

June 2010

Kimono 101
Dating the Yakuza
Hong Kong Ramen



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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
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[http://hyogoajet.net/
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We're also on Facebook!

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear faithful Hyogo
Times fans,

It's already summer! I hope
you are enjoying every minute
of 2010. For those not-so-won-
derful moments please read
and enjoy this issue. I am sure
it will cheer you up!

For a good chuckle read Paul's
great riddle. Feeling bored?

Pick up a new book and/or movie recommended by
JJ and Caitlin. Need a new adventure? Try Lauren's
travel tips for Tokyo or be lured to Awaji by Jonathan
with his love for pinsuyaki. For those who seek adven-
ture in love, Rika has the scoop on dating the Yakuza.

Are your taste buds craving and not raving? Be a pal
to your buds, try Travis' delectable dishes or noodle
through Hong Kong like Andrew did this past Golden

Dear Hyogo,

I'm not obsessed with the weather, really, I'm not.
It's just that I live in what amounts to a very sturdy
tent, and I have to walk to and wait on buses, and the
weather gets into my life. Also, I am turning Japanese,
and must open any correspondence with my reflec-
tion on the current season.

"It's hot, isn't it!" said the checkout lady at JUSCO as I
counted my coins. A week ago, everyone was saying
"It's cold!" I missed out on the "It's pleasantly cool,
don't you think?" and the "It's getting warm at last!"
"Yeah, it feels like summer," I stated, which was true.
She agreed, then took it back.

"No.. first comes the rain. *Then* it will be summer."
The rain?

I have been told that Japan has four seasons (no, *re-
ally*). Others have said five. "The month of June has a
lot of rain," my VP told me (in English). "I don't like it
because the floors get all wet and dirty."

My first thoughts when three straight days of rain
last August had my VP calling my house and telling me
to stay home from some of my first days of work
were, *isn't there a whole rainy season? How does three
days of rain wreak this much havoc?*

Week. Need some new digs and lesson plans? Go tra-
ditional and work the kimono as suggested by Raena
and try out a new activity provided by Matt. You
should wear a kimono while teaching!

We also reminisce about the awesome events we have
organized and participated in like the Hyogo PEPY
ride, the Tigers game, and the Kobe festival. Be sure
to check out the amazing photography by Jaclyn and
Noelle.

Please enjoy all we have to offer and if you have
anything to offer us our Hyogo Times hands are wide
open.

Ever genki,

Epi

Then, last week, classes were cancelled for 'too much
rain.' As much as I enjoy gazing upon the overfilled
rivers, the verdant green of the well-fed mountain-
side foliage, and free time at my desk without inter-
net, I'm not sure how to feel about this impending
rainy season.

I hope you are without roof leaks or window issues.
But outside of that, I find myself wondering what
there is to *do*. My best guess is to reach for a good
book (see page 9) or rent a few good movies (page 27),
or just kick back and read the Times. On those rare
days of sunshine, be sure to get your doses of both
exploration/travel and vitamin D.

Far as I can see, it's already begun. But that's enabled
me to spend some time chilling out at home or in my
work desk, just editing articles, happy as a little snail
munching on someone's garden plants.

Speaking of which... If anyone knows a way to deter
those little buggers, please write in and let me know.
I am overcome with murderous rage and the desire
to CRUSH SNAIL every time I peel one off my pathetic
little garden. Murderous rage can't be a healthy thing
to feel so frequently, even (especially?) in a month full
of rain and short on national holidays. がまんしょう!

Assuredly,

Lemmon

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Letter from the Online Editor

Hey everyone, I'm Jonathan Shalfi, and I'm the new Online Editor for the Hyogo Times! As Online Editor I will be in charge of everything that has to do with the web - websites, postings, PDFs, and some assorted small stuff. I'd like to tell you a little about what I'm working on and some of the changes going on with Hyogo Times and National AJET.

Right now, Hyogo Times exists as a PDF file emailed to members of a group list each month. What this means is that few people outside the Hyogo JET community are reading it, and even some members within aren't because they don't have the time to browse through an entire PDF. The Hyogo Times is full of great articles, stories, and photos, so it's a shame that so few people are reading it. This is why we decided to build a real website for Hyogo Times - Hyogo Times online, if you will! There are many benefits which will come out of this. First and foremost, by having content at an easy to find and easy to use website, more people will be reading our paper. Instead of having to read through a PDF, you'll be able to browse quickly through whatever articles strike your interest. Or let's say there's an article you'd like to share with a friend - this way you'll

be able to send a link, easy as that. Blogs will be able to link to or feature our content, and search engines will pick up our articles for all to find. Beyond this, there are a lot of practicalities which may not be so apparent. The Hyogo Times is a great resource in its teaching advice, travel columns, recipes, etc, so by having all our back issues indexed on a website it'll be easy to find useful information. Let's say you're looking for a place to travel to or an idea for ESS - all you'll have to do is click the appropriate category to get a list of the articles you want. Or do a search. I've only just started working on the site so there's not much to see now, but I'll give you an update in next month's issue.

I'd like to stress one thing though, which is that the new website is not intended to replace our current format of producing PDFs. A big part of what makes Hyogo Times so great is its beautiful layout - the cover art, illustrations and page design, which cannot be transferred to a website.

The second big thing going on has to do with National AJET. As of now, each prefecture's AJET chapter is doing their own thing with their magazines. That's why National AJET is putting together a sort of portal website to help JETs (and anyone, for that matter) access content from every publication. It'll be like a best



of, a single place to catch up on what's going on in other areas, and to read articles written by JETs all over Japan. The site is in its infancy now, and neither the name of it nor its format have been decided upon. I'll keep you posted.

The new Hyogo Times and National AJET sites are still a while away, but in the meantime you can check out the redesigned Hyogo Times page on the wiki (http://www.hyogoa-jet.net/wiki/Hyogo_Times) to download back issues. Right now we have issues posted back to March 2007, but I'll be uploading a few more soon courtesy of Jeff Krengel, a former Hyogo JET who very nicely sent me some old issues he had stashed on his computer.

Before I go, I'd like to make one request. Let's not forget that the best way to share things is personally, through the people we know. Make it a goal this month to find one person such as a JTE or friend who's interested in reading the Hyogo Times, and send them a PDF or a link to the wiki site. It won't take more than a minute!

MESSAGE FROM THE PR

Hi.

Goran gave me and Sarah Lewis a nice welcome to the PR seat last month, but I'd like to note that since then David Nam has been added to our group to complete the Hyogo AJET PR trifecta. Applause, applause. Showering applause.

And, Eric Lord has been given the title of events coordinator.

And, Sarah or Len is the treasurer, I think.

Some things seem like they don't really have a concrete form in the AJET world and have yet to be decided or whatever. But we would like to, I think, get some more involvement and stuff going, create a billion positions, and get Hyogo together more: JETs hanging out with JETs, Japa-

nese people, or other foreign types around here. Will you email us? If you want to, please email us, participate freely.

For one thing, we'd like to hear any thoughts you have on improving the mid-year seminar. We have some time to prepare and present our thoughts in advance this year. We're discussing polls, questionnaires and whatever to distribute between us now, but really any input you have is very much valued. If you have anything to say I really am interested in hearing it so email us or contact us in any other way with any comments or ideas that you have. I just want to put that out there now.

Anyway, soon July will be here, and there are some pretty cool things I am just going to list off briefly, Taj Ultimate (teams have been decided).

Sarah is playing with Nara. You can/ should go as a spectator), and on the same July 4th weekend there is this beach party in Tottori that people keep saying they are going to never do again and maybe they never will do it again, or maybe they'll do it next year! Anyway I want to go.

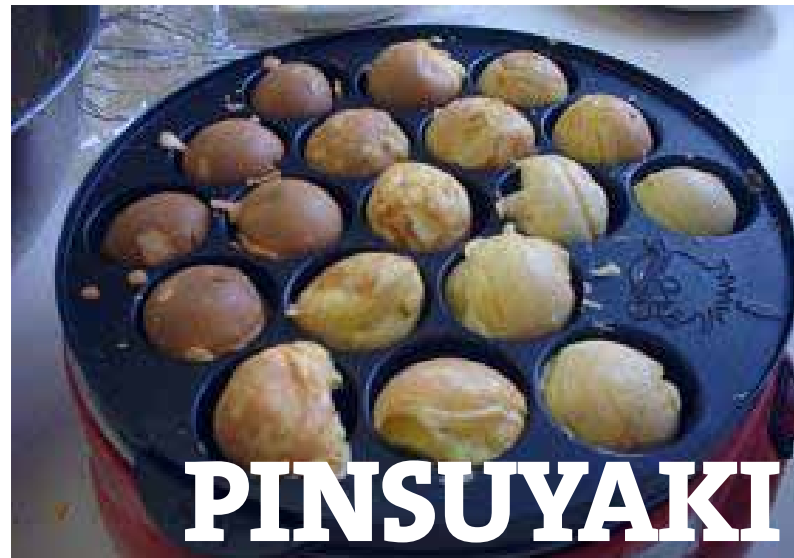
But after that, we're hosting our first event ourselves as AJET PR people...July 18th, at Suma Beach, we want to have our own beach party. Please come with us and have fun. There is a Facebook page. Weren't you invited? You were invited. Please buy Sarah a watermelon.

Peace out.

Andrew Brasher



July's Reason Awaji Kicks Ass (Festive Edition):



Summer. The plants are green again, the air is starting to thicken with moisture to a Jello-like consistency, giant bugs are being lured back to the island by the siren song of 6 inch tall Polynesian girls. Yep, summer. When a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of matsuri.

I'm sure matsuri are pretty nice all across this great nation. Various fried foods, goldfish with 6 hour life spans, public intoxication. But y'all are missing out on the thing that makes matsuri so very special here on the 'waj. Pinsuyaki. It's like if gushers were a pastry. The way the uncooked batter explodes to burn the insides of your mouth, the way the lines are irritatingly long, the irrational sense of pride we Awajians take in our signature confection. Yes folks, *pinsuyaki*.

To put it simply, *pinsuyaki* is deliberately undercooked baby castella, those boring

little cakes that come out of a thing that looks like a giant takoyaki grill with a lid. But they become anything but boring when they are full of hot, custard-y batter. Man oh man... pinsuyaki. *This batter issue doesn't seem like much of a distinction, you may be saying to yourselves. I can't see how something so terrible and boring can become something so delicious just by adjusting the cooking time.* To you I say please, come dine with me... in your mind...

Let's say we are going to a fancy steak restaurant (of which we have no shortage here, but that's not the point right now). You order a nice Awaji porterhouse with sides of scalloped potatoes and hollandaise sauced asparagus. And you order it well done. You see the waiter flinch, the other patrons turn up their noses. Because really, who orders a fine steak cooked well done? You've just ruined it. It

will be dry, lifeless... boring. That steak is your mainland baby castella. Where's the flavor? Where's the sense of adventure? If, however, you are the kind of person who knows how steak is done (and not with A1) you'd be ordering it rare. Still moving rare. Rare like pinsuyaki rare.

Don't call it a lack of patience that leads us to undercook our baby castella. We've got patience in abundance: after all, things move at a slower pace on the island. Think of it more as divine inspiration. Like if Moses came down from Mt Rokko with two sheets of metal liberally sprinkled with divots. We all know what the best part of baking a cake is, right? Not the finished product, but the snuck batter-licks during the process. It's the journey, folks, not the destination! And what's a better leisurely stroll than a baby castella filled with hot batter!

So at your next mainland matsuri, when you take a bite out of a baby castella and question the will of a god who would put such a boring and stupid treat on the face of the Earth, just remember that you aren't that far from a better place. A land of sublime beauty, of storied history, and of great summertime matsuri treats. Yes, friends. That place is Awaji. Where the grass truly is always greener and the snacks truly are runnier. ●

Jonathan Ruggles Reporting

Little, Big

By John Crowley

It was not so much a book as an atmosphere. I was completely enveloped in the world of this novel; sometimes I couldn't tell what was 'real' and what was 'imaginary'. This was until I stopped trying to find a separation and just marinated in the book. It became, in this way, quite an existential read. Surrendering the urge to define what's "really happening" and what's going on in the "dream world" was quite provocative and ultimately rewarding as a reader, you begin to discover that there may not be that large of a separation at all.

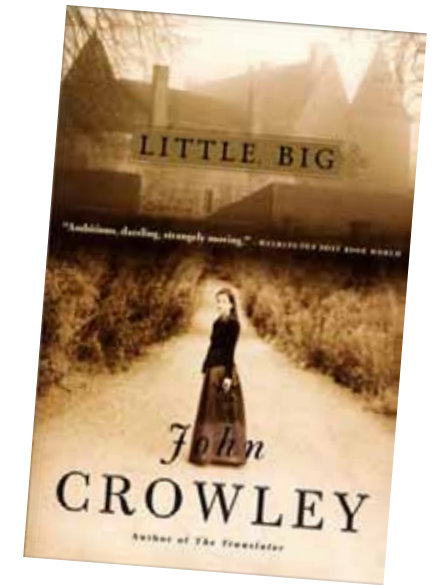
I must be very forthright: I have yet to finish this book. I have purposefully set it aside to read a few pages at times when I need to immerse myself in simple imagination. It was not for any reason other than that I truly didn't want this book to end. So, I am stretching it out with me into the months ahead, a few pages here and there. Of course, the time will come when I will have to set it down after its conclusion, but I think I may just smile, fulfilled, and turn it back to its cover and start again.

Little, Big is first and foremost a fantasy; an epic story that blurs the lines wherever it can, perhaps not always on purpose. It has been described as a 20th century fairytale and I do believe it is just that. The story follows generations of the Drinkwater family and their connection to their country home, Edgewood. There are cities, faeries, love, death, magic, tarot cards, a talking fish.....and the

magic only just begins there. It follows the family Drinkwater through their lives at Edgewood, with sons and daughters being mentioned and then becoming parents themselves. The home itself could have an entire novel dedicated to describing its eccentricities; essentially it is a single house made up of several differently styled homes. It was created as an all-in-one masterpiece, with several "front doors" that all merge together to form Edgewood.

I have read up on other reviews of this book, finding out about the allegories and inspiration for some of the happenings, but I will leave that to your own discretion if you want to discover more within the book. Its layers are truly profound – it has been considered by many authors to be an unsung masterpiece. I think what you most need for equipment when it comes to *Little, Big* is openness, a sense of awe, and the family tree on the first page (trust me, this will come in handy). I often flipped back to find out how people were related to each other, and I suspect that there is an underlying theme to these connections and what plays out in each character's life, corresponding to their heritage.

There were so many delightful characters to play with too; many of them had these really quirky names like Auberon, Aunt Cloud, Smoky, and Daily Alice. There is also the sense that nothing is wasted, there is a purpose for each part of the story you unfold. The book's layout is also unique, some chapters lasting for pages and others just a para-



graph. One chapter in particular made me smile. It was titled "The Folding Bedroom" and was just a few pages long. My assumptions about the chapter titles at this point were almost involuntary and I quickly imagined a magical bedroom that would just fold itself up at your whim as if to fit into Mary Poppins' purse. If you get to this chapter, I hope you too will pay special attention to what "The Folding Bedroom" reveals, as it made me smile when I discovered the magic of a play on words.

Essentially, *Little, Big* is a book that fills you with a kind of pleasant longing. For me, it was a yearning for the magic I sometimes can feel around me, but often remember as being an essential part of my childhood.

I appreciated that the book wasn't a commentary on the loss of innocence, but rather the manifestation of these characters accepted truths in life. If I were in charge of the world, I would put *Little, Big* on my 'must read' list. Since this is not the way of the times, I will instead consider it a present to anyone who needs a little more sparkle in their life. ●

Dating the YAKUZA

BY RIKA SAWATSKY

I have a couple of friends who were involved with the Yakuza in the past—one who dated a middle-rank member of an *inaka* gang and another who dated one of the higher-ups in Osaka. These are some of their memories.

The women who are not scared off by the fleets of black Rolls Royces, intricate tattoos, and the occasional missing fingers quickly become addicted to the Yakuza. The adrenaline rush of being part of something so risqué, where money overflows and everybody shows you the utmost respect, is intoxicating. If you date a higher ranking man, the younger members will rush forward to greet you (addressing you as *neesan*) and will invariably compete to hold your purse and bring you a drink.

The money is not so readily available now, what with the police gaining power over the organization, but there was a golden age. Most girlfriends, however, would rather not know what sustained this era. In fact, hardly any of the girlfriends asked questions for fear that they might later be interrogated by police. They were blissfully ignorant of where the money came from and simply enjoyed the *haute couture* it provided. If they were to make a guess, these boyfriends worked as protectors of *izakayas*, pimps, drug dealers (even though drugs were technically cause for dismissal), organizers of major money transfers, and the support behind the rise of

celebrities and politicians.

So, what were these guys like as boyfriends? According to my friends, they were “pretty normal,” although I doubt that designer labels, five diamond hotels, gourmet food, lavish parties, and expensive cars constitute the normative Japanese relationship. The Yakuza struggled with ostensibly conventional social activities as well. For example, they had their own baseball team but could not find other teams that were willing to play against them. Likewise, all social events took place at *kashikiri* venues because no regular person would approach a beach packed with tattoos or an establishment surrounded by formidable cars. Materialism aside, the Yakuza men differed from the purportedly weak *ippanjin* (see last month’s column) in that they were fearless, powerful, chivalrous, commanded respect, and took good care of others. The sex was also different. Many would use drugs to enhance the experience, using anything from ecstasy to topical creams, to the point where sober sex became entirely unremarkable. My friend told me she found her following normal relationship boring, but then again she “had had enough sex to last a lifetime.”

And what were the other girlfriends like? With this kind of power unfortunately came loneliness and isolation, so most Yakuza girlfriends had only each other as friends. They were identifiable by their

blonde or brown hair, Hermes bags, Chanel clothes, expensive jewelry, and heavy makeup. And, this ostentatious appearance concealed their overwhelming lack of self-confidence. My friends conjecture that most girls who are attracted to the Yakuza are rather insecure to begin with, believing that material wealth might give them a much-needed boost of confidence. True, dating the Yakuza helped develop this façade, but it also exacerbated the women’s insecurities. Because Yakuza girlfriends played no role in the organization, they were just as dispensable as their boyfriends’ other possessions. But, they rarely suffered any physical harm. *Shabu-zake* was the only significant threat. This meant forcibly injecting a girl with heroin so that she would be hooked and therefore unable to leave the Yakuza. The men would keep her around until they could put her to use, often in a tradeoff with an enemy gang. Thus stands the typical Yakuza girlfriend—beautiful, lonely, and insecure.

So why did my friends decide to end their relationships with the Yakuza? Louis Vuitton just didn’t do it for them. Their only futures in the gang were to become trophy wives (if they even lasted that long) with all the material wealth in the world, but shunned by friends, family, and society.

“But, it was fun while it lasted.”

Next month: My experience with *Goukon*—Japanese speed-blind dating ●

Do you have any questions you want addressed regarding love & relationships with a Japanese person? Send them to [rika.sawatsky@gmail.com](mailto:sawatsky@gmail.com) to have them answered by Japanese people in next month’s column.

MAIGO IN HYOGO



How many licks does it take to get to the center of a Tootsie Roll pop? No clue? How about this one: Where in Hyogo can this World Cup sign 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.

Japanese Riddle of the Month

BY PAUL SCHUBLE

いつも文句を言っている動物は何でしょうか?

(いつももんくをいっているどうぶつはなんですか?)

ANSWER AND EXPLANATION:

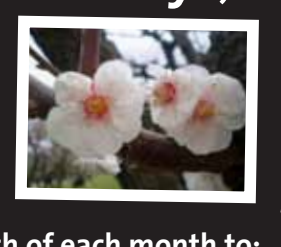
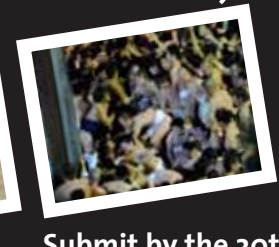
牛 (うし, cow)

So this one is asking “What animal is always complaining?”

In English, cows say “Moo.” In Japanese, they say “もう,” which also happens to be the sound people make when they groan or complain.

We Want Your Stories!

...and pictures, and opinions, and poems, and artwork, and essays, and....



Submit by the 20th of each month to: publications@hyogo.ajet.net



BY RAENA MINA

I love the kimono custom, and even though they are not the most comfortable things to wear. I think they are a beautiful reflection of Japanese tradition. I'm sure there are many ladies out there who have tried on a kimono at least once during their



stint in Japan, maybe some have even gone a step further and dished out the money to dress up like Maiko in Kyoto. I'm also sure you've all seen the *furisode* kimonos worn by the girls during Coming-of-Age day. For most people, the best part of the kimono is the obi, and the various elaborate ways you can tie them.

Obi musubi (tying the sash) is an art form, like doing grand scale origami with heavy, thick, silk tapestry on a live person. During my *kistuke* (着付け) lessons, many ladies practice hard repeatedly to perfect their technique in the various styles of *musubi*.

With summer just around the corner and its endless *matsuri* and opportunities to wear *yukata* and summer kimono (and before I write an article on "How to wear Yukata"), I thought it would be interesting to start off with a simple Kimono 101 and *kitsuke*, for those who may be interested in joining the tradition. I've only been studying for 9 months and am halfway through the *kitsuke* course, but I will attempt to lay out the basics of wearing Kimono.

Kimonos are without a doubt very expensive – let's just say we can compare their prices to those of k-cars. There are various types and styles, making the practice of wearing kimono very pricey. There are many parts involved; even just for one kimono, you need:

- ***hada jyuban*** - white cotton Japanese slip, or any regular comfortable underwear (sports bra, or else no bra – gotta keep the curves well hidden), or a western slip
- ***naga jyuban*** – the garment under the main kimono, without which the kimono cannot be properly worn, as it forms the basis and shape
- ***zoori*** – thonged, wedge-like slippers
- ***tabi*** – white ankle socks with clasps on the inner side, divided only between the big toe and second toe
- ***obi*** – decorative sash
- plus all the hoopla accessories, that are used to wear and tie a kimono properly:
 - ***koshi himo*** - a long cloth rope used as belts at the waist, or to help with tying the obi (三本)
 - ***date jime*** - wide sash worn under the bust to keep the collar in place (二本)
 - ***eri shin*** - a long thin plastic

sheet inserted into the *naga jyuban* collar to make it stiff; important for the shape at the nape of the neck

- ***korin belt*** - thin elastic waistband with clasps on the sides to help smooth out the kimono and keep the collar and front folds in place
- ***obi ita*** - stiff board worn under the obi to keep it in place and to keep it smooth
- ***makura*** - the "pillow" shaped tool used to help wear the obi sash; also for volume and shape
- ***obi age*** - decorative scarf to cover the *makura* and to keep the *obi musubi* in place
- ***obi jime*** - decorative cord to keep the obi in place

One kimono typically cannot be worn all year; there are seasonal kimonos. Winter kimono, which are typically made from wool if they are one layer, or the *awase* lined kimonos, can be worn from late fall until early spring, depending on the weather. In the winter, the practice of wearing *haori* (short coats for over the kimono, worn loosely open or with a loose bow tied in the middle at the opening) is slowly disappearing, giving way to shawls and fur stoles. Many girls also opt to wear extra layers under their *naga jyuban* for optimal heat.

In the spring to early summer season, there are *hitoe* kimono; thin, unlined kimono which can also be worn in September and October. The *naga jyuban* also changes, often made of a very thin, almost transparent fabric. *Naga jyuban* are really essential to wearing kimono and those who have had the opportunity to wear one know that it can get quite hot with all those layers. There is also the summer kimono, *ro* which is basically a transparent weave-like thin kimono, also worn with the summer *naga jyuban*. Geta can be worn in the summer. Of course during *Matsuri* season, girls prefer *yukata*, because it's often too damn

hot to wear a *naga jyuban*. There is even summer obi; usually a thin, airy weave. Many girls like to use *han-haba obi* – half the width, simpler and less bulky, more relaxing and quite cute. Typically these are worn with *yukata*.

Besides the seasonal kimono, there are categories of kimono worn for certain occasions, for example, weddings call for *tomisode* – usually a black, formal kimono with a design below the waist, worn by married women related to the bride and groom, and the *uchi-kake* – a long tailed brocade coat worn over the kimono by the bride. There are special kimono for tea ceremony, *asobi*, and casual wear as well. Most of them are classified based on the pattern, a subtle one or *ironuji* is best for tea ceremony. *Komon* or "all-over" print kimonos are best described as the "jeans" of the kimono world. *Honmongi* are for formal parties with a characteristic asymmetric pattern of having print on one shoulder, and at the bottom hem on the opposite side. Similarly, parties or special ceremonies require the long sleeve *furisode*, worn by unmarried women only. These are typically really expensive with elaborate patterns and materials. A *furisode* requires its own long sleeve *naga jyuban*.

There are also various styles of obi, and they vary depending on what kimono you will wear and for what occasion. *Maru* obi is the most formal, followed by *fukuro* obi, then *nagoya* obi. *Fukuro* obi can be worn with the *furisode* and has essentially replaced *maru* obi, while *nagoya* obi is more widely worn, generally for less formal occasions; it too has various levels of formal styles. When tied, it is difficult to tell whether an obi is *fukuro* or *maru*. Both are longer, heavier and have more elaborate decorative *musubi kata* (methods of tying the bow) than *nagoya* obi.

- ***Maru obi*** is made of heavy brocade
- ***Fukuro obi*** is similar to *maru* obi and is just as long but not as heavy
- ***Nagoya obi*** is shorter, usually made out of lighter fabrics and is

therefore much easier to tie, with the end part pre folded. It can usually be tied in the basic drum-like *O-taiko musubi*

The obi must be wisely chosen, as it's one of the most important parts to wearing kimono; with it, you can express your *kawaii*-ness using any of the various *musubi kata*. The formality level also depends on the fabric and design.

These days, although *kitsuke* is a common "hobby," if you will, the course takes a long time to complete and costs a lot of money. Many women do not know how to tie an obi in a decorative way, as it's actually kind of complicated and requires even more accessories to tie it on oneself. It is common for girls to pay to get it done, upwards of 5000 yen, unless they have a mother or obaa-chan who will kindly tie it for them. A *kitsuke* course can be around 3 months long, once a week, with a test between each course. Usually there is a monthly fee (around 4000 yen), as well as a test fee (3000 yen). It costs more if you plan on getting a license (6000 yen or more). Graduating can take up to two years. Inquire at your local kimono shop about classes: you can take them even if you just want to know how to wear the most basic kind of kimono with the most basic *obi musubi*, and only how to wear it yourself.

It sounds complicated, and kind of a pain in the ass, especially with all the rules on how and where to wear them. It's sadly a dying practice because of the price and high maintenance, but I believe it's a beautiful art form. If you're going to be living in Japan, I think it would be a shame not to wear a proper kimono at least once, and just to have a traditional one if only as a memorable token of Japanese culture.

More to come on this topic, as I haven't even scratched the surface on kimono culture. Stay tuned for next month's issue on wearing a *yukata* or summer kimono, and also for upcoming articles on the Kimono and modern Japan. ●



廃墟 Haikyo

Photos by Noelle Hollister
and Jaclyn Threadgill



TOKYO

During Golden week I spent four wonderful days exploring Tokyo. It was not the first time for me to visit the bustling capital but each visit brings with it new experiences and adventures. Tokyo is a great city to visit in any season and there is always so much happening. From the ancient and traditional to high tech and modern, Tokyo has it all.

Akihabara

This is the major electronic district of Tokyo. It is also known for its maid cafés. These range in price and 'services'. I visited one just for the experience but I think you need to have a high 'kawaii' tolerance!

Asakusa

Senso-ji (temple) offers visitors an insight into the traditional side of Tokyo. The craft and souvenir stalls are often crowded but offer some good bargains. Currently, part of the main temple is under construction but you can still enter. The Asahi Beer Hall ("the Golden Poo") is a unique building. It houses the Asahi Beer Hall and restaurant and marks

the location where Asahi has been making beer for over a century.

Ginza

Designer brand name stores, department stores and exclusive boutiques line the streets of Ginza. If your budget doesn't stretch to allow shopping in this area it is worth it just for a look, and there are some well priced restaurants here too.

Harajuku

Here is the fashion centre of Tokyo – whether it is on Takeshita-dori, which is lined with accessory, fashion, and cosplay stores, or on the bridge heading towards Meiji Shrine. I recommend visiting Harajuku on a Sunday as this is the day when many different people come out and express themselves. You will see many different people in cosplay or other costumes on the bridge and you might even score yourself a 'free hug'! Once over the bridge you enter another world heading to Meiji Shrine. The path winds through a forest and you soon forget you are in the middle of Tokyo. Meiji Shrine dates from 1920 and is a beautiful

Shrine where you can often see weddings on Sundays or holidays. Next to Meiji Shrine is Yoyogi Koen (park) where again it is easy to forget you are in the centre of one of the biggest cities in the world. It is a spacious park and when the weather is fine there are people using the park for practicing dancing or musical instruments, exercise, sports or just relaxing. You are always bound to find something interesting going on. Also in Harajuku there is an amazing Mexican restaurant – Fonda De La Madrugada - <http://www.fonda-m.com/>

Ikebukuro

Sunshine City is one of the biggest shopping malls in Tokyo with over 200 stores and everything from an aquarium to a 240 metre observatory. It also has many restaurants including an El Toritos.

Shibuya

Just outside Shibuya station is one of the busiest intersections in the world. Hundreds of people cross the road at each change of lights. The best view can be found in Starbucks across from the station on the second floor. If



you are prepared to wait a little you might even be lucky enough to get a window seat. Shibuya station is also home to Hachiko. This is the statue of Hachi (the dog) who waited faithfully for his master everyday even after his master had passed away. A movie was made about him a few years ago. Shibuya has streets lined with interesting shops, department stores and restaurants. There is an Outback Steakhouse restaurant here, and a delicious Indian Buffet restaurant.

Shinjuku

Shinjuku has everything - bars, clubs, restaurants and shopping. There is a Sizzler, Dubliners (Irish Pub), Hub (English Pub), Burger King, amazing burgers at Journal Standard, and many themed bars. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government building has great views from the 45th floor and on a clear winter's day you may even be able to see Mt Fuji. ●



PLACES TO STAY

I always stay in Shinjuku at the Kabuki-cho Toyoko Inn but there are plenty more budget and of course high end accommodation.

<http://www.toyoko-inn.com/eng/index.html> (Toyoko Inn)

Sakura House is another budget style accommodation with private and dormitory rooms.

<http://www.sakura-hotel-ikebukuro.com/index.php>

GETTING THERE

The Keio overnight bus leaves Himeji Station at 9:30pm and arrives in Shinjuku at 7:30am. The prices vary from ¥6000 to ¥9500 depending on the comfort level of the bus. The overnight bus can be booked through JTB travel agencies.

The shinkansen is obviously the fastest way to travel and discount tickets can be bought from discount ticket shops and then you can reserve your seat at the JR station. This will save you about ¥4000. Round trip from Himeji to Tokyo costs around ¥32000 and takes about 3 hours each way.



BY SIFTON ANIPARE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIFTON ANIPARE
AND SHELLIE BEE

Did anyone else in Kobe notice a few more people and several more balloons floating in the air than usual last weekend? If so, then good for you and not just because it means I'm not the only one hallucinating on the impending doom of Kansai summer. It means you must have experienced at least some of the magic that was the 40th Kobe Matsuri.

On May 15th, each ward of Kobe had its own festival; the celebration on the 16th took place in the heart of Sannomiya, highlighted by the Omatsuri parade up Flower Road and down Kyomachi-suji. Ad-

ditional stages were set up all over Kobe's downtown core for various performances ranging from hula to dragon dances, but the biggest features of the 40th Kobe Matsuri were probably the last two things one would associate with Kobe (unless you live there): samba and jazz. The parade, especially, looked more like Carnivale than your average Japanese matsuri. There were also a few things added to the mix for the kids, particularly the Mickey Mouse parade, and the Storm Troopers. お疲れさまです (otsukaresamadesu), you guys. お疲れさまです indeed.

The festival dates back to 1971 when the Port Festival (established in 1933 and modeled after

Portland Oregon's Rose Festival) and the Kobe Carnival (celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Port of Kobe) were combined to create the one singular "Kobe Festival." The first Kobe Matsuri was also the first to introduce Samba, so the proliferation of rumba and dazzling costumes on Sunday made a lot more sense. The score of jazz performers on the street also made sense, since jazz has been a big feature of the city since the 1920's. The Storm Troopers, not as much sense, but who cares? It's MATSURI!

If you missed it, try not to feel bad. There there, dry your eyes, and pick yourself up off the tatami. There will be many more festivals in Kobe to come! Save your energy. ●



Inside JET: *the Outside-insiders and Inside-outsiders*

BY EMMA NICOLETTI
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RYAN PARKER

[Editor's note: This is the final installment in a three-part series. You can read Parts One and Two in the April and May 2010 issues of the Hyogo Times.]

The outside-insider. Like the inside-insider, the outside-insider knows the rules of their own group: among their own, they are cool. But like the outside-outsider, the outside-insider unwittingly fails to grasp the rules when they are no longer in their group: what makes them cool in their own group marks them as strange and uncool in their new environment. They are the young office newbie who wears her clubbing high heels and plunging neckline to the Christmas BBQ at "family man" Steve's house. They're obviously cool somewhere, but they don't recognize that the rules aren't the same everywhere.

Goran: The case of the outside-insider looking out for his mates.

A day or so had passed since the new JETs from Perth arrived at Tokyo orientation, and we decided to explore Akihabara. Making our way through the crowded Tokyo station, we got separated somewhere between the ticket machine and the platform. Goran—who at 193cm

would struggle *not* to stand out from the Japanese—was among the first to reach the platform and jumped on the train that had just pulled in. Out of consideration for the slowcoaches, he positioned himself between the doors to stop the train from leaving. It works a treat in Perth, where the doors have sensors that stop them closing if an object is in the way, and this usually buys your friends enough time to make the train. In Japan, however, the doors are operated manually by the conductor. So while Goran was boisterously beckoning us to hurry up, the conductor was gesticulating for Goran to move out of the way. To drive home his point, he closed the doors on Goran, forcing him out of the train. We all caught the next train together.

Two and half years later: Saturday night, Tarumi Station. On the platform we met some other foreigners, and an inebriated and jolly member of the group struck up a loud and jocular conversation with Goran. The train arrived, and we entered the quiet carriage together. Goran took a seat while his new friend hung from an adjacent hand ring with a *chuuha* in hand. Charming, funny, personable: the kind of guy Goran

could easily be friends with. But his gestures and loud voice were earning him derisive looks from the other passengers. Goran remained congenial, but didn't match his volume or excitement, and sat with the repose of a teacher placating a monster parent. Our drunk acquaintance got off a few stops later. The doors closed; the last ring of his voice was gone. Goran nodded at another passenger whose scowl was quickly disappearing.

The inside-outsider

"Barthes encountered a large man, evidently a foreigner, wearing a dirty turtleneck and desert boots. He had glasses and an unkempt beard with considerable gray in it. Over one shoulder he carried (a pure gesture of style) an elegant leather purse. Barthes stopped to stare, and the man returned the stare. Quite rapidly, the man's costume disappeared and his flesh began to melt. A human being is a system of signs, a nexus of semes, cooperative and combative, that illude him." (Wilson 48)¹

The cultural theorist Michel Foucault often talks about the notion of discourse. Let me explain it this way. In everyday discourse, we talk and think

about the body in very commonsense ways: it has a head, torso and limbs, and it enables us to get around and do things. However, in the discourse of fashion, the body is a canvas, something upon which fabrics can be draped, or which can be painted with make-up. In biology, the body is a series of chemical processes, a particular assemblage of DNA and cells. The same entity, then, can have different meanings (canvas, chemical processes) in different contexts (fashion, biology). Moreover, we operate in different discourses simultaneously, and under different discourses wield more or less power. Miley Cyrus, for example, earns \$25 million a year, but she is not yet old enough to vote.

Like the foreigner Barthes met on the Champs Elysees, we are all in some contexts outside-insiders: always a little foreign, always not fitting quite perfectly into any situation, a little disempowered. Can we ever truly belong in our own culture, much less other cultures? But there is one more category to consider, that of the inside-outsider.

The inside-outsider is the reverse of the outside-insider. Their name or appearance makes it obvious that they didn't originally belong to that group; nonetheless, they seem to have understood and mastered its rules. They are the foreigner giving directions to the local High School student, the grandmother performing a one-handed air freeze in a break dancing com-

petition, the body builder deftly changing the baby's nappy. They don't *look* like they fit, but they *act* like they do.

In fact, we have met the inside-outsider at every stage of this journey. The inside-outsider is the girl who came here awkward and afraid, but who made fast friends with native and foreign inhabitants alike. It is Mikage-sensei's mother who now enjoys telling her friends how she made tea with a smiling foreigner. It is the Australian adult teaching the Japanese student how to fold the *fukusa*, or the once frustrated teenage girl deftly turning phrase in flirtatious emails. It is the tall foreigner nodding to his fellow train passengers that he too is glad the noise has subsided. Through interaction, communication and time, we develop the skills necessary to function in new discourses. At some point in our lives we will all experience being an outside-

outsider, an inside-insider and an outside-insider, but no matter our situation, with experience, patience, and communication we can all become that rare and empowered individual, the inside-outsider. ●

¹Wilson, R. Rawdon. *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game and Narrative Theory*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990.





A Perfect Day for PEPY

BY EMILY LEMMON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEN KRYGSMAN IV

Originally, I only knew a little bit about PEPY. I had seen the organization's displays at some JET events (like orientation-- which is probably how I got their e-mail in the first place). Then, I read more about them while trying to educate myself about Cambodia and land mines. This is a topic in the middle-school English book, of course, and as such, I (the World Citizen) was expected to give a knowledgeable summary of it to the rapt audience of my 2nd grade classroom.

There were two things I really liked about PEPY. The first was their attention to detail. PEPY is all about educating kids in Cambodia. However, instead of just building schools and training teachers (which is admittedly important), they also look into all the other factors that affect kids' ability to go to school and learn there. I remember reading about a water filter program that they implemented in villages which, once in practice, increased kids' attendance in school: they were getting sick less and going to school more. PEPY also has a program to give bicycles to

older students to encourage them to continue on to high school; with a means of transportation, they are better equipped to get there. PEPY actually pays attention to how things work "on the ground."

The other thing that caught my attention was the PEPY tour. There are several different tours, but the basic idea is you travel around Cambodia in such a way as to be ecologically low-impact (so, you spend some time on a bike, for example) while seeing more than just the tourist attractions offered by the area. You can even do overnight home stays in village homes. This appealed to me simply because, while I love touristy stuff, I also like the feeling of getting a little 'off the beaten path,' exploring what is 'real' about a place. PEPY tours are reasonably priced and come with a required donation. You go to learn something, travel, and do something good for Cambodian children. Win, win, win.

I sent an e-mail inquiring about time and location of Hyogo's PEPY ride because I was interested, I like PEPY and I wanted to know if this would go gentle off my events radar. It would probably be too long or

difficult or poorly timed, since I was booked for spring break already and I normally managed no more on my bike than the gentle slope to JUSCO. I more or less expected to learn about the details and dismiss the event, though there was some chance that it would all line up with my schedule and ability level and allow me to participate.

What I did *not* expect was to be offered the opportunity to organize and plan the event myself. I wanted to, really, but I didn't know anything about bikes, or routes. My first mental image was a bunch of JETs cycling around my train-stationless town. *Where are we gonna rent bikes here?* I wondered.

The previous year's ride had been in Himeji, though, which was comforting in one respect (I know it can be done there) and difficult in another (what do I know about Himeji?). Providence had it in for me: I had recently made the acquaintance of Chip Boles. Chip knows about bikes AND teaches in Himeji.

I wanted to plan a bike ride that would suit me. I figured, if we put together something I could do, anyone could do it. I also figured, in case no one else showed up to the event, I would at least have a fun and challenging day of biking. I also wanted



to follow PEPY's tour example by making it a sort of tourist trip of less-well-known Himeji sights. Chip knew Himeji's roads and attractions. He'd been on the previous year's bike trip and immediately was providing recollections and suggestions. We met one afternoon and plotted a route. He showed me which of the major roads had better sidewalks, and how there is a no-motor-vehicle-access path along parts of the Yumesaki River.

The rest is, as they say, history. April 17th was the day of the ride, and the weather was perfect. The cherry blossoms were in their late phase, which meant we got to ride through pale-pink blizzards. We visited a shrine near Himeji-jo, then rode around the castle to pick up the road headed toward the river. We stopped for lunch on the riverbank where Valerie Huang, Andrew Brasher,

and Erika Yoshida won the bento contest (criteria: healthy and eco-friendly). We followed the river northward to Mount Shosha, where we enjoyed Temple Engyoji for a while before heading back down. A quick stop at my eikaiwa student's takiyaki shop, and we headed back into the city to conclude our trip with a visit to Tegarayama Park and the "dark castle" contained there. The park also offers a view of the soon-to-be-wrapped Himeji-jo! A few stragglers stuck around for a dinner of milk ramen closer to the station.

The group was excellent, and ranged from serious bikers to people who hadn't even hopped astride one since they were kids. Everyone was energetic without being pushy.

Each participant was required to donate at least 2000 yen, which they could procure in any way

they liked, and beyond that the costs of the ride were 300 for the bike rental, 500 for entrance to Engyoji, and 900 for the ropeway up to the top of Shosha; these three were each optional in their own ways. We had a total of 17 participants, although some joined us later and a few ducked out early. We covered about 25 kilometers. All in all, the day was actually rather perfect.

Long term effects include the furiko-mi of 40,000 yen to PEPY, and my personal decision to invest in a bike not entirely made of rust. I hope that others who enjoyed the ride were positively impacted as well.

And for all those who missed out on the ride, keep an ear out for future PEPY bike events! The next might be in Himeji... or maybe not. Stay tuned. ●





Focus on This Play, This Moment

BY ERIC LORD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEN KRYGSMAN IV
AND LYDIA EBERLY

They are a symbol of Kansai, as much a part of the Osaka mystique as takoyaki or the Glico Man. Their stunning run of failure (one championship in 75 years) is a source of perverse pride to their masochistic fans as well as one of constant frustration. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, they have a following whose size and fervor is unmatched by anything else in baseball, on either side of the Pacific. Each summer, without fail, they inspire us, unite us, teach us and then they go out and get stomped by the Giants again.

They are the Hanshin Tigers.

Last April, about sixty members of the Hyogo JET community descended on Nishinomiya to cheer on the Tigers against the Chunichi Dragons from Nagoya. Hanshin is known throughout Japan for its fanatical fans, its historic stadium, and its shocking lack of on-field success, and all three calling cards were on full display for the local gaijin.

First came a quick stop at the local Kentucky Fried Chicken for a photo op with the Dohtonbori Colonel, source of one of the most bizarre curses in sport. After a quick bite of chicken and a drink

or two, a good-sized crew proceeded to Joy Uniforms, a shop specializing in customizing Tigers jerseys with iron-on patches and designs (<http://joy-uni.com>). Uniform decoration is one of the hallmarks of Tigers fandom, and many of the more hardcore fans come to the ballpark in full uniform and knickerbocker pants (think MC Hammer).

Properly equipped with jerseys, cheer bats, and balloons, the JETs proceeded into one of the most famous buildings in Japan. Koshien stadium was opened on April 1, 1924, to house the annual high school baseball championships – a role it maintains to this day. Each August, the stadium is taken over by the high school tournament, forcing the Tigers into an annual month-long away swing, known among fans as the “Shi no Roudo”, the Road Trip of Death. The field itself is sacred ground, in the literal sense – it is customary for players to bow before taking their positions, and defeated high school teams typically take dirt from the field as a souvenir of their trip there. Prior to its renovation in 2008, Koshien’s exterior was covered in ivy creepers, like Wrigley Field in Chicago – the ivy has been

replanted, but won’t grow back for another ten years.

The Tigers fandom is known as the most fanatical in all of Japanese sport. The fans spend the entire game in song, spurring on the players with organized, personalized chants. A run is greeted with a 50,000-person-strong rendition of *Rokko Oroshi*, the song of the Hanshin Tigers. A win is cause for continued celebration outside of the stadium, where the chants of present and past players are repeated until the stadium security finally clears everyone out. When the Tigers are on the road, the Tigers’ cheering squad, or *ouendan*, has been known to take over entire train cars, singing and clapping for the entire ride back to Kansai.

The game itself was a minor disaster. The Tigers’ starting pitcher, Yuya Ando, gave up 4 runs over 1 1/3 innings of work, most of the damage coming off a first-inning three-run homer by Tony Blanco. The Dragons then jumped on Tigers relievers Kazuya Tsutsui and Jason Standridge for five more, and led 8-0 after 4 innings. An RBI groundout by Japanese baseball’s elder statesman Tomoaki Kanemoto and a grand slam from shortstop Takashi Toritani gave Tigers fans some cause for celebration and hope, but the Dragons bullpen settled things down after that, and the game ended in an 8-5 loss.

In the end, though, it seemed appropriate that this first exposure to Tigers’ culture for so many gaijin ended in disappointment. Given the team’s unique record of futility and regret, it couldn’t really have ended otherwise – when it comes to Tigers fandom, blind devotion in the face of failure is kind of the whole point. ●



GETTING TO KNOW RANDOM JETS



THE BASICS

Name: Alvin Q.T. Tran.

Please call me: Alvin.

School and Location in Hyogo: Kinosaki JHS; Kinosaki.

How we know you: Vicariously through my food; I'm the one who brought éclairs to Hanami in Himeji.

Birthday: August 7, 1985.

Born and raised: National Capital Region, Canada.

Family: Parents, older brother, older sister, and an (occasionally evil) twin.

University and Degree: Carleton University, Bachelor of Commerce – Information Systems.

Other jobs that you have had: Private tutor, office administrator, web programmer, database administrator, short order cook, assistant event planner, customer service rep...

Travels: Boston, MA; Salem, MA; Los Angeles, CA; Las Vegas, NV; Mexico; Montreal, QC; Quebec, QC; Greater Toronto Area, ON; Osaka; Himeji;

Hobbies: Reading, hiking, cycling, cooking, baking, listening to music, swimming, gardening, volleyball, learning languages.

Staying another year? Yes

FAVORITES

Food: Dessert. Just ask Epi about

the time we went to Sushiro for a snack and I...err, nevermind.

Sports: If I have to pick, I'd be obligated to say Hockey. I am Canadian after all.

Music: Pretty much anything, but I have a weird thing for soundtracks.

Shop: Doguyasuji in Osaka

TV Show: at the moment, Dexter.

Movie: Anything not involving sparkly people.

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Surviving life. So far, so good. I hope I didn't just jinx it.

Best life experience: I won't know until it's over.

Motto to live by: Let it be.

I remember when... I didn't have anything to worry about.

What are you drinking? Whatever's in front of me.

Who would you like to meet? Someone to pass the time with.

Why should we elect you President of the World? You shouldn't.

Best thing about Japan so far? The inaka. Coincidentally, that'd also be my answer for the opposite question.

If it was my last day on earth I would... spend all my nenkyuu to cook for the people I leave behind and have week-long, all-night parties on the beach leading up to the day.

Interesting Fact about me: I can't pronounce my own middle name.

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: don't sweat the small stuff.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... it's never happened.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? Is there anyone who gets by without it?

Funniest Story involving a student: One of my students came up to me to talk about three-ways. It took me a few minutes to figure out he was talking about a kind of bag you can wear three different ways.

THE BASICS

Name: Travis Love

Please call me: Travis, or Trav.

School and Location in Hyogo: Living in Aioi, working at Kamigori SHS / Sayo SHS

How we know you: I write the food column! I also have a fondness for hats.

Birthday: August 6.

Born and raised: near Detroit, MI, USA.

Family: Father Mark, 53, Novelist, Mother Kim, 56, housewife, Brother Cameron, 19, annoyance / Firefighter in training

University and Degree: Hope College, B.S. (hon) Computer Science, B.A. (hon) English with a Creative Writing Emphasis / Japanese Studies

Other jobs that you have had: I've worked in IT in some way since my freshman year of college, and quit a full-time programming gig after six weeks on the job to come on JET. I also used to be a copy editor and a waiter/bartender.

Travels: Around Honshu, parts of America and Canada. So far.

Hobbies: Cooking, eating, writing. Occasionally ballroom dance.

Staying another year? Yes. I don't think one year gives the program enough of a chance, and I don't think it gives you a chance to settle into the work.

FAVORITES

Food: Jambalaya, with succulent shrimp, spicy andouille sausage, and fresh tomatoes. If you've never had it, let me know. We'll do lunch.

Sports: Not competitively, but I enjoy running and cycling.

Music: On any given day, my MP3 player is about half Jazz, half Rock & Roll. Today's selections include Rachael Price, Django Reinhardt, Bob Seger, and Billy Bragg. Also

some underground hip-hop.

Book: John D. MacDonald, *Bright Orange for the Shroud*. If you have never heard of MacDonald, and like mystery/suspense/crime, I suggest you do some research.

Usually, though, you can catch me reading something pulpy. Genre fiction. Lots of fantasy and science fiction as well.

TV Show: I'm a sucker for Joss Whedon shows, particularly *Firefly*. I also will forever have a soft spot for *Pinky & the Brain*.

Movie: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Casablanca*, and anything by Mel Brooks.

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Not having lost my sense of humor yet. There's a whole lot of hardship in this world, but if you can manage to laugh at yourself when you rush through shaving and miss half your face, you'll survive anything.

Best life experience: Studying English from a writer's perspective. Studying in detail how people depict other people is the sort of thing that changes how you see the world. That, and it taught me how to tell stories about it, some of which are ten times better than you'd think.

Motto to live by: "Hello, babies. Welcome to Earth. It's hot in the summer and cold in the winter. It's round and wet and crowded. At the outside, babies, you've got about a hundred years here. There's only one rule that I know of, babies—God damn it, you've got to be kind." — Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*.

I remember when... I climbed Mt. Fuji and discovered at the top that I'm acrophobic. That was great. Our editor once compared climbing down Fuji to traveling Mordor. I completely agree.

What are you drinking? Earl Gray or Jasmine tea. Or gin on ice. Depends on the setting.

Who would you like to meet? Terry Pratchett, while he's still alive.

Why should we elect you President of the World? I can fix your computer even if it's running Japanese Windows. Oh, and I rigged the electronic voting machines. I could also just bribe you with pie.

Best thing about Japan so far? Has been and will always be the trains. A good mass transit system is a beautiful thing.

If it was my last day on earth I would... just go for a walk. Make a sandwich. Let the dishes go a little longer. Find a bar where there's live music and good people and the air is clear, and sing and dance and laugh and tell stories.

Interesting fact about me: I used to write song parodies. Still do, occasionally. Some of them are good. Some of them are not.

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Pit your children against each other. If I tell them to do anything conventional, they usually get bored and fall asleep, but if I make it into a competition? They'll quietly copy sentences into their notebooks just to see who is fastest.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... Start talking in funny voices. Once they laugh, it's easy to regain control. The problem is usually when they're too loud.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? Sometimes the funniest things count as bribery. My all-boys agricultural class really

loves getting called up to write on the board. It's useful. And having an extrinsic motivator for those intolerable few never hurts. Stickers really do work wonders. That and the promise of candy.

Funniest Story involving a student: (Clean story) During my self-introduction, one student asked how much money I had. I pulled the change out of my pocket, glanced down, and told him. 87 yen.

(Dirty story) One of my students decided his New Year's Resolution was to "cut back the amount of masutelubeshon," so that's what he wrote on the handout. I saw what he had written on his paper, cracked up, and my JTE came over and corrected his spelling. This being the all-boys class, he actually presented and got away with it.



MINNA NO NIHONGO

5 FILMS YOU NEED TO SEE



Every week for the past six months I have scoured shelf after shelf of Japanese films in search of outstanding movies with English subtitles. The selection at TSUTAYA always delivers, but the most frustrating thing about these reviews is finding the perfect movies—in Japanese only. I have come across some great films that I have had to pass up because they would be incomprehensible to the Japanese-impaired. This month, however, I will no longer let this injustice continue; for your consideration, here are five mini-reviews of films you need to see.

(Note: I highly recommend you look up a synopsis before watching these films and watch them with Japanese subtitles turned on. Most of these films can be obtained legally in English, just not here, so there are detailed summaries on the internet.)

Departures (おくりびと 2008) cleaned up at the Japanese Academy Awards and won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, deserving every honor it received. I love *Departures* so much that I spent Golden Week going to the actual filming sights in Yamagata Prefecture. *Departures* is a challenge to describe both accurately and briefly; perhaps that is why I am moved to tears every time I see it. The main character desperately takes a job without any knowledge of the position. Through this mystery job he learns how to prepare people to “move on” after they have died, but more importantly, his job helps the living cope with loss and make peace with the deceased. I have heard that some TSUTAYA stores carry a subtitled version, but either way you should rent whatever is avail-

able or glue your eyes to the television when *Departures* airs again.

Train Man (電車男 2005) is a great date movie, especially if one or both involved are geeks. First, imagine being so socially inept that even women giving out tissues on the street avoid you. Next, imagine that you muster the courage to save some cute women from a drunken idiot on the subway. Finally, imagine that one of those women is hot, rich, and wants to date you. Add in a makeover and a 2-channel support group to help out along the way, and you have *Train Man* (and a geek fantasy come true). The film follows the industry standard chick flick formula and is therefore hopefully easy to follow; guy meets girl, they get together, guy screws up, they break up, but finally they work things out and presumably make some babies for *Train Man 2: Third Rail Boogaloo*.

Detroit Metal City (デトロイト・メタル・シティ 2008) is awesome if you like metal, and I love metal; therefore, the film is super awesome. *DMC* is about a wimp named Nigishi who aspires to be a pop star. He is no Hirai Ken, however, and instead becomes the front man of a death metal group. Nigishi attempts to keep his personal life and professional life separate, but his King Diamond/Gene Simmons persona rears its ugly head at the worst (for him, best for us) moments. The music is entertaining on many levels and by manga-turned-film standards, *DMC* has a pretty good script. I recommend a *DMC* twofer at your next karaoke outing: “SATSUGAI” (MURDER) followed up by “甘い恋人” (Sweet Baby).

Kamikaze Girls (下妻物語 2004) is the funniest Japanese movie I have ever seen. Japanese girl culture was not an interest of mine before I watched this film; previously, I had only experienced androgynous ballet manga and a film about playing *janken*. When I first watched *Kamikaze Girls* in college, therefore, the word “Girls” in the title shot warning messages into my brain. However, as I witnessed a girl dressed like a doll fly through the air after being hit by a car in the opening scene, my fears quickly morphed into almost painful bouts of laughter that rarely ever let up. *Kamikaze Girls* is about two lonely girls that become unorthodox friends. One is obsessed with Lolita clothing and the other is a biker chick; the cultural divide between them is the primary source of humor (and punching). *Kamikaze Girls* is also about JUSCO.

The **Otoko wa Tsurai yo** series (男はつらいよ 1969-1995) was recommended to me by a volunteer Japanese teacher. Her suggestion was to watch each of the films in order because, as a series spanning four decades, it shows the evolution of Japanese culture since the late sixties. If that interests you as

well, then I highly encourage you to pick up at least a few entries. They do contain challenging Japanese, but they are also rather easy to understand because each film follows the same basic plot. Tora, a traveling salesman played by Atsumi Kiyoshi, excitedly returns to his family in Tokyo only to storm off again shortly thereafter thanks to some petty argument. While working odd-jobs somewhere far away, he meets a beautiful contemporary actress, falls in love with her and is subsequently heartbroken. Tora then returns to his family in Tokyo, and they live happily until the next installment. Tora-san’s travels are a good way to vicariously “see” the country and the films show Japanese life from a simple yet charming perspective. The “Tora” character was such an important cultural icon that when Atsumi Kiyoshi, died people mourned “Tora-san” instead of the actor himself.

Thanks for watching! ●





NOODLIN' THROUGH HK

BY ANDREW TAMASHIRO

the Hong Kong islands. Some, like the Hong Kong style chow mein, were very much reminiscent of the dishes I used to enjoy living in Chinatown in LA after college. Heaping, steaming piles of thin strands of egg noodles or the broad, flat, rice-born chow fun were topped with our choice of pork/beef/chicken/seafood along with plenty of veggies (though, as were told at one joint, we only have 3 veggies: Chinese broccoli, cabbage, and bok choy). Cheap, filling, and most of all delicious, there were occasions where I am sorry to say we left food on the table. This is not Japan, where 遠慮 enryo, asks you to leave that last chunk on the plate. I was sad to see it left, but at the same time knew it impossible to force any more into my swollen belly. We also had to deal with the non-tapered ancestor to what I consider the superior Japanese chopstick (if you're not used to the difference between Chinese and Japanese chopsticks, let's just say you need better control with the Chinese version, despite the fact that dishes absolutely SMOTHERED in sauce are far more prevalent in China).

Our first night had me eating what I can only assume to be a Chinese style ramen; a fatty, beefy concoction contained within a rather large bowl.

It included the requisite egg noodles, but also boasted huge portions of tender boiled beef, soft enough to shred with those bulky chopsticks. It also contained almost an entire daikon, cut in half and also easily torn asunder. This was a fantastic bowl, far better than the hot n' sour soup, gyoza, or oyster and rice noodle dish we also ordered.

The highlights of my noodlin' through HK include a Japanese place as well. Ajisen Ramen, 味千ラーメン, is a chain based out of Kumamoto in Kyushu, and boasts some rather sturdy stuff. I got the spicy Ajisen ramen, and my companion ordered a tender beef ramen. The styles available in Hong Kong were unlike any I have seen in Japan, with a greater emphasis on unusual toppings like beef tendon. Despite the favorable exchange rate and general inexpensive nature of ramen, this stuff was pricey. It was also good, mediocre noodles being covered for by a thick, porky, flavorful broth and a spicy ground beef mixture that had me sweating and grabbing for tissue.

Obviously, Chinese food extends well beyond noodles, but I can't help but be drawn towards the stuff. Hong Kong is a fantastic destination for food-oriented folks of all kinds. ●

My destination this Golden Week was the homeland of ramen, and basically all noodles: China. Yet for such a short holiday, and one that coincided so conveniently with what would surely be enormous crowds in Shanghai for the World Expo, we opted for Hong Kong. Still only a decade into "one country, two systems," the sightseeing, shopping, and of course, food, were all highlights.

I'll spare you some of the gorier details of my trip and get down to business. I had noodles no less than 6 times in my 5 days spent on Kowloon and



Kicchiri Kitchen Hiyashi Chuka and Hiya-Yakko

BY TRAVIS LOVE

It's getting far too close to summertime for comfort, and while a glass of lemonade or something made with Pimm's can certainly take the edge off, lemons are getting expensive, and Pimm's is rare. Rather than eat ice cream all day, try one of these classic Japanese summer treats while chugging down gallons of iced mugicha.

This first one is dead simple. Hiya-Yakko is raw tofu with things on top. It's best if you get good fresh tofu, but if you don't live in the inaka, the best in the supermarket is Otoko-doufu, which has little man-faces on the lid and comes in packs of three. Silky smooth and individually sized. Of course, any tofu works just fine.

1. Put tofu in a bowl.
2. Sprinkle with any of the following: grated ginger, chopped green onion, katsuo

flakes, sea salt, olive oil, or soy sauce to taste.

3. Eat the tofu with a spoon.

Hey, I said it was simple. This is the sort of thing a hungover samurai probably invented one August morning, but it's fantastic. I enjoy my tofu with sea salt and olive oil, but you can use whatever toppings you like. Other herbs, goma salad dressing, cinnamon-sugar, whatever. Okay, maybe not the cinnamon-sugar.

If that was too easy for you, try Hiyashi Chuka! This recipe uses the wildly uncommon Chuka Soba (中華そば), literally Chinese Soba, which is found in your supermarket's refrigerated section. I'm sure you could use any noodles for this if you wanted to, though. Feel free to adjust the toppings to taste as well. Remember, this is cooking, not alchemy.

- 4 packages Chuka Soba (中華そば)
- 100 g boiled chicken breast,

- sliced
- 1 cucumber
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp sugar

For Dressing:

- 1/3 c. water
- 3 Tbsp. Rice wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. Soy sauce
- 3 Tbsp. Sugar
- 1 tsp. Sesame oil (ごま油)

1. Beat eggs in a bowl. Add sugar and mix well. Heat a frying pan on low heat.
2. Mix all of the dressing ingredients together in a small bowl.
3. Heat some oil in a frying pan and pour about one quarter of the egg mixture over the pan. Spread the egg thinly and fry for one minute. In this way, make four thin and round omelets like crepes.
4. Slice the omelets into thin strips. Cut the cucumber into thin strips.
5. Boil lots of water in a large pot and add chuka noodles. Boil for 2-3 minutes.
6. Drain noodles and run cold water over them to cool them. Put the cold noodles on a plate.
7. Top the noodles with all of the slices, arranged in a pretty Japanese fashion. Garnish with that red pickled ginger, beni shoga (紅しょうが). Pour the dressing over noodles just before serving.

Serves 4. ●

Questions? Comments? Suggestions for future dishes? Send them to Travis Love – dr.t.love at gmail.com

English Sensei Spirit: Picture Dictation

BY MATTHEW STOTT

Working in pairs, students describe a picture to their partner, who in turn, without looking at the image, attempts to reproduce it accurately according to the description.

A long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, I was in an input session at Tokyo Orientation doing an activity very similar to the one I'm about to describe to you. The seminar leader put us into pairs with the people sitting at the desks directly behind us, and gave each of us a sheet with an array of lines and shapes. Without showing her the picture I'd been given, I had to describe it in careful detail to my partner; she, following my instructions, had to try and draw the same image on a blank sheet of paper.

Since then I'd always wanted to use that activity in my classes, and have in fact been able to do so successfully with 3rd year Oral Communication classes, with a couple of significant changes.

First, while native speakers will bring to an activity such as this a ready store of detailed questions and (one would hope) a large vocabulary, if you want to implement this in a Japanese high school classroom you'll need to address their language needs. I use a worksheet adapted from sets of preposition flashcards I

found on Lanternfish (<http://bogglesworldesl.com/prepositions.htm>), and on the whiteboard I draw a series of geometric figures which I have the students identify ("square," "line," "circle," etc.). I also draw a picture of an outdoor scene, divide into nine squares, and have the students call out the positions on the picture ("centre," "middle left," "middle right," "bottom left", and so on). I might also draw pictures in various postures ("facing us," "facing left," etc.). Teaching them the difference between "portrait" and "landscape" is not a bad idea either.

Next, I demonstrate what the students have to do. The most efficient way to do this—I now realize—would be to have the JTE act as my "partner," listening and drawing as I begin to describe a picture she cannot see (but which the students may see). What I've actually done hitherto is briefly describe a picture to the students, have them draw along with the instructions, and then show them what the picture actually looks like. It's a good listening activity, and it drives home the need to phrase and parse instructions carefully, but the demonstration with the JTE might inspire more confidence in the students that they will be able to perform the task themselves. Why not do both, if you have the time?

Finally, the best part. Here's where I put the students into pairs, and completely mess with their heads by giving them

actual paintings and photographs to work with—not just circles and squiggly lines. Cries of "Muri!" inevitably peal across the room, but if I've addressed their language needs sufficiently, they actually seem to appreciate the upping of the ante. It helps, I find, if they understand that even if they don't know the name of an object in English, they can at least describe the shape. After 5 minutes, have the partners switch roles.

NOTES

- When you're distributing the images, make sure you do it in such a way as to prevent the listener glancing over at another pair of students and inadvertently seeing the same picture he or she is supposed to be drawing.
- You also want to prevent both members of the same pair describing the same image to each other (then again, that might be interesting). I tend to give the painting to Student A, and the photograph to Student B.
- Landscapes or portraits are fine, but try to avoid images with too much activity. If you like Breugel's work, go for something like *The Peasant and the Birdnester* over *The Triumph of Death*.
- This is important. Before you get the partners to switch roles, give them a few moments to compare their drawing to the original image. It will help convey to the students the point of the activity, and give it a sense of closure. I'll say it again, this is important, so your timing for the whole lesson will be crucial. ●