

July/August 2010

**Peron Festival
Only in Japan
Tajima Ultimate Frisbee**



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

Submit by the 15th of each
month to: publications@
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[http://hyogoajet.net/
wiki/Hyogo_Times](http://hyogoajet.net/wiki/Hyogo_Times)

We're also on Facebook!

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS**Hidey-ho Hyogo,**

How is your mojo?
Genki? Summer 2010
officially rocks! The
festivals, fireworks,
beaches, yukatas, BBQ,
great weather...It is
all good. Although, some

have endured the scorching heat like in my town,
Toyooka, where records were broken and others have
suffered from the incredible boredom that often
plagues class-less JETs in the summer. If this is the
case for you, don't fret my JET. Even if it is not the case
for you, this fantabulous issue full of reviews, advice
and comments on food, sex, politics and art will put a
pep in your step.

The rainbow in the photo on the cover taken by
Meghan during the 2010 Tajima Ultimate Tourna-
ment (page ##) reminds me of a quote I got this past
Golden Week, "No Rain No Rainbow". It was writ-
ten on the back of the van of the hippie couple that
picked me and my friends up as we were hitchhiking
though Yakushima. This quote made me understand
that difficulties in my life are not always bad. They

My fellow Hyogonians,

You'll have to forgive me. Upon writing this, I am si-
multaneously sleep-deprived, jet-lagged, and feeling
between homes.

As soon as the rainy season ended (and just after I fin-
ished my thank-the-heavens-for-a-day-without-rain-
dance), I heard someone comment that summer was
coming, and shouldn't that be fun. A lot of my fellows
are saying, oh yes, August beneath the dazzling sun
with limited use of AC. Soooo much fun.

But I just got back from a little vacation in Atlanta,
Georgia: land of rush hour and the home of the
Braves. I grew up in that sticky, sultry land, and so
while not immune to the oppression of Japanese
summer heat, I am at least accustomed.

I spent my vacation preparing for the zombie apoca-
lypse which will doubtless fall upon us in the year
2012. My preparations were almost entirely an ac-
cident and included watching American movies (like
Zombieland), immediately after which, my brother
suggested that instead of taking me out to lunch, he'd
take me to the shooting range, where I racked up my
first round of kill shots.

are sometimes necessary to move on to the next
phase in my life. It is sad to see beloved friends leave
Japan but it is also exciting to meet new people
from all over the world. Farewell and good luck to all
departing JETs. It was a privilege to have met you and
just like we all wrote in our friends' yearbooks in high
school, K.I.T.! Welcome to the new kids on the block.
I hope you know that you are part of the best prefec-
ture EVER.

I would also like to welcome Colin Fukai, 4th year ALT
in Toyooka, as our new columnist on politics. We live
in Japan we should be in the know. Speaking of being
in the know, we want to know what is going on in
your neck of the Hyogo hood. Have you recently gone
on an awesome adventure, discovered something cool
to do, or do you want to share an experience/cor-
mentary about your life in Japan? Please share it with
your fellow Hyogo-ites. We also welcome and will
now feature any feedback, good or bad, on the Hyogo
Times so please do not be shy.

With sweat towel in hand,

The Epitor

Back in my hometown,
school has already started,
leaving pools deserted and
lines at the local amuse-
ment park far too short. I
returned to find that good-
bye parties had yielded to
welcome parties, as some
of our fellow JETs head off
for lands with actual pas-
tures and we are joined
by new faces.

I suppose I am glad
that the bulk of my desk-cleaning, lesson-planning,
g-chatting summer lies ahead. Be productive, Hyo-
gonians, and don't forget your sunscreen just in case
you get let out into the sweaty, sweaty sunlight.

If that's how it is for now, I remain your junior editor,

Lemmon

10

12

18

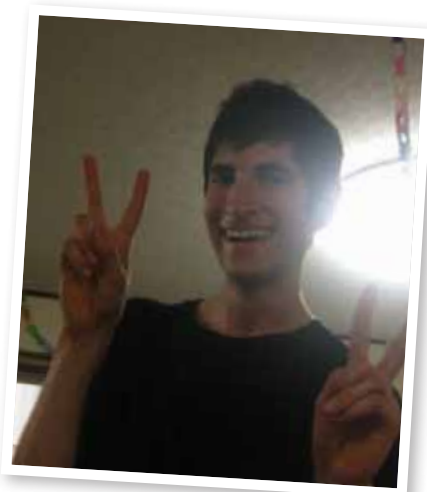
Letter from the Online Editor

Hello everyone! Are you having a good summer? I'll make this one quick so you can get back to Facebook. All the back issues we have of Hyogo Times are now uploaded to the wiki site, at http://www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Hyogo_Times. We have issues going back to 2002, packed with travel guides, teaching advice, and funny/interesting articles from ALTs past, so why not take a look? You never know what you'll find.

Now that the Hyogo Times wiki page is complete, my next project is building the

new Hyogo Times Online site. I hope by next issue we'll have the site online for you, and I will of course keep you updated.

Lastly, about the National AJET all-in-one chapter publication conglomerate thingy. Like I mentioned in the last issue, this site will be an online magazine of its own, a collection of articles from AJET chapters all over Japan. The site is slowly coming along but it's not at 100%, however it is online so you can take a peek if you'd like...<http://press.ajet.net/>. For our part, I'll be contributing a few articles each issue which would be of interest to



JETs outside of Hyogo (in other words, not the feature on the latest goings-on at the "Hub"). I hope you make good use of the rest of the summer and don't go crazy with nothing to do. See you next time!



Hey, goodbye all departing JETs. I really am sad to see so many of you go. Hope you had a good stay here in Hyogo and leave Japan with at least some understanding of the Japanese way of life. Thank

Also, welcome everyone who is new. I honestly am excited to meet you. I hope you are a cool crowd. If you are interested please come to the beer garden. It's kind of the only real staple of Hyogo AJET every year but I have

Message from the PR

you for your time on the program, I know you had the intent to do a good job even if the teachers you work with rarely see it that way. See you.

a good time there and I do want to meet you, so. Enjoy Yashiro, you'll probably be partially done with your "just got to Japan" jitters by then, but if not, you can ask any questions you have on the Hyogo AJET facebook page. Email me at andrew.brasher@hyogo.ajet.net, if anything. Also definitely bookmark hyogoajet.net! Yes. Ok. So anyway people usually do not enjoy the slow months of summer work but I personally wish this month would last forever...! Have a good August.

MAIGO IN HYOGO



It is all about perspective. Where in Hyogo can this powerful punch be found? Post your answers on the discussion board on the Hyogo Times Facebook Group page.

"Maigo in Hyogo" needs your photos! Send them to publications@hyogo.ajet.net, and type "Maigo in Hyogo" in the subject line.

Paul Schuble's Japanese Riddles

パンだけど食べられないパン。
(パンだけどたべられないパン。)

ANSWER AND EXPLANATION:

フライパン

This is among the most well-known Japanese riddles, and it means "It's bread but not bread you can eat." The trick here is the fact that in Japanese as in Spanish, bread is "pan." So what's a pan that you can't eat? A frying pan.

Dotonbori, Osaka

A dirty strip of water that after years of give and take with a metropolis is a line flowing blurred between river and run-off.

Tour boats ripple down it. Elderly passengers staring at the city's up and out attempts to name-brand the sky.

I'm creviced into the wane of a scavenged afternoon. Under a bridge with a beer pacing my mouth.

Half a block away and twenty windows up, a man in a Thursday suit leans out and extends hands split into peace-signs. Victory proclaimed to an oblivious crowd.

I wave at the passing tourists.

They wave back.

The man disappears behind closed curtains.

The sightseers return to the docks they started from.

A train takes me back to a village where rice paddies outnumber headlights.

None of us take the canal past the piers and through the harbor. To the ocean.

We won't inspire whales into abandoning their plankton trawling. To leap into the sky. To scoop up the moon. Baleen stream the Milky Way.

- Doc Suds

Where Are They Now?

Name: Ailey (Kaiser) Hughes

Age: 27

Placement school/s and location in Hyogo/Japan while on JET:

Minato Chu Gakko/Toyooka-shi

Current occupation & jobs held since leaving the JET programme:

I currently worked at the Rural Development Institute (RDI), an international non-profit focused on securing land rights for the world's poorest people. After I came back from Japan, I spent two years in graduate school studying Public Administration and International Development.

Highlight/funniest part of your JET experience:

This is really difficult to answer, because every week brought a new adventure and a funny encounter. One thing that stands out was getting to know a great friend in Kyoto. He is a Buddhist priest at a temple there and he introduced me to a way of living

and thinking that I had never considered before.

How the JET programme has benefited you career-wise:

International experience is critical to finding work in International Development. That extra year overseas really boosted my CV and made me a stronger communicator.

What transferable skills JET gives you:

Confidence, communication skills, flexibility, and international understanding – once you've survived a year or two in the *inaka* you're capable of achieving anything!

What advice you would give to current JETs for getting the most out of the JET experience in order to further their career afterwards:

Volunteer with your local international association. I taught English and Spanish classes and edited and translated business documents. This experience helped me secure necessary internships in graduate school. Also, the profes-

sional contacts that I made were excellent referrals.

Any tips for job hunting after JET:

If you have an idea of what you'd like to do, be tactical in your approach to getting there. Think about the skills and experiences you need to have to get hired for your dream job and talk to people in the field. Intern and volunteer to get that experience and network to find the positions. Consider going to graduate school. Taking any old position may put you off course. It's a tough market out there, but don't get discouraged. ●



The Time Traveler's Wife

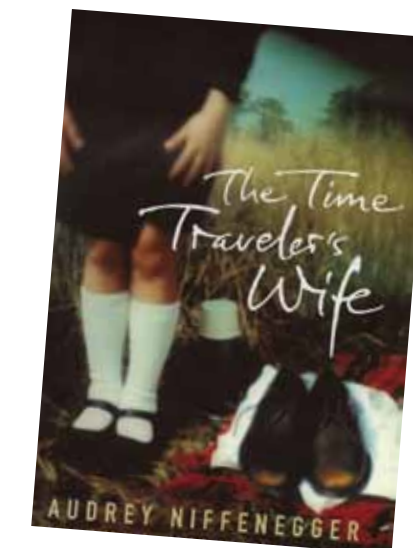
By Audrey Niffenegger (2003)

It's a bit of an unsung hero for those who have read it. It was recommended to me as a good plane book and while I read it on both my connecting flights, I had someone comment on how much they loved it each time. I also find myself doing the same if I hear anyone mention it. I can't help it; I just start to ask questions: "Don't you love it?"; "Isn't that exactly what it would be like if someone could time travel?"; "How far are you in the book?" I just convulse with happiness that someone else is reading this book and I want to bond with them over our mutual reading.

In short it is a love story. It follows the relationship between Clare and Henry. Henry is a time traveler, whose genetic structure can send him through time at any moment to any place without any warning (or clothes). Clare first meets Henry when she is 6 and he is 36. He comes back for visits throughout her life and by the time they actually meet in 'real' time, Clare knows all about Henry and Henry feels like he is meeting Clare for the first time and, technically, he is. While the elements of a fantastical novel are there, I felt that it wasn't

just a one hit wonder. There were strong elements dealing with the general challenge of time and the encouragement of love in the face of adversity. Yes, it's a story about a man who can time travel and it would be really easy to just skip over it because you "aren't into that kind of stuff," but you'd be missing out on a very well written and gracious book that charms you into its world. I absolutely loved that all the characters were flawed. It's such a relief to read a 'modern' story where the characters actually seem modern. The stresses in their lives and their arguments are quite relatable, while still being fantastic. I also enjoyed that this book was written, in part, by accident. I read an interview with Niffenegger where she says that she had no intention of writing this novel, but did it as a side project while creating her picture novel *The Three Incestuous Sisters* (which, by the way, I own and it is totally bizarre).

The Time Traveler's Wife has story development, momentum, pendulum swinging: the whole shebang. In college, I worked in a book



store (surprise, surprise) and I remember a woman won an auction for 100 dollars in the store. She looked at me and was like, "Any suggestions?" After clapping my hands together in pure glee, I set off and piled on her lap several books: *Ada*, *The Blind Assassin*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and.....*The Time Traveler's Wife*.

Lucky for you, the book has been out for a while so you can probably find it used or borrow it from a friend. So, I am recommending your summer be sprinkled with an enjoyable, relaxing read that, for all extensive purposes, will take you on a ride. ●

Goukon

Japanese speed-blind dating

BY RIKA SAWATSKY

My ambivalence towards the Japanese blind date, *goukon* (aka *konpa*), stems from participating in a few this past month. They are extremely unnatural and childish, and yet rather amusing after the fact. You are forced into a seating plan, usually a boy-girl pattern, so you can't escape from a less-than-desirable person like you would at a bar back home. There also seems to be a mutual assumption between the boys and girls that they are looking to pick up, and preferably that night. However, both parties are too shy to outright hit on each other, so they resort to games that I doubt some of us foreigners would have played even in elementary school.

My first *konpa* had a "3 vs. 3" setup—three firemen and three female teachers. The men timidly introduced themselves after we got settled in our designated seats. Needless to say, they were taken aback by my relatively direct self-introduction with eye contact, a smile, and *kansai-ben*. All in all, it was a very awkward night. A *konpa* should proceed like a typical blind date where strangers simply get to know each other better. But, in this case, my friend and I had to carry the conversation because two of the firefighters were too shy to speak. Another simply drank himself into a mute, red-faced stupor. And, the other girl who came with us gave up on talking altogether after discovering she was older than the men. I did learn something new, though--

these and many other Japanese men pluck their beards out, through their tears, because Japanese girls supposedly like the prepubescent look.

A pseudo-*goukon* followed this disastrous night. My friend and I asked a guy we met at the gym to go for a drink with us because he seemed "normal" (i.e. not girly and not afraid of us). He brought a couple of friends along, and things were going well until they suggested playing a *konpa* game. Apparently, the coincidence that there were the same number of girls and boys was too hard to resist. They closed their eyes, stuck out their hands, and waited for us girls to grip the hand of the boy we each found most attractive. My friend therefore exasperatedly tapped all three hands. They immediately opened their eyes and excitedly compared results, each of them half relieved that he got tapped at all and half annoyed that he wasn't victorious. I also found out that they watched their caloric intake—"You're not seriously going to eat that popcorn at this hour!?"—to maintain their "model-like" figures. Apparently, gym boy was not so "normal" after all.

My last *goukon* consisted of four firefighters and an eclectic mix of girls--a quintessential *burikko*, a girl disinterested in dating a firefighter because he might die on her, a drunk, and me. The boys were a bit more assertive in con-

versation this time, but I was unimpressed that I was subjected to the hand game yet again. We later moved on to the chuck-the-ten-yen-coin-under-the-*oshibori* game, where we took turns asking questions like, "Who would sleep with someone at the table tonight?" Everybody answered by flipping his/her ten-yen coin to the yes/no side and concealing it under the cloth in the middle of the table. An excited counting of the results followed. As for the *burikko*, she wasn't drinking but claimed that the waitress had spiked her drink. I thus ended up with a ditz sitting next to me, pretending to be wasted and throwing her panties at these boys. When we moved onto the *oosama* game (draw chopsticks to become the king who gives out orders), *burikko* became the king, only to declare that she must kiss all of the firefighters. So, she went around the table to feign a wasted make-out with each of them.

I had to get hammered to make it to the end of each of these dates, but, in retrospect, they make for a good laugh. I highly recommend going on at least one before returning overseas.

Next Month: The Upper-class Wannabes' Methods of Seduction (or Lack Thereof)

Do you have any questions you want addressed regarding love & relationships with a Japanese person? Send them to rika.sawatsky@gmail.com to have them answered by Japanese people in next month's column. ●

A Tough Pill To Swallow

BY COLIN FUKAI

On August 30th of last year, Yukio Hatoyama and his Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) were swept into power in a landmark election that saw dissatisfied Japanese voters turn out in droves to expel the former ruling Liberal Democrats (LDP) in favor of Hatoyama and his reformist pledges. Promising to build a "new Japan", hopes and support for Hatoyama were high. The honeymoon was short and ended in brutal fashion.

Financial scandals, scandals within the DPJ leadership, failure to make good on an oral promise to move at least part of a relocating US military base off of Okinawa, and a growing perception that his leadership was "loopy" and indecisive finally torpedoed Hatoyama, a mere eight months after his landmark inauguration.

Since the administration of the wildly popular Junichiro Koizumi ended in 2006, Japan has welcomed a new prime minister every year: Shinzo Abe, Yasuo Fukuda,

Taro Aso, Yukio Hatoyama, and now Naoto Kan. The roll call of failed leaders reads like a trivia answer but the national and international consequences of political gridlock to Japan are all too real.

Ties with the U.S., Japan's closest ally, were strained over the Okinawa base problem and looming economic issues threaten to swamp Kan with both overseas and internal pressures just as the party he now leads fights to maintain its razor-thin majority in the July elections.

Known as a "realist", Kan's cabinet is already hinting that fully funding the promised childcare payments will be "difficult" and to avoid a Greek-style collapse Japan needs to reform its debt structure.

Both the DPJ and LDP have made policy goals to *double the national consumption tax* over the next few years. Despite public support for the tax raise, the bearer of bad news is seldom greeted with enthusiasm and the pressure will be on Kan not

only to get results but also to emit a strong public presence. He has recent history to draw lessons from.

The long reign of Junichiro Koizumi fueled the public's perception of what an effective leader should be. His fiery rhetoric, willingness to take chances, and direct appeals to the public earned him steady approval ratings. "Mr. Kan must show he has learned the Koizumi lesson," said Kyoto University politics professor Satoshi Machidori.

The new Japanese prime minister needs to be as much a cheerleader as he is a doctor, administering the bitter medicine that Japan must swallow. Beyond leadership, this role demands personality and charisma. The test for Kan is to be the personality that Japan needs to feel comforted in these challenging times. ●

What is Miyazaki?



BY NICHOLAS ANDERSON

Miyazaki? What is that? Do you mean Hayao Miyazaki, the famous animator or perhaps his son, Gorou Miyazaki? Or perhaps you are more familiar with the words Hamasaki (Ayumi Hamasaki), or Miyagi? No, I meant Miyazaki, as in Miyazaki prefecture. Before I came to Japan, I also had no idea about this prefecture. Now, I would like to introduce you to wonderful Miyazaki Prefecture and all it has to offer.

Miyazaki prefecture is located on the eastern side of the island of Kyushu and has an ideal subtropical-temperate climate. When the word "Miyazaki" is spoken, a few things may come to mind. One may be Miyazaki beef, which is famous worldwide for its cuts of "Wagyu" beef from black-haired wagyu cattle. When you think of "Miyazaki", you may think about

Hideo Higashikokubaru, a well-known former Japanese comedian and the current governor of Miyazaki prefecture. Despite the recent spate of hoof and mouth disease, he still enjoys a high approval rating and is a big enthusiast of the many running races and marathons that take place in Miyazaki. Or perhaps, when you hear the word "Miyazaki", you may think of cascading waterfalls, year-round flower gardens and shows, go stones, or perhaps the very origin of Japanese history and mythology. According to the Kojiki, Emperor Jimmu, the first emperor of Japan, was born in Miyazaki prefecture and later left from the land to travel to Nara to unify Japan. Also, Miyazaki is home to a large number of historical artifacts. The Saitobaru Burial mounds are one of the largest and best preserved area of tumuli burial mounds called kofun. These kofun are shaped like a large

keyhole-shaped hill and the area is registered as a National Special Historic site. Miyazaki is also a home of the Haniwa culture from the Kofun Period of Japan. A large park with the statues is located in Miyazaki city at Heiwadai Park, located next to the monument built during World War II to commemorate Emperor Jimmu. Miyazaki, however, is much more than history or a person. .

If you are looking for a place of natural beauty, look no further than Miyazaki prefecture. Miyazaki is a prime place for a variety of outdoor activities from hiking and camping to paragliding and surfing. A must see place in Miyazaki is the Takachiho waterfall. Located up in the northern highlands of Miyazaki on the way to Kumamoto prefecture, Takachiho is a land of beautiful waterfalls, mountain passes, and ancient history.

For a small fee, you can rent a rowboat to row a boat directly to the bottom of the falls. With natural beauty, Miyazaki is well-known for the many different flowers that bloom year-round. Two big places for flower viewing are Saitobaru and Florante Miyazaki. Saitobaru, though famous for the kofun burial mounds, is also one of the best hanami areas. Throughout the year, the fields of Saitobaru are also used to grow a variety of flowers depending on the season. All four seasons have different species of flowers in full bloom. The other major place in Miyazaki for flower viewing is Florante Miyazaki and the Miyazaki Flower Festa. Floran-

te Miyazaki is a large indoor and outdoor flower garden located in Miyazaki city right next to the Seagaia Ocean Resort, which boasted the world's largest indoor water park. Florante has a number of flowers on display and laid out in model gardens for home. The flowers change with the season. The Miyazaki Flower Festa is the largest flower festival in Miyazaki prefecture. It takes place throughout the entire prefecture in the springtime. Experiencing nature in Miyazaki, however, goes beyond flowers. Miyazaki is part of the Kushima natural park and has excellent hiking and camping areas. Or, perhaps you are maybe more

of an ocean person. Miyazaki is well-known in Japan and the world for its excellent surfing beaches. Beaches like Aoshima, Kanegahama, and Okuragahama are a few examples of the many fine surfing beaches in Miyazaki.

So, do you now have a good idea of what Miyazaki Prefecture is? All that has been mentioned is just a small part of Miyazaki. If you can, come and visit! Come and experience Miyazaki!

Nicholas Anderson is a prefectural ALT based in Hyuga City, Miyazaki Prefecture. He is currently a member of the Miyazaki AJET Group. ●



KIMONO & YUKATA & ON A DIME

for the Gaijin girl

BY RAENA MINA

If you read my basic 101 article, you can see how Kimono is quite an expensive tradition. If you are a *gaijin* girl who is not as lucky as the many J-girls in this generation who inherit a closet-full amount of kimono from their mothers, are not bloody rich, or do not have a fairy-obaoa-chan, I'll give you a quick run down on how to get real quality, traditional kimonos, at decent prices.

Who says *gaijin* girls can't get in the Kimono spirit without having to dish out 二万円 (20,000) yen for a one day rental, or even drop around 40,000 yen (四万円) just to look like an oddly featured *Maiko san* in Kyoto? You too can own a real, beautiful kimono and keep it! Yes, there are many cheap discount kimono shops that sell the touristy "kimono" and "yukata" (which, in my opinion, look like Barbie pajamas) for around 三千元 (3000 yen) maybe even with an obi included. You can even buy 1500 yen *geta*. I understand for some people, who just want to partake in a *matsuri* donning kimono or yukata once, this is a reasonable price and if you aren't that into it, who cares if it's not real or made in China (nothing against China or Chinese products). If you're like me, and into the "*mukashi*" vintage style prints and think it would be nice to own a traditional silk kimono then I hope this information helps.

Where's the number one place to buy it? You probably don't even have to leave your own town – yes I'm even including the *inaka* inhabitants. Some of my cheapest and best kimono have been bought at my local *furugiya-san* – or Thrift store. Recycle shops usually have a section just for kimono. You



can buy *haori* for 500 yen or less. Although, the practice of wearing this coat is on decline amongst the younger generation, I like to rock it and westernize it by wearing it with a belt, leggings and flat boots. I've bought silk *komon awase* kimonos for as low as 1400 yen and brand new albeit vintage style *geta* and *zoori* from about 500 yen. There are usually plenty of obis available, from *Fukuro obi* fancy formal ones, to casual *Nagoya obi* and *Han haba* obi. Aside from the latter that typically range from 300 to 500 yen, the usual obi are around the 3000 yen mark. Even essential parts required for *Kitsuke* can be sold basically brand new at used prices at the thrift store. *Naga jyuban* run around 1400 yen, with *obi jime* around 500 yen and *obi age* around 1000 yen depending on the fabric. I once found a silk kimono in mint condition for 9000 yen and the *Furisode naga jyuban* for 4000 yen. It was a STEAL!

I'm almost unwilling to divulge all my secret cheap kimono shops, as I would hate to compete for a cheap badass vintage kimono, but from one *gaijin* girl to fellow *gaijin* girls, I will make an exception. One of my favorite chain recycle shops is called *Chicago* and I typically go there for regular western wear. There are two stores in Tokyo, one in Harajuku but the one in Omote-

sando sells vintage kimonos. For us Kinki folk, we are lucky to have one in Kyoto, in the *shotengai* running between *Shijo* and *Sanjo* Dori. For ridiculously cheap *kitsuke* parts, there is a shop in Kobe Motomachi shotengai, on the right near the entrance before Choco-Cro. If you wander south of China town, in addition to all the funky thrift stores, there are some that sell vintage kimono. But your best bet is to try your local recycle shop, as they have the better prices.

Some things to keep in mind: Kimono cannot be worn without *Naga jyuban* and unfortunately when you look for Kimono and *Naga jyuban* separately, it will be hard for the sleeves to be the same length (this is crucial in proper kimono wear.) However, you can get by with unmatched lengths by safety pinning them together at the wrists. Kimono must be longer than your height, so this may be difficult for the tall *gaijin* girl. It must be long enough so that you can tuck it up at the waist around 6 inches, with the bottom hem almost touching the floor. The width of the kimono must also be wide enough to wrap around your body one time and a half, with the side hems directly at the sides of your legs. It is also important for the sleeves to not be too short. *Geta* and *Zoori* should be small,

with your heel hanging off, as it makes it easier to walk in, but the straps near the toes shouldn't be so uncomfortably tight. If you buy *Nagoya obi*, the folded in half section must be able to wrap around your waist twice, and the rest of the length needs to be long enough to tie *O-taiko musubi*. These requirements make it more difficult to find the perfect kimono, but I enjoy the hunt. Look out for the inside linings, that there are no brownish stains or holes (meaning it hasn't been properly maintained over time) and look for patterns that are appropriate for the occasion where you will wear it.

If anything, a recycle shop will have cute traditional Japanese things for cheap prices that are good as a keepsake or souvenirs for friends back home. You can find unused kimono print clutches for 300 yen or less, and sometimes I buy children obi jime and wear them as a head band. Some people even buy old obis and use them as table runners, or make purses out of them. Whether you want a real deal kimono, or just some real deal traditional kimono items for fun, checking out your local recycle shop is worth a try. Happy hunting, and if you find any good shops, please don't hesitate to let me know! I'm on the lookout for summer *Hito*... ●





Fant-artistic Times in Kobe

BY RENATE BEYER

What do you get when you put six musos, three live artists, one live calligrapher and four photographers together in a hip café called *Bo Tambourine*? An artistic expression of *NO SPACE*. Just joking. You get an extravaganza of an event that indulges every one of your senses, and well, to put it simply, a super cool party.

This creative collaboration was initially the brain child of Atsuko Nishimura that morphed into the huge multicultural, multimedia event known as “It’s Raining but so Colorful”. It all came together in downtown Kobe on Saturday June 5th and it seemed that everyone in Kansai and beyond wanted to be there. *Bo Tambourine*, a cool Mexican fusion café tucked into

a small side street with random instruments and graffiti on the walls, was packed full of artists, eaters, drinkers and people generally having a great time. To set the right fun and fantastical mood, event goers were given brightly colored crowns to wear. Most of the food was suspended for the evening and the tables were either pushed to the sides or outside, but I did catch a few glimpses of some decadent brownie sundaes floating between the packed crowd.

Andrew Brasher, Gajin, Hiroshi Ohta, Justin Bacon, Yoma Aoki and Yuricorn were the musicians who kept the vibes

upbeat and the atmosphere pumping. These musicians gave us everything from pop rock to acoustic guitar to *biwa*, a classical Japanese instrument. There wasn’t always enough space to dance at *Bo Tambourine*, but to everyone’s glee, Chip Boles, Sayako Tszzzunekage and Ryan Parker were doing their own kind of artistic dance, a dance of creation to music. It was pretty cool to watch as the art took form to the beats.

Chip was definitely the most technological of the artists. Using a MacBook, a light, a projector, a wall of the café and a carefully placed box, Chip was able to wow and intrigue the crowd with his innovative process. Everyone was able to see each line of his drawing come to life via the projector. After he finished the sketch, he scanned and colored it on the laptop. His creation? A fierce gun slinging mermaid.

Sayako used a combination of paints, water colors and colored pencils to show us the fantastical inside her mind. A look of intense concentration was on her face as she created. In the end she wowed the audience with three separate pieces. Ryan was the last artist up and his art piece paid homage to the county we all call home right now, former PM Yukio Hatoyama. His finished piece really showed off his style of borrowing from reality and then twisting it into a dark, dream-like state.

One of the highlights for me

was the Japanese calligraphy created by Masa Eguchi. Paired perfectly with the musical styling of Gaijin, a duo of Douglas Hargave and JB who put a bit of modern twist to traditional *biwa* and *djembe*, Masa created a work of art that silenced the crowd.

In case the music, the live art, the drinks and the conversations were not enough to satiate your senses, there were also some photographs being exhibited and sold on the walls of *Bo Tambourine*. With everything going on in such a small space, it was a little hard to fully appreciate the photography. However, what I saw, was amazing and inspirational. Thanks to Ayako Tokito, Emerald Huang, Epson, and Atsuko Nishimura for sharing their inner eye. “It’s Raining but so Colorful” became the unexpected and was enjoyed by everyone including random passerbys. Rodney from Osaka was impressed by the scope of the event. He was expecting more of an exhibition or gallery but instead was treated with an event, “a happening” that also got the viewers involved. Motonori, a surfer from out of town, actually just wanted dinner! *Bo Tambourine* was recommended to him by his hair stylist. He never did get to try the food, but he thoroughly enjoyed the eye and ear candy. Fant-artistic. Absolutely. What a night! I left the party feeling like an inspired hipster who was lucky enough to experience the art of local up-and-coming artists. ●



Japan's as quirky as a Seinfeld character. Its oddities, for me, are what make it such a fun place to live.

ONLY IN JAPAN...

BY RYAN PARKER

...could a building be this cute.

Actually, everything here is excessively adorable, almost enough to make you puke in your mouth. Everything, from castles to high-speed trains, has a "character," which makes you think that most marketing plans are directed at seven-year-olds.



...would a lady carry a giant bag of trash onto a train.

Japan's got one of the most baffling waste management systems in the galaxy. And what's more: you'll be hard-pressed to find an adequate number of trash cans in public, which results in people having to carry trash in their pockets, purses, and *murses* until they find a bin appropriate for a specific type of rubbish.

...would I have to perform my own dental work.

I have a haunting feeling that many others have experienced similar dental challenges. Seven visits to the dentist and three hospital trips later, my tooth problem isn't much closer to being fixed. Thanks to a frighteningly crippled medical system in which bureaucracy often crushes the quality of care, I was forced to sterilize my X-acto knife and get to work.



...could you see an army of traffic Nazis blanketing every small street corner.

Every time I see this white-gloved team, I have the same thought: 'Who's paying these guys?' It seems that they fall into two categories: the over directors, and the day dreamers. Over directors tend to fuel confusion by mirco-managing every bicyclist, car, pedestrian and dog that passes, while day dreamers are as useless as pigeon wings on an buffalo. Either way, you could have up to five old men telling you where to go at the same time.

...could you marvel over a group of construction workers scrubbing dirt out of the cracks of a city street.

Yes, I saw this on a bike ride home. Most claim that Japan lacks a coherent national religious identity, but I beg to differ: it's cleaning. Cleaning itself often seems to take precedent over Shinto spirituality, in which it's an important ritual practice. Whether it's cleansing your mouth and hands before praying at a shrine or obsessively scrubbing a street corner, cleaning creeps into nearly every aspect of Japanese life. ●



There's only one thing we like more than these sweet outfits... **CLEANING.**



Peron Festival

BY ROB MILLER

Aioi is a small town. It has a Shinkansen station and about 10 ALTs living there. There are two izakayas and a supermarket. I once met a couple of tourists at the train station; they were there to change trains. This weekend was an opportunity for a revo-

lution. For two days Aioi performed the trick that most towns will do once a year in a bid to keep its name famous and its little shops in business; it put on a festival.

The Peron festival is a two day event. Saturday has fireworks in the evening

(one of the largest in the area I'm told) and on Sunday there's boat racing. It also includes numerous stalls selling everything from takoyaki to toy guns. Toy guns seemed especially popular this year with the kids, who were having running street battles through the crowds. The locals put on performances and so there were dances, marching bands and my personal favorite, an 80s rock band who had somehow survived into old age and insisted on continuing performing in their tight snakeskin trousers. Cowabunga As for the ALTs who went. Firstly

thank you. An afternoon barbeque in the sun at our local park was a great way to spend the day and I'm sorry for losing a football to the local river (you know who you are).

The one problem with living where you are partying is when your students live there too. After several hours of drinking, it was time to head down through the town to the fireworks display on the waterfront. The only thing that lay between me and my goal were dozens of my students and their judging parents. If I could blend into the crowd

all would be good. But as a six-foot-three foreigner, this is a little tricky.

Sunday was the day of the boat races. They are called dragon boats, but sadly they are somewhat less exciting than they sound. They are not fire-breathing battleships but instead colorful longboats, powered by a score of determined rowers, a drummer and a gong-banger to keep rhythm and one man on every boat who's job it was to waft a stick back and forth in the air. Perhaps to keep the dragon spirits appeased.

The main event reminded me of watching my first baseball game. The initial excitement of seeing something new is soon distilled by the knowledge that not much happens, the thing that does happen happens again and again, and that the whole thing goes on for hours. This depression is soon relieved through the liberal application of sugary foods and beer, and suddenly the whole event is exciting again. ●





[The Best Sporting Event] TAJIMA ULTIMATE FRISBEE TOURNAMENT



BY MEGHAN MATSUURA,
CHAIRMAN, AND THE TAJ ULTIMATE
COMMITTEE 2010

Taj Ultimate is a two day ultimate frisbee tournament where teams and players gather from all over Japan and even from all over the globe. Taj Ultimate is also famous for its BBQ dance party. During the party players get a rare chance to relax together and get to know each other. It isn't often that you get to meet people from all over Japan in one area. We pride ourselves on creating an event that encourages grassroots exchange. Over the past seven years Taj Ultimate has grown into one of the largest sporting events in Tajima, Northern Hyogo Prefecture. The first tournament was held on the weekend of June 5th - 6th, 2004. The tournament has

grown over the years. In the past seven years the number of teams has increased to twenty teams and over 300 participants. Taj Ultimate players are extremely diverse. Players living in Japan from abroad and Japanese nationals of all ages and genders make up the players. This past tournament we proudly received recognition from National AJET as the "The Best Sporting Event". We hope that Taj Ultimate will continue to be such a great success.

What has made Taj Ultimate a success is the dedication and support of our volunteers. Taj Ultimate is organized entirely by volunteers. It takes many hours of planning to ensure that Taj Ultimate runs smoothly. Planning usually begins as early as six to eight months before the tournament

is to take place. We begin preparations for the tournament and also for the massive BBQ dance party that takes place at night after the first day of play.

Organizing the event is a production in its own. This was my first year acting as chairman for Taj Ultimate. It was a great learning experience. It was a challenge because this was my first time helping put together and coordinating an event of this size. I learned the basics of promoting, gathering sponsors, booking spaces, ordering and gathering supplies, and the list goes on. This however would be nearly impossible to do on my own, that is why I am ever so grateful to the other committee members and our volunteers for their support. The committee is made up of both internationals and locals. Some have been doing it for a few years and others for the first time. We are always looking for and welcoming new faces into the circle. We hope to pass on our knowledge so that we may keep the spirit of Taj Ultimate going for several years to come. If you are interested in or have any questions about Taj Ultimate or ultimate frisbee please feel free to check out our homepage: tajultimate.com

We hope to see some new and also familiar faces at next years tournament. ●



GETTING TO KNOW RANDOM JETS



THE BASICS

Name: Gabriel Chase

Please call me: Gabe

School and Location in Hyogo: Yanase JHS, Awaga Elementary Santo-cho Asago City

How we know you: I was a ninja turtle at Halloween, have been known to drink too much in front of Himeji Castle and previously rocked a fro.

Birthday: November 13, 1984

Born and raised: Portland, Oregon USA

Family: Mom, Dad, older sister and two dogs, Griffy and Tanner

University and Degree: California State University Monterey Bay, Global Studies

Other jobs that you have had: Legal Assistant, Waiter, Batting Cage Operator

Travels: Spain, France, Bermuda, Mexico and Korea

Hobbies: any sport, especially baseball and basketball, eating, drinking and arguing.

Staying another year? Yes

FAVORITES

Food: Mama's home cookin. In Japan, Yakniku.

Sports: Baseball

Music: Soul

Shop: Upper Playground, Portland

TV Show: The Daily Show

Movie: The Sandlot

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Successfully beating a speeding ticket by sending a written argument to the court.

Best life experience: Playing college baseball

Motto to live by: Don't talk about it, be about it

I remember when... I used to terrorize my Japanese teachers when I was a student.

What are you drinking? オロナミン C

Who would you like to meet? Willie Mays

Why should we elect you President of the World? I would institute a policy of dessert with every meal

Best thing about Japan so far? Tabehodai/nomihodai (especially yakiniku)

If it was my last day on earth I would... get some kegs and some meat and throw a BBQ with a whiffle ball game

Interesting Fact about me: I was in a Japanese Immersion Program when I was a kid, but spent more time in the principal's office than in class so I didn't learn all that much.

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Keep the kids entertained. I never learned anything if I was bored, so I figure it is better to do something fun and mildly educational then bore them to sleep... though, some of my JTE's seem to disagree.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... do something funny or silly to break the monotony

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? I find prizes and such distracting, but I keep a stack of baseball cards in my desk for emergencies.

Funniest Story involving a student: My students tend to be pretty mild mannered. But there was the time when I fell asleep while standing in front of the class. The JTE didn't notice when I almost fell over, but several of the students did. I got a great reaction from the kids. My JTE couldn't figure out why they kept laughing at me, or why I couldn't keep a straight face. But after that many of them remembered the phrase 'you are very tired.' Yeah, thanks kids.

THE BASICS

Name: Erica Reynolds

Please call me: Erica

School and Location in Hyogo: Sekinomiya JHS and Oya JHS, plus various elementary schools. I live in Sekinomiya, though.

How we know you: Apparently I have a very distinct laugh.

Birthday: December 12th

Born and raised: Springfield, MO/Chesterton, IN (NWI)

University and Degree: Purdue University Calumet, Elementary Education

Other jobs that you have had: Various teaching-related jobs, plus a few local restaurants in my town

Travels: Around the US and Japan, but that is only the beginning.

Hobbies: Dancing, reading, watching movies, shopping, traveling, the beach...

Staying another year? Yes, but I think that may be it.

FAVORITES

Food: Mexican, Italian, Chinese, Vietnamese

Sports: Cheerleading! (Yes, I really think it's a sport.)

Music: Pretty much everything. My first favorite was the B-52s, though.

Shop: Charlotte Russe

TV Show: Biggest Loser, Grey's Anatomy, Ugly Betty, True Blood, Big Love

Movie: Across the Universe

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Getting my teaching license.

Best life experience: Coaching cheerleading.

Motto to live by: The only person you can control is yourself. (My Grammie taught me that one...)

I remember when... I remember, I remember when I lost my mind!

What are you drinking? Kagome brand juice. Yumm! It's not as good as Bolthouse from home though.

Who would you like to meet? My great-great-grandma.

Why should we elect you President of the World? ummm...really? I'm too busy as it is. No, thanks.

Best thing about Japan so far? Awesome scenery, awesome students, awesome friends.

If it was my last day on earth I would... go to the beach.

Interesting fact about me: I can't stick out my tongue.

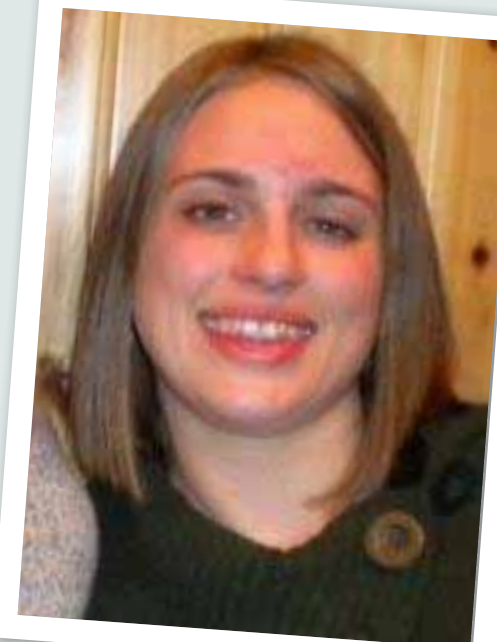
TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Try to do something fun that helps the students learn at the same time. The JTEs think it's impossible, but it's not. Plus, the JTEs are boring enough when you're not there. Change it up! I've also learned to prepare lessons almost in full before I present the idea to my JTEs. It makes it harder for them to say no.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... get loud. (Just kidding! I'm always loud!!!)

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? YES!!! My students (elementary AND JHS) love, LOVE, LOVE stickers! I suppose it can be a bit expensive at times, but it definitely makes teaching a lot more enjoyable. Plus, I get to do more of my activities because the kids beg for stickers.

Funniest Story involving a student: I have extremely goofy kids at my schools, so this is kind of difficult. I suppose it would be when my third graders clued me in on an ongoing joke about the science teacher's bald head. They told me it "shines as bright as the sun!"



Hirokazu Koreeda's *After Life*



If you consider yourself a cinema enthusiast, you need to see the Hirokazu Koreeda (pronounced *Kore-eda*) film *After Life* (ワンダフルライフ). *After Life* is more than just a good movie; it presents a vision of life after death that can give anyone hope. Film lovers especially, however, will find themselves nodding in ferocious agreement when one of the deceased remarks, "...that really is heaven." The concept behind the afterlife in *After Life* is that whenever a person dies (even the jerks) they go to a waystation where agents are waiting to help them choose the most significant memory of their life. The staff then recreates that event on film. After viewing their movie, the deceased are whisked away into a presumably blissful afterlife of that one great memory. It sounds awesome, doesn't it? Personally, I would choose hearing my girlfriend explode with blissful laughter and cheers as I tumbled, purposely, down the Tottori sand dunes last year. Or the time my dad screamed "Call Syracuse!" after I won a wrestling tournament that qualified me for another in Syracuse, New York. Anyway...

Koreeda got his start making documentaries for television and is renowned for using a similar style in his non-documentary works as well. He accomplishes this in *After Life* by using three different techniques. First, handhelds are his camera of choice (before all the cool kids were doing it). Occasionally, this gives the

illusion that we are chasing after the characters to capture candid moments. Other times, it helps us relax and simply enjoy the stories the characters want to tell.

Selecting **one** perfect moment from a thirty, fifty or eighty-year-long lifetime of memories is tough work. Therefore, the "customers" at the waypoint spend the majority of *After Life* simply talking about themselves. The mock-documentary techniques continue with Koreeda casting many amateur actors (as themselves) to lend realism to the roles. Furthermore, much of the film was unscripted to give the amateur actors an opportunity to tell their actual life stories.

The techniques employed by Koreeda to give *After Life* a documentary vibe also serve to make the film feel "real." This credibility helps viewers develop an appreciation for the characters' "lives." I now understand why the families in *Departures* say 「お疲れ様でした」 to their departing loved ones. *After Life* does have an overarching plot but this is not the most important aspect of the film. The purpose of *After Life* is not to find out how an eighteen-year-old deals with her emotions or how a long-dead man finally chooses his memory. Those conflicts are at best subplots to the amazing life stories of the deceased and the charming way in which their significant memories are brought to life on film. Koreeda has imagined what I believe to



be the perfect afterlife: warm, comforting and all about making movies.

If you enjoyed *After Life* and find yourself craving more Koreeda, definitely check out *Nobody Knows* (誰も知らない) next. *Nobody Knows* is based on the true story of a Japanese mother that abandoned her four young children (from four different fathers) in a Tokyo

apartment. Once again, Koreeda used amateur actors and his signature documentary style to create "reality cinema," an atmosphere that serves his heavy subject matter particularly well. You'll laugh, you'll cry, but most of all you'll want to punch the mother in the face. Thanks for watching! ●



Kicchiri Kitchen FISH!

I did not know how to cook fish before coming to Japan, mostly because fish in Michigan is either dreadfully expensive or of very poor quality. In Japan, things are obviously different. Sure, Greenpeace would have you believe we're over fishing the oceans and will run out of fish sometime this century, but I believe in moderation. Besides, one can only eat chicken for so long. Now I will tell you more about fish than you would ever want to know. .

How to Buy Fish

First, a word on buying fish. Fresh fish is extremely perishable. So much so that walking back home from the grocery store on a hot July afternoon can cause it to go bad. Therefore, here's what you want to look for in a fish.

If your fish is not prepackaged, you will probably be able to smell it. If it smells fishy, like ammonia, or in any way off, it isn't fresh. If the fish is missing scales, slimy, or dry looking, it is not fresh. If the eyes are dull or cloudy, it is not fresh. If you are buying cut flesh, it should be bright in color. If the flesh does

not spring back when you press it, it is not fresh. Chances are, you will not find fish that is not fresh in a country that regularly consumes sashimi, but knowledge is power. Keep the fish as cold as possible, and cook it the day you purchase it if possible. If you buy frozen fish, it should be thawed slowly in the refrigerator. Wrapping it in paper towels works quite well. It will take anywhere from 8 hours to a day. Plan ahead.

How to Cook Fish

There are two types of fish, lean and oily. Lean fish is usually white, like cod or tilapia. Oily fish is usually darker, with lines of fat, like yellowtail (ふり) or salmon. "Oily" fish is actually still leaner than most other meats. Oily fish takes longer to cook, because the fat transmits heat more slowly.

If fish gets too hot, it will dry out completely. If you have ever had a really bad kyuushoku, you know exactly what this fish tastes like. It is very easy to overcook fish, so a common practice is to remove the fish from the heat before it is completely cooked, and let the heat remaining in the fish finish the cooking process. Regardless, check the fish you are cooking constantly. Watch it like a paranoid security guard watches that high school boy with oddly placed piercings.

There are different ways to check your fish. It should flake a little bit along the seams, and spring back quickly when you press it. The flesh should be opaque all the way through. Knowing when fish is done takes practice, but I paid close attention and had it perfect by my fourth filet.

I know you're a little curious about the fish grill hidden under your gas burners, so let's go ahead and use it. If you don't have a fish grill, use your newest non-stick frying pan, and let's get this show on the road.

Grilled Yellowtail with a touch of lemon-pepper

- 2 filets of Yellowtail (ふり) (Other white fish works just fine.)
- salt
- pepper
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- Lemon juice

1. Heat your grill or fry pan over medium heat. Add the oil. Rinse your fish with cold water and pat it dry with paper towel. Sprinkle a pinch of salt over each filet.
2. Apply fish to heat. Cook the first side for about 90 seconds, then flip.
3. After about a minute, check the fish for doneness. Overall, the fish should cook within 1-3 minutes per side, depending on the thickness of your filets and how well done you like your fish.
4. Remove fish to plate, sprinkle with lemon juice and pepper, and serve with a summery salad. Something involving baby spinach and mini tomatoes.

Serves 2