as well. My friends are abandoning me for other (possibly greener) pastures. I will have to begin anew, this time with the stigma of having been here for two full years already. The newbies will look at me and assume that I have walked the walk and talked the talk, but there are still places in my own town that I have yet to visit. I will be whispered about like a legend and go to JET events where people will think that I am a first-year because they haven't seen me in months, possibly years.

All of these things make up the reason I am staying in Japan. My overall JET experience has been so great that even though I can't imagine another February here, I also have trouble imagining myself anywhere else. I hope many of you share these reasons as well, and remember, if you are going on a trip, call me. No seriously! I still haven't been anywhere!

First-Year Survival Guide:

Words Every JET Should Know

By Joy Feddes
& Suzie Winterton

1. Genki

Meaning: This word is the be all and end all. It means good/fine/healthy. Most of my conversations begin with, "O-genki desuka?" "Hai, genki desu," which is the "How are you today?/Fine, thank you" equivalent. The best is when you ask a student "How are you today?" and they answer "Yes". It makes sense, almost.

Phrases: "O-genki desu ka?" "Genki desu."

2. Muzukashii

Meaning: Difficult. Studying Japanese? Muzukashii. See a student struggling with English? Muzukashii. It's a way of praising Japanese for being such a complicated language and also apologizing that English makes no sense.

Phrases: "Muzukashii desu ne?" (It's difficult isn't it?) *common slang has reduced this word to "muzui" or you may hear simply "muzu." Use this to either awe your kids with your 133t Japanese skillz or have your English teacher correct you on your Japanese.

3. Atsui!/Samui!

Meaning: Hot!/Cold! Heard constantly from June till mid-October (and conversely mid-October till May) Even if it's a perfect day out - atsui! Good for conversation starters and help build the group feeling.

Phrases: Atsui/samui desu ne?

4. Daijoubu desu (ka)

Meaning: "It's/I'm ok" (It's/I'm ok?) Has someone fallen and is struggling to get up? Is your tea lady struggling under carrying something 3 times her size? This is your word. This phrase can be used to cover just about anything except asking permis-



sion. In English we'd say, "Is it okay?" but in Japanese, you say, "Ii desu ka?" However, if you screw up, they know what you mean - daijoubu.

Phrases: Daijoubu janai! (It's/I'm not okay!).

5. Wakarimasu/wakarimasen

Meaning: I understand/I don't understand. From your kyoto-sensei telling you about nenkyu to the 5-year old on the playground, this one is a good one. You may also hear "wakarahun"—casual Japanese in local Kansai-ben. It means exactly the same thing. Use it to impress the 5-year old, but not to your kyoto-sensei. Unless they ask if you know any Kansai-ben, in which case, let rip. You might also hear "wakaran," which isn't a dialect so much as it is people being lazy.

Phrases: Wakarahun! Also, "mataku wakarimasen." (I don't understand in the SLIGHTEST.)

6. Sumimasen

Meaning: I'm sorry/excuse me/ok. Used before "wakarimasen" for extra politeness.

Phrases: Feel free to use this any time you feel the least bit like someone has been put out (your fault or not, in any kind of way), has done something really nice for you, or when you owe them an apology. (Follow it up with, "gomenasai.") Chances are it will fit the context perfectly.

7. Onegaishimasu

Meaning: Please. If you're like

me and not committed to learning the various polite forms, using a nice, polite "onegaishimasu" makes your requests that much better.

Phrases: Using this phrase implies you are entrusting someone with something. You can't use this when you're making a request like, "Please open your books to page 31." "Onegaishimasu" can also come across as "I'm begging you," though it would depend on how big your puppy dog eyes are and how low you bow.

8. Ima/Kyou

Meaning: Now/Today. "Joy-sensei, can you please teach the class?" "Ima?!" "Hai! Ima." Knowing when a vague request needs to be fulfilled is half the battle. Knowing it's right now helps too.

Phrases: "Ima" can also mean living room.

9. Tomodachi

Meaning: Friend. Who is that person of different gender I see? Must be your boyfriend. Waiiit, the foreigner is saying something. Ohh, friend. Dang.

Phrases: According to the J-drama's I've been rotting my brain with, this is often shortened to "dachi" in everyday speech. In the extremely likely event of you being suspected to have a significant other, if you say "lie, tomodachi" the response will probably be "Eeh?!, USOOOOO!!" which is, "No way! You're totally lying!!"

Politics Booze with Paul

TAKING A BREAK FROM POLITICS TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT!

By Paul O'Shea

To avoid alcohol taxes, brewers here started reducing the level of malts in their beers — malted barley being the taxed ingredient.

Unfortunately, malt is also the ingredient responsible for flavour. The result is something called Happoshu. These beverages have roughly the same alcohol content, but are half the price and taste quite different (See below).

This month I decided to take one for the team. Over the course of two hazy summer evenings, I tried out a wide variety of Japanese beers and happoshu. The first evening, I drank the standard real beer, while over the second evening I tried happoshu. During each session, I chronicled my innermost feelings. Please, relax and join me on the emotional roller-coaster that is getting drunk on your own on two consecutive weekday nights {*Editor's note: Paul does this far too often. Someone find this guy a drinking buddy...*}.

Day 1: The Real Stuff

Asahi Super Dry: Spicy, strong, slightly bitter, dry. When you really just want beer, this is what you are looking for. The only negative I can see is that it might be bit heavy, particularly after din-

ner or after the seventh can, which is why God gave us chu-hai!

Kirin: This is what I usually drink. Strong, not so spicy, not so dry, slightly heavier, not so fizzy either, but not as flavourful as the Asahi. Funny, the Asahi was nicer! I'll have to change my regular beer...

Kirin Classic: Strong, a little heavy but not too much. Maybe that's because it was beer number three and I still hadn't had dinner yet, but it was definitely very easy to drink. Strong, yes, but also fruity, in a good way. Flavourful. Really reminds me of a good German beer. Delicious, and yet only 4.5%! My favourite so far.

Kirin's Original Brew: Overwhelming impression is that it is clean, strong, refreshing. Kirin Classic was flavour country — a hot, bountiful country. Original Brew is more Scandinavian fjord-country maybe, where it's cool, fresh, wet, but still sunny and pleasant. I think I've begun to lose it. Only one beer left though.

Kirin's Sparkling Hop: Anyway, last beer, if you can call it that. It's a happoshu, which means it was half the price of the other beers. Well, first impression is very fizzy. Very light. It says it's 5%, but it tastes like fizzy beer-flavoured



water. There is no real flavour, or after-taste. It's clean, but in a sort of lame way. It tastes like Budweiser! Make of that what you will. At least it's cheap!

I've to go to work tomorrow... time to hit the water!

Day 1 Verdict

Kirin Classic is the definite winner. It's also the only beer to weigh in at under 5% alcohol. I'm going to drink it and the Asahi from now on. As for the Sparkling Hop, well I'm beginning to dread tomorrow — a whole night drinking beer-flavoured fizzy water...

Day 2: Happoshu

Kirin Stout: I know, I know, stout is not happoshu. But if I have to drink a load of beer-flavoured muck — I mean water — then I might as well treat myself first. First reaction: It's bitter!! Stale almost but it has been a

while since I last had stout.

It may be over 30 degrees centigrade, but nothing beats a pint of stout. Or even a can of stout. And I like that they don't use the widget, so it's not draught stout (like say standard canned Guinness is at home). Rather it's old-fashioned canned stout, with a bit of fizz. It's a very different than the stout you get in pubs, and I like it.

Thumbs up!

Kirin Tanrei. White Can, Silver label: Very Sharp taste, lack of fizz. Looks and tastes like a beer that you left out for a while but still drink because, well, it's a beer. And at least this one is cold. Having said that, it's not all bad. There's a bit of an acidic, slightly citrus edge to the bitterness. A bit like a white beer or pale ale. If only it had more flavour, and a bit more kick.

Kirin Enjuku: Not bad. Doesn't have the saving grace of an extra kick like the Tanrei does. Tastes a bit like a (very) cheap beer at home. More fizz than the Tanrei, which is good. Otherwise, like the last one, as long as it's cold, it'll do the job, but no more. This is a beer for the beach on a hot day, or if you are planning to drink a lot, you can start off with the good stuff and descend to this. Not a beer for a pleasant evening in.

Asahi Red Label Draft: At this stage, it's getting a bit much. This beer is not disgusting, but it is not great. It is a bit sweeter than the others, but aside from that, it's duller than an evening watching Noh. This was all fun and games to begin with, but I want to drink real beer now. And there are two more to go. At least the alcohol will numb the pain, though at this stage, I think I need a big glass of water — not because I'm getting drunk (I like getting drunk) but because my mouth is drier than a barren dog from drinking this stuff.

Asahi Blue Label Aqua: I've been trying my hand at Japanese over the last year, but most kanji still elude me. I get the impression that this beer is low

in something, but that definitely isn't alcohol, because it's still 5 per cent. I don't understand how fake beer-flavoured drinks can still be so strong!! Flavour: Very Modern Japanese — the stench of sulphuric hot springs combined with a stifflingly hot August afternoon down by the local recycling plant, etc.

Kirin Green Label Tanrei: Like the previous Asahi Blue, the Kirin Green Label is the low-something (calorie, flavour?) cousin of the second beer of the evening — the Kirin Tanrei. At this stage, really only two things hit me. One, it is cold. Two, it makes me contort my face as if somebody forced me to eat a slice of lemon. It is not terrible but it's definitely better than the last one. It's just not very nice.

Day 2 Verdict:

This evening's beers are not the worst beers in the world nor are they the best beers. In fact, they're not even beers. But to be honest, I can't see myself drinking any of them any time soon. I'm lucky enough to have a JET salary so I'm going back to Asahi Super Dry and Kirin Classic. Having said that, there are some situations in which

you may find yourself reaching for the Happoshu — say when your pockets are almost empty or when you've already had a few and taste isn't very important. In that case. I would say go for the Sparkling Hop or the Kirin Tanrei but stay well clear of the canned Devil's piss that is the Asahi Blue Label Aqua.



Better Know a Ken: Toyama

By Hugh Turpin

Part 8 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.

Describing Toyama, the Hokuriku prefecture in which I live, is a challenge, but why is that? It is not without attractions. We have Japan's largest dam, and the beautiful traditional thatched village, Gokayama. There are many picturesque towns, such as Inami and Johanna, which have much to recommend them.

Festivals are plentiful, such as the Yotaka festivals held in so many of the towns, where huge colourful floats with screaming youths hanging off them are rammed violently against one another. There is also the tulip festival in Tonami.

The houses here are larger than in other areas, a physical confirmation of the claim made in our orientation seminar that Toyamans have the most comfortable standard of living in Japan. There are good places to ski and hike. Takaoka boasts the country's third largest bronze Buddha statue. Toyama's *gohan* is boastfully said to be especially *oishii*. Most



Toyama Castle

importantly, as locals proudly and frequently assert, the prefecture's tap water is the most delicious in the entire country.

Why then is it so hard to describe? Because, despite these occasional quirks, what Toyama feels like more than anything else is the distilled essence of provincial Japan, untainted by such distractions as distinctive features. As such, humble Toyama is a place that is easy to ignore.

Few people who travel to the USA would make Indiana their first port of call. Scunthorpe is not known

as a tourist magnet to travelers visiting the UK. No tourist in their right mind makes a beeline for Maynooth after touching down in Dublin airport.

Toyama suffers from the same problem — the inability of people to appreciate the quiet purity of the mundane and their constant, childish preference for the gaudy novelties of so-called exciting places. In order for places like Toyama-ken to seem more attractive, human nature itself must enter a more adult, perhaps even a more geriatric phase.

However, putting my reservations about our species' maturity to one side, let me present you with my two personal favourite spots in Toyama-ken.

First is Himi Beach. The beach offers views of snow-capped peaks over stern gray water. It is

a melancholy kind of place, unremarkable but for a certain feeling of having seen better days. The air smells richly of brine and you never know what you might find washed up down by the shore.

The high point of my year came when I went for a pensive stroll across that glum stretch of filthy sand, and in the process literally tripped over a massive, purple-headed and heavily veined dildo which had sadly been beached. Despite being incapacitated, the dildo seemed to be taking the matter philosophically, exploiting its predicament to bask its realistically molded testicles shamelessly in the sun while it waited for high tide to sweep it back to Korea, from where it probably originated.

Next is Johanna, a sleepy village at the end of a local train line which runs once every hour from Takaoka station. Though seemingly largely uninhabited, it has a real quaintness and feels a bit like Twin Peaks, from the TV series of the same name. It has a beautiful temple, a weaving museum and a curiously curved street with traditional houses. However, as with other parts of the prefecture, there are few people around. Perhaps,



You never know what will wash up next on Himi Beach!

if anything could be said to be the defining feature of Toyama, it is this feeling of desertedness.

Finishing up, I suppose the real cause of this almost sepulchral atmosphere is that familiar old problem — the ageing, dwindling population. Except for the provincial capital, there are few people to be seen on the streets at any time of day, even in Takaoka, a city of over 200,000 inhabitants. Those that do appear are either school children or wrinkled and ancient quadrupeds wielding dual walking sticks with backs hunched

over at an impossible right angle, like a witch's gnarled, beckoning finger, inverted.

All the young people have been sucked away by universities in other prefectures, and the town centres have become ghost towns deserted in favour of the Aeon megamall, the new heart of the ken. It's a shame really. Toyama-ken is losing its vigour, and a timeless and charming kind of indistinctiveness is losing out to a very modern, very bland one.



Travel Japan

Exploring the islands of the Seto Inland Sea



By Jeff Weese

It's summer holiday and what better way to spend a weekend than away on an island at the beach? Sure we have beaches in Hyogo, and some fine ones at that, but sometimes we need to travel the distance to feel like we are on a holiday.

Takeno and Hamasaka in the north boast fine sandy beaches and Suma in the south has all the Bon Jovi and Tina Turner look-a-likes you could ever want, but if you want that small island retreat feeling, head to one of many islands that dot the Seto Inland Sea. Nestled between Honshu and Shikoku, each island has its own character.

Shodoshima is an enjoyable two-hour journey from Himeji Port and is home to numerous sights and activities. On Shodoshima you can do everything from a miniature version of Shikoku's 88 Temple Pilgrimage, visit the loca-

tion where the famous Japanese film classic *Twenty-four Eyes* was shot, or taste soy sauce-flavoured ice cream! Shodoshima is also famous for its olive groves... visit the Olive Park for a taste of olive chocolate or to see some fake Grecian ruins!

There are several swimming beaches scattered around the island, but the most well known is Silver Beach on the north side. There are also a number of places to stay if you want to take the whole weekend to explore the island. From Shodoshima Olive Youth Hostel to Maruse Minshuku to Resort Hotel Olivean to Dutch Pancake Camping, there is definitely a place for everyone regardless of the budget or style you are after.

A bit further west is Naoshima, which is famous for its amazing art pieces all throughout the island as well as in the Naoshima Contemporary

Art Museum and the Benesse Island Naoshima Cultural Village. Some of the pieces here are world famous and you can also catch a glimpse of some work from Andy Warhol, David Hockney and Jasper Johns.

While beaches are not the highlight of the island, there is plenty to keep you occupied. Staying on the island in one of the Mongolian yurts called pao is all part of the experience. These get



Hmm... Suma Beach (at left) or Ikuchijima Beach (at right)? Tough decision...

booked up quickly, so reserve them as soon as you can. Getting to the island is an easy 20-minute ferry ride from Uno in Okayama Prefecture.

Even further west is a chain of islands that are now connected by expressway making them very easy to access if you own your own vehicle. If you don't, ferries from Mihara and Onomichi on Honshu are ubiquitous. Within this chain of islands are Innoshima, Ikuchijima, and a few other smaller islands.

Innoshima doesn't have much, but the pirate castle on top of Shiratakiyama makes for an interesting afternoon. The main beach on Innoshima is Ohama on

northwest side of the island. While its no Waikiki, it is a great place to take a dip when the temperatures are soaring.

On Ikuchijima, the beach situation is similar to Innoshima, and Sunset Beach on the west side of the island is the place to be. With water slides and shaved ice stands galore, it is the most popular of the beaches in the area. If you're sunburnt already and want to see the sights of the island, head to the main town of Setoda and visit Kosanji. It is a collection of famous and important temples recreated all in this one place! In addition, at the top of the hill, there is a very interesting Italian-inspired sculp-

ture park. Instead of being covered in concrete like the rest of Japan, this hilltop is covered in fine Italian marble. Even the café (which is a great place to rest your feet and have a cold drink) is clad in brilliant white marble. If you plan on staying the night, your best bets are camping at one of the camping villages on the islands or stopping at Setoda Shimanami Youth Hostel.

There are many more islands to explore in your own style, but these are just a few to get you thinking about what the Seto Inland Sea has to offer. Don't let the monotony of the staff room get to you this summer, get out and explore Japan!

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Getting to Know Some Random JETs

❖ **Name:** Brenda Ann Elizabeth McKinney.

❖ **Please call me:** Bren, Brenda or simply "B."

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Takasago Minami and Harima Minami (the ~nan's).

❖ **How we know you:** Probably from AJET events or emails - Go Block 6!

❖ **Birthday:** January 17th — same day as the Hanshin Earthquake.

❖ **Born and raised:** in Minnesoooota, USA.

❖ **Family:** Mom, dad and the l'il bro back in the States.

❖ **University and Degree:** Majored in economics and Nordic studies (yes, Nordic studies).

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** My first job out of college was as a business analyst in the Girl's Bottoms Department of the Big Boy, Big Girl Division of Target corporate headquarters. Try having that on your (red-coloured) business card. Hot! Was also a camp counselor for a whopping six years.

❖ **Travels:** North America, lived in Norway for two years (after HS and Uni), study trips to the Middle East and China, worked in China for a bit, been around Europe and now exploring Asia. You might say I have the "travel bug."

❖ **Hobbies:** Running outside (when it's not so humid), spending time with friends, music (listening, not playing), travel, reading when I'm not running around, AJET stuff.

❖ **Staying another year?** You betcha!

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: Italian or curry. Here, okonomiyaki and inarizushi.

Sports: Don't really follow them, but like soccer/football and baseball games.

Music: A bit of everything!

Shop: Still trying to convince the kids Uniqlo is cool. Otherwise, Gap, Target, vintage shops and small, independant stores... you never know what you'll find.

TV Show: *Grey's Anatomy*, *Curb*, *CNN*, *Arrested Development*, *Lost*, *The L Word*.

Movie: *The Princess Bride*.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** I cried when I finished my first marathon, and maybe knowing how to fix a car and knowing I could live on my own pretty much anywhere.

❖ **Best life experience:** Too many. I'd say Japan is going to be up there when this chapter ends.

❖ **Motto to live by:** Never take a NO from someone who doesn't have the authority to give you a YES.

❖ **I remember when...** Pluto was a planet.

❖ **What are you drinking?** Ceylon tea with milk.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Amma, a guru in India I've heard a lot about.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** Kekko desu.

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** Not having to deal with icy roads in the winter, living in another culture and getting to know people from all over the world at the same time, my crazy students, not having a car, beach afternoons in the summer, being able to travel, the fact that pretty much anything goes when it comes to fashion, 飲み放題 / 食べ放題.

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** Spend it outside, hopefully with people



I love.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I danced in the music video for the first *World Idol*.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Not everyone likes languages and the kids are not going to remember everything you teach them. Just make it FUN and hopefully you will spark an interest and inspire some.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** Dance or pull out the bonus points.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Yay... but not too often.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** We did a "lunch with the ALT" series last year, where I would have lunch in my classroom with three second-year students at a time and we could talk about anything. It was actually awesome, but one group of three girls had definitely prepared for their turn. They spent basically the whole hour asking me really personal but funny questions like "When did you retire birgin?"

❖ **Name:** Ann Chow.

❖ **Please call me:** Ann.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Tatsuyama JHS, Shoyo JHS (currently), Arai JHS, and five elementary schools in Takasago-shi.

❖ **How we know you:** I am currently editor of the newsletter you're reading now and I was... Stealth Gaijin deshita!

❖ **Birthday:** July 6.

❖ **Born and raised:** Brooklyn, New York.

❖ **Family:** Mother and father. Hitoriko desu.

❖ **University and Degree:** City University of New York — Baruch College, theatre and music.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** library clerk, English and math tutor, college computer lab techie.

❖ **Travels:** Canada, the UK, Ireland, France, Italy, the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Macau, mainland China, Australia... so far.

❖ **Hobbies:** These days it's reading any books and magazines with English in it, watching English- Chinese- Japanese-language movies, listening to music and solving puzzles..

❖ **Staying another year?** I am entering my second year. Not sure about a third though.

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: real Chinese and real Italian food. Maybe not together, but it is okay if it is!



Sports: I hate exercise, but I like swimming (not in the ocean because I get swept away by the tide a little too easily.).

Music: Rock, pop, alternative, songs I can sing to without breaking my vocal chords.

Shop: J. Crew or... Uniqlo!!! I think it's official — we all LOVE Uniqlo! I usually don't play favourites for clothes because most stores/brands don't consistently carry my size and no amount of money is worth forking over for something that doesn't fit.

TV Show: *Heroes* and *Alias*.

Movie: *The Sound of Music*. Julie Andrews is awesome.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Graduating college/university in four years even though I changed majors four times and studied abroad twice.

❖ **Best life experience:** It's a toss-up between living in Europe and living here. Going into the unknown and seeing what you're made of is a good thing sometimes.

❖ **Motto to live by:** *Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.* (This doesn't really work in Japan because the machines always give you the change back.)

❖ **I remember when...** I rode bikes for fun, Pluto was a planet and boys had cooties.

❖ **What are you drinking?** One of those juice blends from Kagome. I'm not a health

nut. It just happened to be on sale at the supermarket.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** God, and if he or she doesn't exist, well, then... I have no idea what happens after that actually. Probably no more silly wars on behalf of God...

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** Just

on the grounds that countries that have female heads of state are generally more stable economically and politically, imagine the effect if a woman was President of the World. Otherwise, you shouldn't elect me. I am a responsible person but hate responsibility and I know very little about economics. Well, maybe a little more than computers.

❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** Japanese logic confounds me, so everyday is a surprise! My insanely genki elementary school kids who scream "Ann-sensei!!!!" every time they see me, whether at school or not. Oh, let's not forget the vending machines!

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** spend some quality time with friends and family while consuming delicious food and drink.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I was an extra in Will Smith's *I Am Legend*.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Visit the student clubs. My students hate talking to me in class but clamour to say three sentences to me when I'm out of the class and watching them practice.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** let it be (because they're usually annoyingly loud) or play a game, depending on my mood.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Yes. My schools are on the low-level side so the students don't really like English, but they'll fight to the death for that extra hanko in their textbook.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student?** This doesn't exactly involve a student but another teacher. I went to an elementary school for the second time and I hadn't met all the teachers there yet. That day I had lunch with the students in their classroom. I went back to the staffroom, only to be chased in by a teacher. She kept asking "Doushita? Doushita?" and I, not fully understanding, just repeated after her. As she soon realized I wasn't a student, but in fact the ALT, she immediately started apologizing profusely. For those of you who don't know, the oldest students at elementary schools are 12 years old. >_<!

First-Year Survival Guide:

Beat the Heat! (the cheap way)

By Kate Emory

August is upon us! Batten down the hatches and give me some air con!

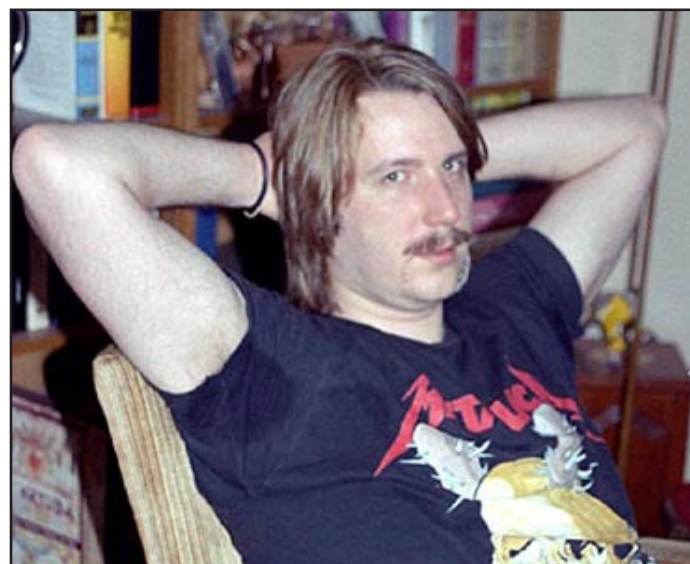
As you now know, August in Japan is hot, humid and barely bearable. You may feel like you are sweating out every last drop of moisture from your body. You may also look around at the Japanese walking about freely with their long sleeves and track pants and wondering why they are not a hot mess like you are.

Do Japanese people sweat? Don't they feel like hiding inside or going to the beach? Why are they still convinced that it's not time to turn on the air con?!

These questions may run through your head as you spring into the delirium of a heat daze, but here are some tips to stay cool this summer, without dishing out cool cash!

Tea

Japan's answer to everything really. There is nothing more refreshing than a cool glass of *mugicha* or *oolongcha* after being out in the heat. To save money, make your own. Buy some tea bags, boil water and refrigerate!

**UNIQLO Dry Wear**

Yes, we know that about 80 per cent of your school wardrobe is now UNIQLO, but this is a must! Dry Wear cools you down when you're sweating and the polo shirts don't show unsightly sweat stains. Plus, Dry Wear comes in a variety of colors and styles to let you relax in the heat, but still look good. Comes in shirts, pants, undergarments and sportswear.

UV umbrellas

Only in Japan does carrying an umbrella on a sunny day not only make sense, but seem awesome. Ever walk about Sannomiya in the sun and feel like you are melting? Try one of these parasols and you will be cool in both temperature and style.

Go somewhere cool!

The beach is a good place to start, or the mountains. The beach allows you to cool off in the ocean, while the mountains give you shade and lower temperatures. Both include beautiful scenery for free.

The school pool

Nearly every school has an



Pit Stains do not rule as hard as these pictures suggest.

outdoor pool, and if you are lucky or tenacious, you can convince your school that it is necessary that you use the pool this summer. Either that, or just swipe the key when the school clerk isn't looking. Cool off while getting paid. Nice.

Aircon

What, you thought I would leave this out? Aircon is awesome in August. But, it's not really cheap, you say? It is when you go to a conbini, Jusco or the public library! Hang out in these places for the free aircon and make new friends. If you absolutely need the aircon on in your apartment, put it on a timer. That will save you money, and save the environment.

Now go out there and enjoy the summer in style! Remember, if you feel like you are dying, you probably are. Drink some water!

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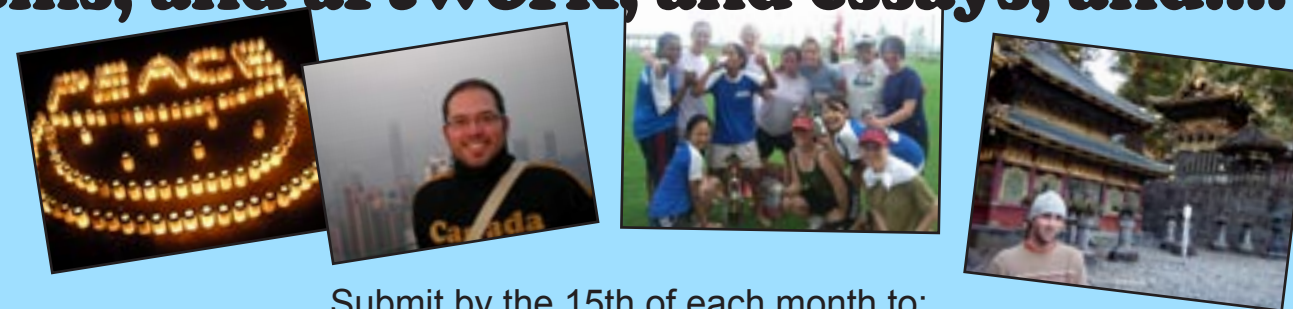
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Introducing the JET Effect

With Kobe and Himeji Castle in its boundaries, many people (in Japan, at least) probably have an idea of where you are, and might even call you lucky, when you tell them you are a Hyogo-ken JET. With one of the largest JET populations in Japan, a lot of Hyogo JETs now have another reason to be proud. We are the host of the first JET EFFECT focus: Jeff Morrice.

The **JET EFFECT** is a new AJET program that was unveiled at Tokyo Orientation this summer. It is designed to spotlight JETs that go above and beyond their work duties to contribute something to the community. JETs are not only English teachers (nor are all JETs ALTs). We are given a unique opportunity to impact the environment around us and become envoys of grassroots internationalization. This program is designed to recognize people who do just that.

Check out the blurb below to find out more about why Jeff was chosen. In addition, once a month, National AJET will choose a JET-organized community involvement project to spotlight on the national website and in the National E-Bulletin (including the who, what, when, where, and most importantly HOW!), so watch for more stories in upcoming months! Congrats to Jeff (*yay Hyogo!!*) and cheers to all of you for spreading the "JET Effect."

Email JETeffect@ajet.net for more info.

JET EFFECT Spotlight

Jeff Morrice's Kamicho Town Brochure, made with Muraoka High School students in Hyogo.

Project: The idea stemmed from the BOE suggesting that ALTs incorporate their unique abilities and knowledge into lessons and projects. The project was an English tourism brochure highlighting spots around Kamicho, our town. Designed with foreign visitors in mind, it also provided small bits of insight into Japanese cultural quirks, such as onsen etiquette, regional delicacies, etc. The brochure project gave our students a realistic and practical use for English. They took it seriously, and I think it kept them interested.

How: We had great support on this project from both the town office and our school. The town office provided all sorts of photos of the sites we were highlighting, and the school not only encouraged our work, but allowed countless test prints, day trips, advice and ultimately paid for the costs of having the brochure printed by a professional print company. Today the brochure has had its time in the limelight. We were interviewed by local and national newspapers, featured on Kamicho's town website and have copies of the brochure in the town's tourist information centre. Also, the Kamicho town office and mayor have adopted the project as their very own English tourism guide.

Advice: If anyone were to want to attempt a project on this scope, I would totally encourage them. It requires a good plan, perseverance and a great JTE, and the realization that these students are much smarter than you give them credit for. So my advice is simple: never underestimate the student's ability. Never say "They couldn't possibly do this." If you plan out your project, engage the students and keep them interested, they'll reward you.

