

MARCH 2009

IS JAPAN
DRIVING YOU
CRAZY?

ITS MARCH
MADNESS!

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

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From The Editor...

Hello One and All! I hope you're enjoying the weather turning around (hopefully for longer than a week!) and are starting to come out from under the kotatsu!

Last month, we had a great event — the Himeji Valentine's Day Prom — that no one should've missed, if it could've been helped. The events of that were written up by none other than the Prom Queen herself, Kate Emory!



In other activities, our Ramentary guy took a break from writing a ramentary this month because he had more important things to do, i.e. not break any bones while running in the annual Hadaka Matsuri (Naked Man Festival) in Okayama! He came back in one piece (as far as I can tell) and wrote up a little bit about this year's running of the naked men.

Speaking of running, the Tokyo Marathon is coming up at the end of the month so if you want an excuse to trek to Tokyo on the weekend of March 28th-29th, the marathon is as good as any, and our own Brenda McKinney will be running in it, so go support her if you can!

And if you're worried about train costs of getting there and back, fear not! Clay was good enough to write something up on the "golden ticket" that is the Seishun 18 Kippu. It allows unlimited travel on the JR lines to as far as you want/can get to in one day, and can be bought for a little over 10,000 yen for a total of 5 days of travel. You can even use it in other ways, and for those details, read on!

If you decide to buy the Seishun 18 ticket, it's probably best to travel farther than Osaka to get the most out of it, but if you're going from Himeji to Osaka, the Seishun 18 for one person in a day still costs less than round trip tickets. There are some great things in Osaka to check out if you haven't already, such as the new exhibit in the National Museum of Osaka, which is running to the 22nd of this month. And just your luck too — there's a review of it in here by new writer Alison Miller.

All this talk of travel is getting me hungry, so I might just make myself a pot of Bob's recipe for the month and add some fuel to this engine. In the meantime, I hope you're enjoying the end of term (students graduating = sadness) and continue reading and writing for us!

Thanks as always!

— Ann Chow

Meet Your Prefectural Assistant

Name: Hannah Starr

Nationality: American

Hometown: Born and raised in the Chicago suburbs, specifically, St. Charles.

JET Year: First. That's why Chris does all the hard work.

Employer: Hyogo Prefectural Government, international relations division (AKA the Seat of Power).

Hobbies: I love to read, play video games and go sight-seeing. But I'll try anything once.

Past:

I went to Lawrence University, a small private liberal arts college in freezing Wisconsin, where I majored in East Asian studies. I studied abroad in Japan when I was a junior and returned to the US for senior year and graduation in June.

Present:

Being a prefectural assistant is also only a small part of my job since it seems Hyogo JETs do alright all on their own.

My PA duties include fielding phone calls and answering the e-mails Chris doesn't. When I'm not being a PA, I work with two other translators in my office. I check their work, they check mine. We translate everything from road signs and names of prefectural facilities to letters and conference documents. We also interpret at receptions occasionally.

Unfortunately, with three of us, there can be a shortage of work, so I've become much more knowledgeable about news than I ever was in college.

Fortunately, I don't only have translation work. Sometimes, I get to visit schools or international associations and give presentations or play the token foreigner for whoever wants one.



Future:

I have recontracted for another year, so I look forward to getting to know you all better. I also look forward to actually going to one or two of the orientations and Yashiro.

As I'm sure you've noticed, I'm not nearly as long-winded as Chris. Plus, he said all the interesting information last month. However, because I'm not anti-social like he is, you can all invite me out for fun events. I hope some people found this interesting!



Recipe of the Month:

By Robert
Hollands

Kimchi Jigae

While the month of March brings the true beginning of spring and the hope for warmer days ahead, the sad truth is that for the majority of the month, there's precious little respite from the cold.

When I came to Japan, I was amazed (as I'm sure we all were) by the amount of indoor exposure to the four seasons. Many houses have little-to-no insulation and are built with the sweaty summer in mind.

And you can forget about central heating, because it's expensive to install and creates the potential for a lot of wasted energy on the part of unscrupulous

tenants. Unfortunately, this means that during the winter, there's seemingly very little you can do to protect your fingers and toes from Jack Frost's ravenous bite.

Actually, there are a few things: You can hit up an *onsen* or two or buy some *HeatTech* underwear at UNIQLO.

But the one wintertime ac-

tivity I most enjoy is sitting under the *kotatsu* with my friends and enjoying a *nabe* pot filled with fresh seasonal leafy vegetables, seasonal seafood such as oysters or crab (if you have deep pockets), tofu, or anything else we find at the back of our fridge — though we're always careful to smell it first. Try it sometime!



Just don't do it too often because even though the warm stew will help you survive the last throes of winter, you'll quickly tire of standard Japanese *nabemono*. It's simply too tame: just right on the salt but severely lacking in spice.

Sure, there's *kimchi nabe*, but even that's a pale imitation of the original Korean dish *kimchi jigae*. So why not do yourself and your friends a favor one evening and give them the real deal, which is sure to have your eyes watering (in a good way) and will warm you through straight on to cherry blossom season?

The one critical element you need for this recipe is kimchi, which, if you didn't know, refers to a Korean food preservation technique. The variety of kimchi most well known outside of Korea is easily *baechu*, which is spicy and red in colour.

Fortunately, there are a lot of different kinds of *baechu* to choose from at your local supermarket, but you might want to consider a special trip to visit your local *ajima* (the Korean equivalent of an *obaasan*) who will almost certainly be able to supply you with a far superior product.

Commercial Japanese kimchi is good, but it simply isn't sour or spicy enough to do justice to this recipe. Use it if you must, but it might well be worth it to you next time you're in Osaka to head down to Tsuruhashi — otherwise known as Korea Town — to get the real deal.

Once you have your kimchi in hand, the rest couldn't be simpler.

Kimchi Jigae

Ingredients:

- 500 g pork, sliced into strips
- 1/2 pack of firm tofu
- Assorted vegetables, roughly chopped: green onion, bean sprouts, mushrooms, etc.
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 3 cups water
- 2 cups kimchi
- 1 cup kimchi juice
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tbsp gochujang (like miso, but sweeter. Can be found in the Chinese section of your supermarket)
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp chili powder



Directions:

- In a pot, stir-fry the pork and garlic in the sesame oil until the meat turns white.
- Add the kimchi, and continue stirring until the kimchi is cooked through.
- Add the water, kimchi juice and chili powder. Bring the contents of the pot back to a simmer.
- Add the gochujang, stirring it in to dissolve it completely.
- Add the tofu and any vegetables you have except for the green onion. Cook the vegetables as thoroughly as you like, but save the onion for last as you don't want them to wilt.
- Turn off the heat and add the soy sauce. Stir the soy sauce in completely.
- Serve with steamed rice in a separate bowl.



WHEEL OF JEOPARDY!

Time for the H.T. Quiz: The Drunken Irish Edition! By Joy Feddes

1 • Saint Patrick:

a) The second-best saint, after St. Blaise, patron saint of vets, wool combers, town criers and weavers.

b) Ties for first place of awesome saints, with St. Martin de Porrees, patron saint of hair dressers.

c) He's the best!.

2 • What's your favourite colour?

a) What language did you type that in? Take those U's away!

b) Rainbow! Because I'm indecisive.

c) Green. No, blue. No, green. No, blue. (I'm not indecisive. Japan's got me all confused.)

3 • Would you say you're a winner?

a) My mom does!

b) I give St. Patrick a run for his money, even though I haven't reached sainthood (yet).

c) I won a spelling bee in the Fifth Grade. Booya!

4 • Would you ever teach your students dirty words?

a) Yes, yes I would.

b) Let's be honest — they teach me.

c) They can barely say "I'm fine, thank you," so I don't want to complicate things.

5 • In your mind, March is synonymous with:

a) Let's try that question again with a word I understand please.

b) San-gatsu!

c) Leprechauns, pots of gold — Lucky Charms!



6 • Have you left Japan since you arrived?

a) Leave? What? You're crazy!

b) JET: Jet-setting Everywhere and getting paid for it.

c) Yes, a couple times, but I don't tell my teachers. I haven't bought them omiyage yet

7 • Since coming to Japan, I find myself using "!" more:

a) It's better than shouting "kawaaaaiiiiiiii" whenever you see something.

b) Me too — because my life is so exciting!!!!

c) As long as when you write them you don't make the dot into a heart you'll be OK.

8 • Do you have any visitors coming to see you?

a) Do you count?

b) No... (cries)

c) I do! More than you! Ha ha ha!

What your answers mean:

Mostly As: You know what February's

gift to you was? How delightfully short it was! March's gift is the hint of spring you so desperately crave, followed by drinking under cherry blossoms, thanks to April! Cherish your seasons, Mostly As, because there are only four of them in Japan.

Mostly Bs: The BBC posted a list of the "100 Best Books" or something, thinking that most people had only read about six of them. Have you been reading lately? You don't want to turn out like Mostly As. Build up that English vocabulary. Someday you'll need it, I promise.

Mostly Cs: It's your birthday! Happy Birthday! My gift to you is a tidbit of information. The word Internet is capitalized. I guess it makes sense, there is only one Internet. In case you knew that already, I'll also tell you that it has been estimated that there are approximately 10,000 three-leaf clovers for every four-leaf clover. Enjoy!

Himeji Valentines Prom

By Kate Emory

A Message From Your Queen:

Ah! February 14th! To many of you it means scrambling to find your special someone something special; to others it means throwing "Happy Singles' Awareness Day" parties. To those lucky few who came to Himeji, it meant redoing one of the biggest parties of your High School career (or finding out what all the hype is about for Americans).

I'm talking about prom! The time-honored tradition of dressing up, going out, dancing the night away and making romantic time in K-cars. Only, this time around, in Japan!

The theme was classic: "Enchantment Under the Sea." The decorations were authentically made by our dedicated Prom Decoration Committee (of course we had a committee!). The location was the Time Machine Karaoke at Dai Geiki Building in Himeji, in a room that could only be described as... a high school gym! There was a stage, some chairs and tables, a multitude of balloons, a disco ball, and a lovely photo backdrop to get that perfect prom portrait with your sweetie.

Usually Prom is well-known for having very eclectic music (i.e.- sucky music), but the Himeji prom utilized modern technology, including three live karaoke performances to maximize all of your favorite school dance songs out there. The music began promptly at 8 p.m. when the doors opened, and lasted till 10:30 p.m. when the prom-goers were kicked out to continue the party elsewhere.

We had quite the crowd as well! Around 50 people turned up from all over: JETs, non-JETs, and a healthy dose of interested Japanese. This doesn't count the multitude of curious karaoke-goers who peeked in to see what the awesome fuss was about. The

event brought out first-year through fifth-year JETs and people from as far south as Awaji and as far north as Tajima.

Prom wouldn't be complete without superlatives to vote on! In the back of the venue, several voting boxes were located, including Class Clown, Most Likely to Succeed, Biggest Flirt, Best Dressed, and the standard Prom King and Queen.

It was a challenging task to decide who deserved what the most. The dresses, the drama, the dancing! It came to an end at 10 p.m. with the crowning of the lucky winners.

The crowns, made with love and glitter by the Prom Committee, fit the occasion. Best Dressed went to Mr. Non-Jet Eoin Moore from Kobe for his lovely house jacket and cut-off shorts. Biggest Flirt went to first-year Stacey Shanahan with the help of her innovative and flirty dress. Class Clown went to Philip Farrell, the look of joy on his face during the crowning proclaiming all his feelings on the matter. The title of Prom Queen had several contenders, but ultimately went to third-year Kate Emory (it may have had something to do with her awesome rendition of *Heaven is a Place on Earth* on the karaoke stage). Prom King was pretty much a no-brainer, given to organizer and artist, second-year Chip Boles.



Prom King and Queen Chip Boles and Kate Emory

After prom, many of those who came from afar returned home, while those still interested in rocking-it-out ventured to Tiger Bar for some more late-night shenanigans.

And for the truly adventurous (or those who didn't feel like the fun should end just because the trains in Japan don't run after midnight), everyone capped the night off by heading back to where most of the Prom Committee originated — Aioi! The after-party was so great, to spare all of you JETs who could not make it, I shall not write it up. That way, you can imagine us spending it huddling in a gaijin-trap and not having a truly awesome time.

Ah Prom! I never thought I would revisit it again. The dresses! The drama! The prom night festivities! Oh, the memories!

Lesson Plan of the Month:

Cinquains

By Matthew Stott

Japanese
Polite . Shy
Working Studying bathing
People have black hair .
Samurai



Back in Australia I was a high school English teacher by trade—albeit a very inexperienced one. On one of my practicals, I taught a poetry unit to a class of Year 8, and I have been able to adapt a couple of lessons for my senior high school classes here in Japan. Getting your kids to write poetry is a fun and creative way to reinforce phonics and basic grammar points. The biggest advantage, however, is that at the end of the lesson your students have produced something tangible that they can hang on the wall and show to their peers: something they find, believe it or not, highly motivating.

Earlier this year I had my *sannensei* writing *cinquains*. For those of you who weren't paying attention back in

junior high school, a cinquain is a five-line poem written according to the following model:

Line 1: One noun naming the subject of the poem.
Line 2: Two adjectives describing the subject.
Line 3: Three verbs describing the subject's actions.
Line 4: Four words giving the writer's opinion of the subject.
Line 5: One more noun giving a second name for the subject.

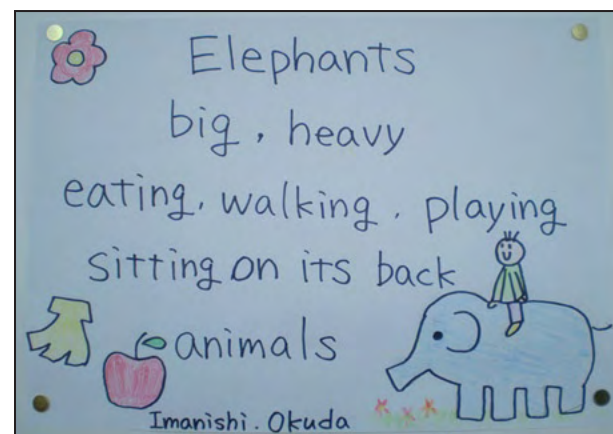
As you can see, the form demands a basic familiarity with the parts of speech (i.e. nouns, verbs and adjectives), but is otherwise simple enough for English language learners to work with. (It's almost poetry-writing-by-numbers, isn't it?)

Start by reproducing on the board two cinquains which meet the aforementioned criteria. These can be readily sourced on the Internet or, if you've a knack for it, via your brain. Go through each word of the first cinquain and ask

the students to identify what part of speech it is. Repeat with the second cinquain, this time asking students to count the number of words in each line. This way, they learn the conventions.

Next, write a cinquain together with the whole class, asking individual students each to supply a word. If you have a particularly shy class, you might want to have the students working in pairs—especially for Line 4. Whatever you do, don't let this activity drag on: it should be fast-paced and exciting. Praise the students for their efforts and lead them in a round of raucous self-congratulation for a job well done.

Now comes the fun part, when students write their own cinquains.



Depending on their ability, they can work individually or in pairs. You should allow them to use Japanese-English dictionaries, and you should check their spelling, grammar and expression as they write. Indeed, if you have the time and if you would like to hang the

cinquains on a wall afterwards, it isn't a bad idea to have the students write a draft version first. Some JTEs may be reluctant to display a student's work if it isn't "perfect."

A final word — if you do intend to display the poems, make sure you

conduct this lesson early in the school year, or at least early in the term. You'll give your students a chance to take pride in their work; and if you give this lesson before the *bunkasai*, they'll be able to show their parents and friends, too.

Get Your Art On in Osaka

By Alison Miller

Nestled in the basement galleries of the futuristic National Museum of Art in Osaka, *Avant-Garde China: Twenty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art* awaits, ready to amuse, shock, and delight museum patrons.

By the late 1970s, the Chinese people had survived wars, famine, the Cultural Revolution, and the tumultuous political reign of Mao Zedong. Along with the economic opening of China in the early 1980s came greater freedom of expression, and Chinese contemporary artists followed suit with a great outpouring of creativity.

In the last decade, Chinese contemporary art has soared in popularity and market value, and is considered one of the most vibrant art scenes today. *Avant-Garde China* is the first major retrospective of Chinese contemporary art to be shown in Japan, and provides a broad selection of movements within Chinese contemporary art, giving museum-goers insight into the complex emotions that accompanied China's rise in global economic and political power.

The exhibition begins with two-dimensional works that are political in nature. In paintings such as *Great Criticism: Nikon*, the political pop artist Wang Guangyi appropriates the visual language of communist propaganda art and combines it with a critique of China's new commercial culture. The cynical realist painter Fang Lijun provides a critique on the soul of the new China, creating bright and upbeat images of people with eerie empty smiles and hollow blank eyes. Perhaps the most interesting paintings are those of Zhang Xiaogang, whose *Bloodline* series of photo-realism works questions the notion of family in post-Cultural Revolution China.

The exhibition also provides a sampling of video art, including Cao Fei's whimsical *Hip Hop Guangzhou* and *Rabid Dogs* videos. In *Rabid Dogs*, we see the everyday functioning of a generic office, except the workers are all actors costumed as dogs, complete with Burberry accessories. Be forewarned that among the other videos are a few shock-value works that may offend more sensitive viewers.

Avant-Garde China also includes a few installation pieces, such as Xu Zhen's *The Last Few Mosquitoes*. These slightly oversized insects are actually sucking blood from the



gallery wall, be sure to get up close to watch their uncanny movements. Finally, don't miss the second basement installation pieces of Peng Yu and Sun Yuan. *Old Person's Home* is a large scale installation by this artist team that includes life-like mannequins dressed as old men from various cultures who move around the room in automated wheelchairs creating an amusing scene of chaos.

Avant-Garde China runs through March 22nd in Osaka, after which it will move to the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art. The National Museum of Art Osaka (NMAO) is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday (closed Monday), and has late hours on Fridays. Admission to the special exhibition is 1,000 yen. The museum is about a twenty minute walk from Osaka station, or a fifteen minute walk from Yodoyabashi Station on the Mido-Suji subway line. For additional information in English, including an access map, visit the museum's website: <http://www.nmao.go.jp>.

The Naked Run Hadaka Matsuri

By Andrew Tamashiro

Last month, I was one of the bravely foolish (or is that foolishly brave) foreigners who decided the prospect of wrapping some cloth around my pelvis, slapping fabric wrapped cardboard on my feet and jostling with a bunch of sweaty men was my idea of a good time.

Yes, I took part in Hadaka Matsuri/Naked Man/Saidaiji Eyo at Saidai Temple in Okayama City. There was a good 40 or so of us runners on the bus, representing five or six different prefectures. As far as I knew, there were only four JETs from Hyogo taking part, and I was hoping to uphold Tajima's sterling reputation as the region which seems to have JETs who get a bunch of pretty bad, but not life-threatening, injuries.

The bus ride to the temple was uneventful. Folks were drinking, there was talk of cooperation in the event someone comes out with the main Shingi stick (rumored to be worth 500,000-1,000,000 yen), and a poll is taken of those who played "real sports" and what skills could be applied. As a guy of average height and build who played basketball, tennis and volleyball, my advice went un-

heeded.

We got to the temple and walked around a bit, trying to adjust to the cold. Okayama City is nowhere near as cold as the town I call home (Asago for those who are keeping track), but it still wasn't warm enough for a fundoshi and tabi outfit to keep one's nipples from getting hard. Speaking of that fundoshi, paying someone 1,000 yen to shove the thing into my butt and LIFT ME UP by it (think ultra-wedgie) wasn't my favorite thing in the world, but it's important that they make it tight because the last thing you want is for it to fall/get pulled off.



Few things are as noticeable as a group of foreign guys jumping around in a temple full of Japanese people. We took part in the chants of "wasshoi" as well as creating our own ("gaijin yuushou" was my favorite). You run around a temple with thousands of spectators, splash through cold water meant to purify you, and bound up and down stairs. I must have given 200 high-fives to people on the side of the pathway, mainly kids and young ladies. The other Japanese groups either welcomed us with open arms or gave us weird looks, particularly when we were chanting. I find it hard to believe we were the

first group to come up with foreigner-specific chants, but who knows.

We managed to get up into the elevated temple area before most of the other groups. I had splashed around in the water seven or eight times, gone up and down steps and was having a grand old time before we got into the temple. This is where the madness began. Cramming a bunch of wet, semi-drunk men into a small area and telling them to wait is an interesting concept, one

that really has to be experienced to be understood. I've stood on morning and evening rush hour trains, last trains out of Tokyo, and been in many a pit and I can't remember ever feeling as helpless as I did at Naked Man. As word gets out that it's filling up, people race up there to try and secure a spot. The shingi sticks only get thrown out at midnight in this area, so if you're not up there fighting over a stick, you might as well be a fully clothed spectator.

I was perhaps three feet back from the front wall, from atop which priests regularly threw cold water down on us. I drank some on accident, not unlike what happens when you get caught under a wave at the beach, and caught some in my eye (bad, because I wear contacts). Arms were held up for the entire time I was in this area, perhaps as long as two hours, so the shoulders definitely started to ache.

The swell moved side-to-side, heels came down hard on tabi-wrapped toes, and there was a struggle to stay upright. People to the rear rested their arms against my head, shoulders, whatever, and the only option was to rest mine on the guy in front of me. The push went on for what felt like forever. I caught an elbow in the ear and a skull in my eye, neither of which felt great.

There were regular announce-

ments in Japanese about people getting kicked out, updates on the situation, but if you can understand Japanese over a loud-speaker when men are yelling, "wasshoi," in your ear, color me impressed. There were arms everywhere, and I couldn't see what was happening above me. Then the lights suddenly went out, and thus began a futile struggle for a 20 cm stick that everyone in the temple desperately wanted. I was hoping just to get my hands on one, to fight with someone over it, not even really caring if I got it.

The craziness of pushing and shoving mostly naked men in the dark was relatively short-lived, though, and soon the lights came on and people starting clearing out. There were a few small skirmishes near the entrance, since the sticks are officially up for grabs until they're past a certain gate. Apparently the wise thing to do is hide it in your fundoshi, or have a bunch of friends carry you out. I just wanted to get the hell out of there and back into some dry shoes.



It turns out my buddy JJ came away with one of the smaller sticks. It was a wild event, from drinking in the cold, to getting naked in a tent with a bunch of dudes also getting naked, to running around in water, to the fracas that was the culmination of the night. I'm undecided, but I can see myself running again next year.



The Best of the Block

By Brenda McKinney

Hello everyone! A few little updates on the National AJET 411:

As I am sure you are aware, the National AJET Elections are now open! We have three excellent candidates running from Shiga, Kobe City, and Hyogo, so please visit the AJET website (<http://ajet.net/2009Elections>) and cast your vote! In case you still don't know what I/they do, your elected representatives essentially support the JET community, present your concerns to CLAIR and the ministries (next Opinion Exchange is in June!), and fund vital services such as the Peer Support Group. Voting is open until March 12th and Hyogo currently boasts three national AJET council members (myself, Goran Seletkovic, and Joe Schott) that you can contact at any time if you have questions!

On the topic of upcoming Opinion Exchanges, we are also finalizing surveys for the June Opinion Exchange (OE) with CLAIR and the three Ministries in Tokyo. This year's OE will have five topics, including one about sexual harassment and another about the forthcoming policy changes concerning English being introduced as a mandatory subject in elementary schools (5th & 6th grade only). Pretty interesting topics - please take a minute to go through the surveys when they come out! Your voice matters.

Finally, as a member of the corporate committee, I can also tell you that quite a bit of time, hard work, and excitement has gone into planning the Conference for Returning JETs (CRJ) Information Fair



in Yokohama (mainly organized by Alaina, the GAM Liaison & block rep out of Nara!). Thank you to everyone that attended and I hope you found it helpful.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the Hanami events (Yay! Spring! Sakura!) and thank you - as always - for checking out the Best of the Block! :)

The Best of... SHIGA PREFECTURE Yab's St. Patrick's Live Concert and Fundraiser Event

For St. Patty's Day, Yab's (Shiga's "local" ~ located in Hikone City) is having a big live event with big drink specials. There's several performers lined up, including Mike Bass (who I will personally recommend going to see and you might know from previous shows he's done at Polo Dog in Kobe with Hyogo JETs). There will also be contests (from *Greenest Person*

to *Greenest Tongue*), prizes, and a Jello Shot fundraiser to raise money on March 14th for the "Help the Dalit" trip leaving for India. If nothing else, come for the green beer, meat pies and green pasta! For further details on this event, please email block6@ajet.net or Kyle (in Shiga) at kfkrayer@gmail.com.

Snowshoe Tour to Makino Heights & Kitsugi

Join this guided snowshoe walk through the rich, natural environment of Makino and Kutsugi Heights in Shiga-ken, led by the expert staff of the BSC Water Sport Centre. The walk is "moderately difficult", but the tour consists of a briefing, snow hiking, a main hike and a trip to an onsen after the walk. Tours are held on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays (through the end of March), from 10 - 15:00. The ¥9,000 admission fee includes snowshoes and BSC asks that you reserve your spot a week in advance. For more information or to sign up, email info@bsc-int.co.jp or call 077-592-0127. Remember

this option if you have guests coming in March and are looking for outdoor "family-friendly" fun!

The Best of... KYOTO PREFECTURE Seiryu-e at Kiyomizu Temple

From March 15 (Sun) to March 17 (Tues), come to the famous Kiyomizu Temple for a grand parade (starting at 14:00 each day) and to see the symbol of this temple - a huge blue dragon - making his way around the beautiful grounds! The event will also be held on Friday, April 3rd and entry is 300 yen. For more information, please call 075-551-1234.

Hanezu Odori Dance and Plum Blossom Viewing

Zuishin-in Temple is famous for its plum garden, which is both at its peak (for blossom viewing) and opens to the public at the end of March. On March 29th, a Hanezu Odori (dance) performance will be given 3-4 times during the day, starting at 11:00, in addition to children singing and dancing in pink costumes. Other dance performances will be held on the 28th.

Entry to the event on the 29th is 1,000 yen (it's usually 400 yen for the Temple and 400 yen to get inside the hall) and you can access the temple via the Tozai subway line (Ono Station). For further details, please call the temple directly at 075-571-0025.

The Best of HYOGO PREFECTURE Uzushio Matsuri (Eddying Tide Festival) & Beautiful Awaji Island

Sometimes I feel bad for one of my JET friends that lives on Awaji Island. It seems like she always has to leave her island and come to ours when we plan things to hang out. While she's a good sport about it, I could definitely understand why she'd want us to come to hers,

though - Awaji is one beautiful little place!

Don't just take my word for it, though. If you haven't been to Awaji Island yet, now is your chance!

The Eddying Tide (whirlpools) in southern Awaji are said to be some of the biggest in the world and you can approach them safely by boat, leaving from Fukura Port. Southern Awaji is also known as the home of a wonderful Bunraku puppet art museum, an English-themed farm with onion ice-cream and koalas, it boasts TWO (one real and one replica) samurai castles and the island terrain makes for some great biking (landscape scenes right out of a Ghibli movie)!

The Uzushio Matsuri will be going on all spring (3/1 - 5/31) so take advantage of this excuse to check out "the other major island in Hyogo".

For more information on the event or how to get there, contact the Minami Awaji Nandan tourist office at 079-952-2336.

Also in the neighborhood... OSAKA: Grand Sumo Tournament in Osaka

SUMO is coming to Osaka March 15-29th!! Get your tickets to this live and actually-very-exciting event on

the Nihon Sumo Kyokai Official Grand Sumo Home Page (http://www.sumo.or.jp/eng/ticket/nittei_hyo/index.html). Also be aware that the cheaper "standing seats" are actually very close *seats* and can be bought the day-of if you get to the ticket window early enough!

Osaka Pool & Ice Skating Rink

The 1,800 square meter indoor Olympic-size swimming pool is turned into an ice rink each winter (with a café overlooking it!). Come skating before it closes on March 31st - either ひとりで, with friends... or bring a date! The rink is open 9 - 20:45 (closed Monday), costs ¥1,400 and is located near the Chuo Subway line (Asashiohashi St.). For directions or more information, call 066-571-2010.



Getting to Know Some Random JETs

❖ **Name:** Gabrielle Michelle Bouchard.

❖ **Please call me:** Gabby, Gabs, Gabbers... the list goes on.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Fukuaki Senior High School, Himeji Bessho Senior High School.

❖ **How we know you:** I think "various" is an appropriate answer here.

❖ **Birthday:** August 28, 1985.

❖ **Born and Raised:** Born in Thompson, Manitoba. Raised in Dalhousie, New Brunswick.

❖ **Family:** Mom Nicole, Dad Yves and little brother Mathieu.

❖ **University and Degree:** Mount Allison University, B. Sc Biology.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Lifeguard, swimming instructor, Lab TA, field assistant, puffin hucker.

❖ **Travels:** all over Canada, Japan, France, Indonesia, South Korea, Hong Kong.

❖ **Hobbies:** cooking, jogging, reading.

❖ **Staying another year?** I'm tired of this question.

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: That is like asking a mother to choose her favourite child - I can't!

Sports: swimming, jogging, skiing.

Music: I have terrible taste in music. You don't want to steal my iPod. Really.

Shop: Bon Marche foreign foods aisle!

TV Show: *Frasier*.

Movie: Despite the terrible messages it sends about women, I still have a fondness for *Pretty Woman*.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Sur-

living on my own for two years in Japan ranks pretty high.

❖ **Best life experience:** I don't know. I prefer to hope that my best life experiences are still around the corner.

❖ **Motto to live by:** "A ship in a harbour is safe, but that's not what ships are built for."

❖ **I remember when...** watching *Full House* after supper was the epitome of happiness..

❖ **What are you drinking?** I am

doing this at school, so sadly, only water.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** You!

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** You really, really shouldn't.

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** The Spring! Best. Season. Ever. And grapefruit chi-hi (preferably enjoyed together).

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** gather all the people I love around a table filled with great food and good wine.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I wrote my thesis on barnacles. I know more about barnacles than any girl should know. I dunno, is



that interesting? Also, I huck puffins.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Every class is different, so changing activities for individual classes helps. A lot. I learned this the hard way!

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET** I... look at my JTE for help!

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** If the teachers are okay with it, YAY all the way!

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** Students were supposed to write down their Christmas wishes. One student wanted to write (I think/hope) "I wish for a clear head this Christmas." Instead, he simply wrote "I wish for good head this Christmas." Oops!

❖ **Name:** Maura Deignan.

❖ **Please call me:** Mo-la Sensei.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Obu Junior High School, Kobe.

❖ **How we know you:** I have lots of big, curly brown hair you can see from a mile away.

❖ **Birthday:** May 29.

❖ **Born and raised:** San Diego!!! The land of *Anchorman* and Shamu!

❖ **Family:** Mom is Chinese, Dad is Irish, but we're all American and live in America. Try explaining that concept to your students and teachers and watch their heads explode.

❖ **University and Degree:** UCLA, Anthropology (aka Indiana Jonesology - except I don't dig up dead things or broken pots. But I am probably critically analyzing the socio-cultural implications of our conversation).

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Education Abroad counselor, TV reporter (I got to interview movie stars, but it's not as interesting as it sounds).

❖ **Travels:** So far I've been to 18 countries! I have a bajillion more on my to-do list! My nickname is Maura the Explora. Maybe one day I'll have my own TV show on Nickelodeon like Dora.

❖ **Hobbies:** TRAVELING!! Reading, photography, watching movies, facebook.

❖ **Staying another year?** Yep!

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: Anything spicy!! And sashimi.

Sports: Lacrosse, basketball.

Music: Everything and anything!

Shop: In America: H&M; In Japan: Hundred yen stores all the way!

TV Show: *30 Rock*, *Arrested Development*, *The Simpsons*, *Gossip Girl*, *Desperate Housewives*.

Movie: *Moulin Rouge*, *Fight Club*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Old Boy*, *The Dark Knight*, *Kung Fu Panda*.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Graduating from my dream school!

❖ **Best life experience:** Not dying while bungee jumping as an exchange student in China.

❖ **Motto to live by:** "The ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."

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

❖ **What are you drinking?** Malibu and coke is my one true love.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Ewan MacGregor.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** Because I'm Maura the Explora. 'Nuff said.

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** Autumn leaves!!!! Oh, and the bowing Nara deer!

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** have lots of crazy sex and

eat really yummy food. Then I would watch a beautiful sunset over the ocean.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I was interviewed by Pakkun on an episode of NHK's *Eigo de Shabera Nigto* in December. My kids thought I was so cool for like five minutes.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Really try to get to know your kids outside the classroom. It makes them try to study English harder so they can tell you all their gossip. Also, playing with them at lunch on the playground gives you street cred.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET** I... make funny faces and act overly enthusiastic about everything until they laugh.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** I bribe mine with maura money every day. They go nuts over it and actually participate when I wave it in front of them.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** I suffered a serious injury playing tag at lunchtime. My students think that's the most hilarious thing they've ever heard.



Nagasaki Lantern Festival

By Anette Leslie

Nagasaki Prefecture is situated on the western tip of the Japanese peninsula, on the southern island of Kyushu. It was the first prefecture that was opened to the western world. Therefore, in some areas, it has Dutch-influenced architecture and it is known for its many churches and Christian population.

Nagasaki's prime location makes it the closest neighbour to other Asian countries, especially Korea and China. As a result, its culture is slightly influenced by them. Moreover, everything in Nagasaki City gleams with life as it is a fairly new city that was rebuilt after World War II. Nagasaki gets over one million tourists every year due to this and a lot of these tourists attend the Nagasaki Lantern festival.

The Nagasaki Lantern Festival is held between January and February each year and usually runs over a two week period. It is a brilliant display of red Chinese lanterns, animal lanterns and effigies in the center of town, mainly in Chou Bashi, Hamano Machi and Chinatown. There are numerous performances in acrobatics, dancing and singing at different locations, such as



Minato Koen and Chuo Koen, throughout the day, which makes it ideal for busy people and school children to drop in at any time. This is also a good time to catch up on Chinese delicacies served hot from the numerous beautifully decorated stalls that line these parks. Try the champon manju, kakuni manju and, my favourite, the goma dango. If you prefer fine dining, make reservations early, as the countless Chinese restaurants in the area are booked-out during this time.

The main attractions are the lion and dragon dances. Usually, two men are disguised underneath a huge lion costume. One man is in the rear with his two legs making the back paws of the lion, while the other is at the front and makes the lion's two front paws. They perform tricks simultaneously, rolling over, jumping, standing on stilts and dancing to the sound of music and the oohs and aahs of the crowd. The dragon

dance is somewhat similar, except that there are many men carrying a huge replica of a wild-eyed, long-tongued dragon, on poles. They twist and turn this while running about and pretending that the dragon is about to devour you. If you are really into scary things, you will also appreciate the lineup of par-boiled pig's head on display.

The Okinawa drummers also add to the grandeur with their dynamic performances. The most spectacular scene is when some of the performers invite children and adults to play their drums to any tune or to dance with them on stage. It feels like you're in heaven. It's a good opportunity to move your feet and rock your body if you haven't danced lately. Also in the lineup are tai chi dancers with their more subtle, yet equally entertaining sets.

These range from toddlers to adult groups who use a variety of props, such as parasols and swords to enhance their performances. Their vibrant costumes add to the euphoria and there is a feeling of being transported to another world. If you missed it this year, you won't want to miss it next year. It will not be the same, but it will be just as stimulating.



Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger with Tabata Interval Training

By Phil Young

During Winter Break, we've had many an epic feast that we justified as being "for the holidays." But no matter how much we deny it while devouring the latest treat, our holidays' eating habits will give us holidays' physiques, and that's not something to go to the beach with when summer rolls around. You want to feel and look your best, so that you can make the most of summer barbecues and *ahem* everything else that a summer's day at the beach has to offer.

The road to fitness doesn't have to be an ordeal to be overcome, though. It's all about how you think of it. If you ask me, exercise can be fun and challenging. You can set your own goals and achieve them at your own pace.

But you need to have the proper mind-set to achieve it, and be mindful of your eating habits. It can be very depressing to set a goal for yourself and then never achieve it. You can run a mile every day if you want, but it's not going to be enough if you still sit down to your 1000-calorie meals three times a day. After all, getting what you want means going forward, but I've seen too many people take one step forward and two steps back.

Pills and powders have their purposes, but getting to where you want to be requires knowing what to do and how to do it right; form is key, as is setting up a proper exercise routine. Many people may be convinced that doing a thousand bicep curls or abdominal crunches is the way to go, but you shouldn't overlook the fact that you can burn

many more calories by exercising your legs, glutes, back and chest. Squats and push-ups are a great way to do this, and it won't take half the day to do it.

My challenge is to try the Tabata method, researched and developed by Dr. Izumi Tabata et al. for the Japanese olympic speed skating team. Using this method, you will find an effective way to lower body fat while maintaining muscle mass.

What to do:

1. Choose an exercise. I like air squats or sprints.
2. Practice the exercise 20 seconds on and 10 seconds off.
3. Repeat seven more times.
4. Find a place to roll over and count the stars... you'll be seeing them for a while.

That's eight sets of 20 seconds with 10 seconds rest. Sounds pretty simple. Your tabata score would be the set with the lowest reps/distance covered. My first score for tabata squats was 14. Frequency would be key with this type of exercise. I'd say you will start to see results if you can do this for four days a week for six weeks.

If you really feel like four minutes isn't enough, try adding in tabata pushups and 10 minutes of stretching before and after your workout. That's 28 minutes of no nonsense, testosterone-pumping, workout carnage upon your body. What are you waiting for? Do it and awaken your buns of steel!

So now you've got a great workout that you can do everyday, rain or shine, and it takes less than 30 minutes to do. Now get up from beneath your kotatsu and get a move on!



To Perform Air Squats

1. Toes are slightly pointed out
2. Hips are back and down
3. Back is straight, chest is up
4. Knees are behind the toe



Travel Japan

Osaka — Thinking Outside the Box

By Clay Eaton

Osaka is one of the most dynamic cities in Japan, but it doesn't get a lot of love from the travel books (or the other Japanese, for that matter). The *Lonely Planet* has special books about both Kyoto and Tokyo, yet Osaka earns only a couple of pages as a side note. While it is true that Osaka is dear to our hearts more as a place to party than to sight-see, there are still plenty of sights to grab your attention if you poke around. And true to Osaka's wild and eccentric nature, these places are anything but dull. Here are some suggestions around northern Osaka that'll get you feeling surreal as you head home after a night in Shinsaibashi.

First stop is the *Instant Ramen Memorial Museum* (インスタントラーメン発明記念館) in Ikeda City. Ikeda borders Kawanishi, and the museum itself is less than a kilometer from Hyogo, so we're starting pretty close to home.

This free (!) museum is dedicated to Momofuku Ando (1910-2007), inventor of the instant ramen noodle and world hero. Here you can learn how the dehydrated noodle went from Ando's humble kitchen in Ikeda to an international staple (47,000,000,000 Cup Noodles consumed in China every year!). Enjoy astronaut ramen and explanations of what all those weird chunks in instant ramen really are.

The museum is mostly geared towards kids but is awesome for all ages. There's a food court, and you can also get some real ramen in a couple restaurants near the museum. The best way to get to the museum is from Ikeda Station, which is on the Hankyu line between Takarazuka and Umeda.

Another worthwhile stop in north-



Anyone else ever played *Day of the Tentacle* and is having a flashback?

ern Osaka is the former grounds of the 1970 World's Fair (万博公園 Banpaku Koen) in Suita City. You can get here on the Osaka Monorail (万博記念公園駅 Banpaku Kinen Koen Station), which you can transfer to from the Midosuji Subway Line at Senri Chuo Station (千里中央駅).

Eccentricity is the name of the game here. The first thing you'll probably see is the defunct Expoland amusement park, which was home of the world's largest roller coaster until it derailed and killed a teenager in 2007. After a safety inspection found that most of the major rides were in horrendous condition, the park was closed down for repairs (I asked a woman when it would open again and she just laughed).

Despite this there's still plenty to do around Expoland. Off to the west is a Hall of the Future where you can test out the latest in kitchen and bathroom humidifying technology, and also watch a video about the World's Fair itself. If you think Japan is a strange place now, wait until you see what it was like in the '70s.

Across the highway is a large park, most famously home of Okamoto Taro's *Tower of the Sun* (太陽の塔 Taiyo no To). This massive work of modern art was the centerpiece of the fair, and looks something like a white and red penguin with a face in its stomach (odds are you've seen it in pictures). The three faces on the top, middle and back of the sculpture represent suns of the Future, Present and Past, respectively. The scale of it all is truly epic and that's just the beginning.

The park is full of eccentric little space playgrounds and a little ways behind the Tower is the *National Museum of Ethnology* (国立民族博物館 Kokuritsu Minzoku Hakubutsukan). This is, hands down, the best museum in Osaka. Every conceivable group of people is represented in the museum's collections, from a full-sized Central Asian yurt to the wall of South American hats. My personal favorite was the Japanese dialect machine, where you push different buttons to hear the story of Motomaro told in dialects from all across the country. While museums that tackle

this subject matter are sometimes embarrassingly racist, all the displays are very respectful [Editor's note: wait, what?] and simply let the artifacts speak for themselves. There are also regular lectures and exhibitions at the museum, and we even had the good luck of showing up during a Bollywood Movie Festival.

Moving on from the Expoland park, there's the *Open-Air Museum of Old Japanese Houses* (日本民家集落博物館 Nihon Minka Shuraku Hakubutsukan) in Toyonaka City. Housed in Ryokuchi Park, this museum comprises of 11 different farm houses. The houses come from all over the country, from Kagoshima to Iwate, and each was carefully deconstructed before being brought to the museum, reconstructed, and filled with traditional furnishings.

Some of these houses are the last of their kinds, and their different styles say volumes about the places they were constructed in. Surrounded by trees, the park is a nice place to spend a relaxed afternoon after only managing three hours of sleep in a capsule. The park can be accessed from the Midosuji Subway Line (緑地公園駅 Ryoku-chi Koen Station).

This certainly isn't the limit to Osaka's weird and wonderful places. The Maritime Museum in the port, the Bicycle History Museum in Sakai, and the Kansai Cycling Centre (basically a bicycle amusement park) in the southern mountains may not be on the way home but they are definitely worth a visit as well. And like before, if you have any other suggestions please let me know, and have fun this Spring Break!



The Golden Ticket (actually, it's teal...)

By Clay Eaton

Another vacation is on its way here in Japan, which means we're about to get another chance at the greatest travel deal in the country: the *Seishun 18 Kippu* (青春 18 切符). While the *seishun* translates to "youth," this ticket is available to all ages during the three major vacation periods of the Japanese school year: summer, winter and spring.

This time around it will be on sale from February 20 - March 31 and usable from March 1 - April 10.

This amazing ticket is an all-you-can-ride pass for five days on any "local" JR line in Japan. Local here just means anything, NOT the shinkansen or a limited express (特急). You can ride any train you want from 12:00 AM to 11:59 PM which is enough time to get from Kansai to Tokyo in one direction and Kyushu in the other! Trips this distance are grueling to be sure: I once left Fukuoka on the Bantan line at 7 o'clock in the morning and arrived at my friend's town near Fukuoka at 9 o'clock at night.

But this doesn't mean you have to spend all day sitting on the train. The ticket acts like the fabled JR Pass (that we can't get with our visas) where you flash it to the station staff and they wave you on through. You can get off and back on however many times you want,

as long as it's the same day. For instance, in the 14 hours that I was traveling to Kyushu, I was able to get a great lunch in Fukuyama and spend a couple hours



in Hiroshima. And if you're heading through the countryside, it's a great way to get a pit stop in cool little places that you might otherwise never visit.

The best part, though, is the price. The ticket itself costs ¥11,500, so the cost of each five day *nori-houdai* is just ¥2,300! To put this in perspective, without this ticket taking "local" trains from Himeji to Fukuoka costs ¥8,320, while shinkansen would put you back ¥13,230. Also, the ticket is good for five *non-consecutive* days within the usable period, so you don't have to use up your passes all in a row.

The tickets are NOT limited to one person, so you could use one ticket for five people for one day, two people for 2/3 days, etc. And even if epic cross-country travel isn't your style, remember that a round-trip between Himeji and Osaka costs ¥2,900 anyway, so the *seishun* ticket is still a good deal. There is simply no better travel deal short of a flying carpet.