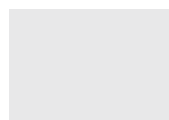


hyogo times

May
2007



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Tsukiji Fish Market, Tokyo

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...

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

Submit by the 15th of each month to:

submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

<http://hyogoajet.org>



from the editor

I am happy. (Gasp! Sorry folks: only limited sarcastic commentary on Japanese life this time.) Spring is FINALLY here and, like many of you I'm sure, I have been spending many of my days

trying desperately to break winter's early bedtime cycle, and working frantically to fit back into those pre-winter, non-bulky clothes...hmm. On the bright side (literally as the days are now much longer!), one thing that has really inspired me this spring is the astounding beauty of the sakura. Seriously, spring in Japan is very esthetically pleasing!

I must admit that I was skeptical about the much hyped up beauty of the cherry blossoms. I have found that there are many things in this country that were not quite disappointing, but also not quite as fantastically extreme as I had been told. Sure, there are lots of new electronics, but they're not particularly cheap. The students work hard, but not so much in class. The women are feminine, but they don't wear pink frills all the time (some of the men on the other hand...) The cherry blossoms, however, are a different story. They honestly deserve every great thing that has been said about them, from the subtle differences in their varieties, to the sweet smell, to the way they "snow" from the trees at the end of their season. Other than inari, a speedy train system and the way my doing normal things, like eating an apple, continues to provoke cries of amazement, the sakura might be my favourite thing about Japan.

Conversely, one thing that surprised me about the cherry blossom season was the concept of Hanami. I had initially thought that this was a one time special event, on a specially designated day, in specially designated places and with specially designated foods – it turns out I was wrong. Though I am not quite sure of the direct translation, I think hanami basically means "sit under a cherry tree and get drunk." It can take place at any time of the day (no joke, I saw old men doing it around 10am), on any day of the week (see previous example – this was a Wednesday), and can be held anywhere a cherry tree happens to bloom (again, Wednesday, 10am, under a tree on the side of a semi-busy street in my town). Though I'm sure that nice sake is traditionally the celebratory drink of choice, it also appears that beer, chu-hi or an 89yen glass bottles of death from the konbini will do just fine. So much for classily reveling in the beauty of nature...

At any rate, the sakura are just beautiful and Hanami is a good time. It is one of the Japanese traditions that I am going to need to find some way to replicate when I return to Canada – poutine and beer under the maple trees anyone?

Hello again from your sometimes too genki PR!

The weather outside is beautiful, the days are longer, and our spirit level is sky high! Well, mine is at least. I hope everyone's Golden Week was enjoyable, and that you were able to make a fresh start, going into May with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

For those of you who came to the AJET Hanami viewing in Himeji this year, thanks for your support. Even if the weather wasn't very cooperative, the event seemed to go extremely well, with all of the Hanami essentials accounted for: flowers on the trees, quality time with friends, guitar-playing ninjas, good food, good sake and of course, the annual random drunk person passed out on the tarp! Many thanks to our new Events committee for making all this happen!

Coming soon for all my fellow re-contracting first years is the conference in Kobe. That's right – half of Japan is coming to OUR turf! Make sure you show these "tourists" around and help show them how we party in Hyogo! By this, of course, I mean that you have a few social drinks before going to sleep early in order to be fully rested for three days of exciting and informational seminars. Ahem, wink wink.

Keep an eye out for other upcoming events and for God's sake, get outside and enjoy this weather before we are rained on for a month straight! Until next time, take care of yourself and each other.

-Brandon

from the PR



Love & Relationships

not your typical hotel bible...



Japan has a number of quirky dating accessories if you will, but none quite as visible as the phallic, neon symbols that pop up across the urban landscape – I’m talking about love hotels, of course.

Admittedly, if you’ve ever been “lucky” enough to have penetrated this aspect of Japanese culture, there’s a small chance that you weren’t there for some scandalous sex play. Love hotels can often be a cheaper, or simply more interesting, alternative to your typical ryokan.

Or, maybe your encounter with this odd cultural convention was not quite what you had expected. One couple I know wanted to experience the kinkier side of a night away from home, but discovered a karaoke machine as one of the main attractions...in case things got boring?

This, however, does not mean that Japan’s famous love hotels have earned their reputation out of nothing... and there’s written proof! Love hotels can be pretty wacky, but one thing you may not have noticed or heard about is their new take on the hotel bedside “bible”. Love hotel diaries, found in almost each room, provide an eye-opening look at the kinkier side of Japan.

These books are for guests to jot down messages about their experiences, leave notes for other guests, or to simply dish on their innermost thoughts. Crazy enough, in a country whose people are known for keeping mum about their personal lives, many hotel guests actually do write extremely candid things. A lot of the entries are from young couples, many describing their first sexual experiences, and often include little pictures (this is the land of manga after all!) Other appealing entries tell the tales of forbidden trysts between salary men and their office ladies; share the secrets of those out for some “afternoon delight” with, well, someone other than their spouse; and give tantric testimony of couples experimenting with “open relationships.”

To give an example, this message is from a popular love hotel in Osaka, written by a college student with an older man cheating on his wife: “You can only be happy if your partner is someone else’s husband”.

I found an online translation of this love journal entry from a lesbian office worker who worried about a potential future trip: “Today one of my bosses asked me to sleep with him. What in the world am I going to do? But he’s married. I told him I liked him as a joke, but he took me seriously. What am I going to do?”

In another more sentimental entry, a teenager writes an ode to her boyfriend: “We’ve been going out for one year now. I hope we spend many happy years together in the future. I love you.”

These few examples are not even scratching the surface. With an estimated one million visitors per day at Japan’s 17,000 love hotels, these diaries offer a potentially very real glimpse into a seriously intimate part of the culture. Whether they are put there to help people rationalize and justify their night out, or as a preventative measure for the karaoke machine is unclear, but – in short – if you happen to end up at a love hotel, you can rest assured that there’s some good bedtime reading for you!



“I’ll try anything once, twice if I like it, three times to make sure.”
- Mae West

The Hero I'll Never Meet

micah jorrish



"We are human only to the extent that our ideas remain humane."

-Kurt Vonnegut Jr "Breakfast of Champions"

It's not often that I've found myself attached to a person whom I have never met before, especially a famous person. I have been touched by their literature, I've cried at their movies, and I have cheered at their athletic achievements, but although these creations have affected me deeply at times, I've never really developed feelings for the creators themselves. When I choose a "hero," I tend to stick with a safe bet, someone who I am close to and have a personal connection with. But, every rule has its exception.

Have you ever interacted with something that you had no hand in creating, but consciously felt changed by it? That it actually was successful, even just a little bit, in altering your view of the world? The instances when you witness something that hits you so deeply and yet is so far away tend to be few and far between. For me, it was my senior year in high school when I was ordered to write an overview about a contemporary author. I had just been introduced (by my father of all people, a relatively

conservative dude) to a little book called "Cat's Cradle" by some controversial, outlandish author named Kurt Vonnegut. Thus my story begins...

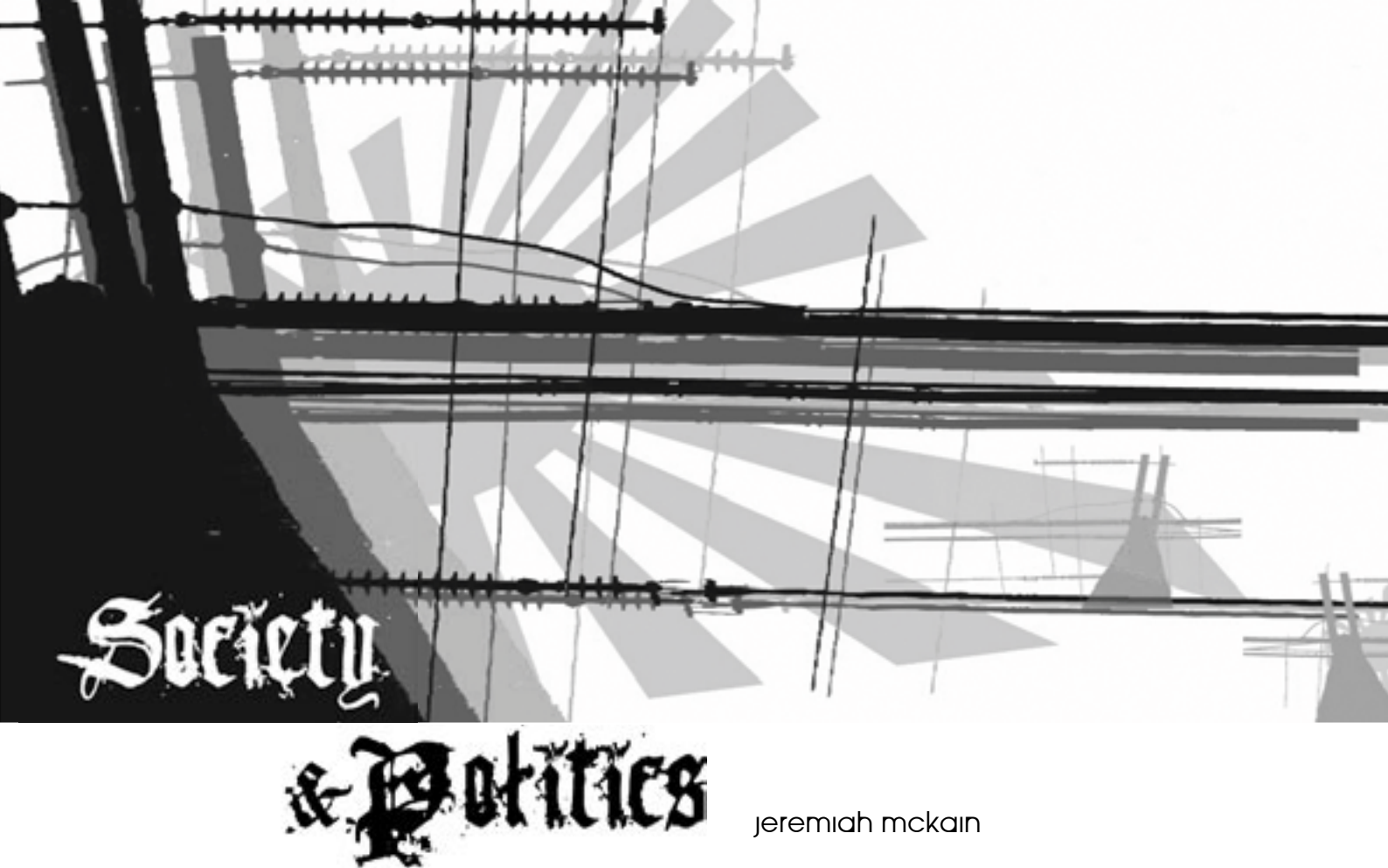
Immediately, I fell in love with Vonnegut's work and his cynical, sarcastic style that characterized him as not only an author, but as a human being. I cried while reading "Slaughterhouse-Five", my first source of knowledge about the Dresden bombings during World War II. I laughed at (and related to) his awkward heroes in "Mother Night" and "Bluebeard," visualizing how they must personify Vonnegut himself. His lucid passion for humanity as well as his skeptical criticism of modern human direction not only gave him most of his fame, but also made it impossible for me not to evaluate my own principles. He was articulate, witty, and most importantly, he was far from perfect.

Vonnegut attempted suicide once in the early 1980's. His honesty and ability to make peace with his inner demons was exemplified in his pseudo autobiography "Fates Worse than Death". As he became older, his increasing bitterness towards politics engulfed his work, which was usually short stories during the last 10 years of his life. He was a pioneer in contemporary literature, misunderstood on more than one occasion by his critics, but was ultimately (as all true greats are) successful in affecting people from every generation, all over the world. Though he had multiple best selling novels, he never strayed from his deeply held opinions and remained humble in his books as well as his life until the day he died.

Kurt Vonnegut passed away on April 11th due to complications from an accidental fall in his home. He was 84. Upon hearing this news, I was surprised by my own reaction: it was as if someone I knew had died. Someone I had shared something with, as small as it may have been. I doubt I will ever find an "unknown" hero whose passion, battles, and ideals have affected me the way that Vonnegut's have. Although I will not mourn for him, for he led an extraordinary life, I will miss him. He helped open my mind to the greatness of the world and to believe in myself. I will always remember that.

"Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt"

-Kurt Vonnegut Jr.



Author's Note: This month's S&P is the first in a planned two-part series on the Yakuza, Japan's take on organized crime. This installment deals with the history of the Yakuza from their feudal origins to the era immediately following WWII. Next month's column will look at yakuza today, including their power structure, membership rules, and distinctive image.

A few weeks ago, on April 17th, Japan was shocked by a violent crime on its own turf. While not nearly the same magnitude as the massacre at Virginia Tech (which rocked the United States during the same week), the shooting death of popular Nagasaki mayor Icho Ito certainly made headlines around the country. The shooter, Tetsuya Shiroo, 59, was a senior member of the Yamaguchi-gumi, the largest of Japan's yakuza (organized crime) organizations. Although the nature of Shiroo's beef with Ito seems to have been personal – he was angry about the city's refusal to pay for damage to his car at a public works construction site four years ago – the mayor's death is a reminder that in outwardly safe and peaceful Japan, the yakuza are alive and well.

The term *yakuza* refers to both the larger crime organization and its members. Compared

with their counterparts in organized crime, for example, the Sicilian Mafia and the Chinese Triads, Japan's yakuza is far less shadowy and ephemeral. In Japanese society, the yakuza plays an integral, but contradictory role: many work in or operate legitimate businesses during the day, while still openly declaring their gang-affiliations through their characteristic markings and style. How the yakuza came to be simultaneously a part of mainstream society and a fringe element engaging in every sort of criminal activity imaginable is an interesting tale.

The origins of the yakuza as an organized phenomenon are difficult to trace. Ask a yakuza, and you'll likely be told that the *machi yakko* – groups of samurai employed by individual towns to keep order and protect the citizenry from intruders during the Edo period – were the fathers of modern yakuza. While some modern day branches do have these well-intentioned origins, scholars trace the criminal transition, and much of the characteristic behavior of today's yakuza, to another feudal phenomenon: groups of samurai with masters, known as *kabukimono* ("the raving ones"). These individuals dressed, spoke, and behaved in a distinctly vulgar and stylized manner, making the harassment of ordinary people their primary occupation.

It was during Japan's feudal years that the ancestors of modern yakuza perfected the art of racketeering, establishing themselves as exploiters of the newly empowered merchant class. Even today, protection rackets for local businesses are a significant source of income for yakuza organizations. During the lead-up to World War II, more coherent proto-yakuza groups allied themselves closely with the ultra-nationalist movement, establishing ties that persist to this day. Unlike modern yakuza, they had no specific claims to geographical "territory", but rather engaged in violent intimidation of political opponents wherever possible.

It was after WWII, however, that the yakuza began to take on their present form. The rampant destruction in the country and scarcity of resources during the postwar era allowed many yakuza bosses to make substantial fortunes, both through their legitimate construction and demolition operations, and their illegitimate control of the black market. With the US occupation, the yakuza made two important adaptations to their image: one, they began to dress in a more western style and two, they began to use firearms. It is now estimated that the vast majority of illegal handguns in Japan today are in the possession of yakuza members, and over two thirds of gun crimes in the country are gang related. The yakuza also moved into the entertainment industry during this time, controlling prostitution and allying themselves with the watering holes and other dens of iniquity in red light districts across Japan.

In his book *Toppamono* (Outlaw), Manabu Miyazaki describes the experience of growing up as the fourth son in a powerful yakuza family in postwar Kyoto. Miyazaki's home was something of a gangster commune, with a score of his father's underlings living, eating, and sleeping in the family residence. By day, these men worked for his father's construction business; by night, they engaged mostly in carousing and gambling (Miyazaki's father's primary illegal activity was managing gambling dens). Miyazaki describes these men as having devilish features and a complete lack of self-control; as men who "said and did exactly what they wanted." He speaks of the revulsion with which mainstream society looked upon these men, as well as the invisible gulf he perceived between those outside the organization and himself.

Yet in spite of the intimidating nature of his home and the people who inhabited it, Miyazaki's father was an important part of the local community. Referred to as the "Boss of Fushimi," named for the district where he lived, locals regularly sought his advice in settling disputes. Miyazaki even recalls couples in the midst of marital strife seeking his father's intervention. Miyazaki's father and his louts also provided a measure of security to the neighborhood, keeping local bullies in check; conversely, this was probably a simple effort to maintain their monopoly on intimidation.

Miyazaki's family is a perfect example of how yakuza, in spite of their illegal activities, were and continue to be very much integrated into mainstream society. Though the yakuza are not loved by many outside their membership circles, they have developed an ability to coexist with society that is unique in the world of organized crime. It should come as no surprise, then, that today's yakuza remain very visible both on the fringes of society and in the corporate and political worlds.

To be continued next month...



Nagasaki mayor Icho Ito

The maiko show of a

tori lowe



lifetime

Kyoto is known as THE place to catch a glimpse of a geisha or maiko. I know I have spent some time in Gion in the early evening, hunting down Sayuri and doubt that I am the first tourist to drink myself into a stupor in the bars of Kyoto due *only* to the fact that I was unable to catch sight of one of these shy creatures. We all want to see geisha! Even the most cynical of Japanese culture could not pass up the opportunity to take a picture of one were she to walk past.

What if I told you that on the 31st of March, you missed the Maiko Show of a Lifetime, just down the cobbled streets from Kiyomizudera? Would you be kicking yourself that you had not been told about it earlier? Would you curse the person writing the Events lists in the Hyogo Times? But more importantly, would you want to smother my curvaceous body in kisses if I told you, "It's not too late"?



On the 31st of March, three friends and I dressed up as maiko (or "apprentice geisha") and took a stroll through Gion. After an hour of make-up, and the help of some very beautiful kimonos and hair-pieces, we made our triumphant debut as four magnificent maiko. We became the main attraction on the streets. One very observant onlooker was heard to comment, "They are FAKES!!", but the general excitement of the

crowd was just amazing. Even though people knew we were just four punks on a lark, it did not make them any less keen to take our photos.

So, if you are having trouble finding geisha or maiko in Kyoto, do what my friends and I did: become the maiko! And then, for a laugh, go for a stroll through the streets of Gion. It is an experience that I promise that you will never forget (unless, god forbid, you get Alzheimer's or





some other neurodegenerative disease). Do not wait to find the geisha, be proactive about it! Get a group of friends together and head to Shiki; <http://www.maiko-henshin.com/english/>. You will all get the photos you are after!

The Maiko Show of a Lifetime is when YOU want it to be.

(Makes a great gift idea too!!)



Who's who in Hyogo

tori lowe

The Basics...

Name: Kyla Winter

Please call me: Seriously, call me, my phone hardly ever rings...

School and Location in Hyogo: Kakogawa Nishi High School, Kakogawa

How we know you: You probably don't, so read on!

Birthday: February 7 1984.

Born and raised: Adelaide, South Australia, then moved to Perth.

Family: Hopefully one day, but I'll probably just end up with cats.

University and Degree: Murdoch University; Education

Other jobs you have had: Donut maker/decorator, bar wench, primary school teacher

Travels: Hawaii, Thailand, Austria, South Pacific (Vanuatu, New Caledonia etc.), around Australia and Japan.

Shumi wa nan desuka: Uno. I cannot be defeated!

Favourite...

Food: Toffee Apples.

Sports: Aussie Rules, the BEST kind of football.

Music: Anything that's not weird jazz or Jack Johnson.

Shop: Vie de France.

TV Show: Scrubs, The Chaser's War on Everything.

Movie: Zoolander, I wish I could be professionally good looking.

Kyla
Winter

Most Proud Achievement: Earning my black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

Best life experience: (cliché alert) Being in love.

Motto to live by: If everything is under control, you are going too slowly.

I remember when... you could buy something for 1 cent.

If I had a million dollars... I would buy the DeLorean from Back to the Future II.

Why should we elect you President of the World? I will out-law romantic comedies.

Do you have an alibi for the Fire Extinguisher Incident at Yashiro? No comment.

Best thing about Japan so far? Vie de France.

Other interesting trivia: A cockroach can live for nine days without its head before it starves to death.

My top tip for teaching: Make friends with the bad kids, they're fun and might make class easier.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... Thank god I'm just the tape recorder.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? YAY! As long as I get treats too!!

Brendan
Maguire

The Basics

Name: Brendan Maguire

Please call me: Anything you like, just don't call me late for dinner.

School and Location in Hyogo: Akashi High School, Akashi.

How we know you: You probably don't but you would probably know my other half, Tori.

Birthday: 19/8/1977 Yes, I am 30 this year.

Born and raised: Born in Kalgoorlie (mining town, possibly in a tent) and raised in Bunbury, Western Australia

Family: Mother, Father, two older brothers and three older sisters. Also an N-dog called Peppy

University and Degree: ECU in Perth studying Film and Philosophy

Other jobs you have had: Planting trees, cutting up trees, a series of sales jobs selling everything from paint, CDs, to furniture and computers, Best boy and a nightfiller.

Travels: England, Scotland, New Zealand and now Japan.

Shumi wa nan desuka: Music

Favourite...

Food: Lamb Roast with all the trimmings.

Sports: Soccer

Music: Rock, although I appreciate all forms.

Shop: I don't really shop that often.

TV Show: Heroes, Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip, NCIS, Jericho, Doctor Who

Movie: A life Aquatic, In the name of the father, any movie that makes me think and feel.



Most Proud Achievement: Helping save a friends life

Best life experience: Snowboarding in Hokkaido

Motto to live by: There are many ways to leap, the essential being to leap.

I remember when... The money you got for recycling a glass bottle was enough to play a pinball game.

If I had a million dollars... I would buy a house and invest the rest.

Why should we elect you President of the World? I don't want the job and, well, if you listen to Plato that is reason enough.

Do you have an alibi for the Fire Extinguisher Incident at Yashiro? You don't understand – I come from the year of the strangler.

Best thing about Japan so far? Delaying real life for three years.

Other interesting trivia: A hippo farts through its mouth.

My top tip for teaching: Show respect and you will gain respect.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... am probably not in it.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? Yaya, but only if they really good.





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Hyogo Times

JAPAN: travel review

jeff weese



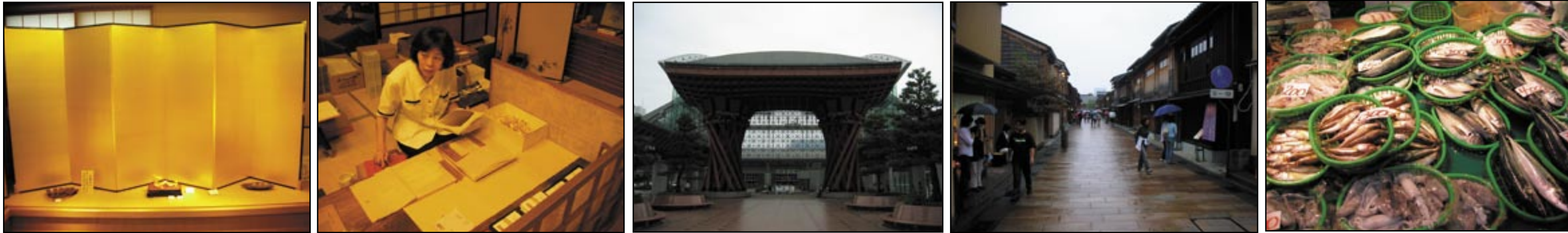
kanazawa

The 6.7 earthquake that rocked Ishikawa Prefecture on the West coast of Japan was well broadcasted through out the country, but don't let that deter you from visiting the beautiful city of Kanazawa.

you like fish! Of course you can find a variety of food in Kanazawa, but the food that people flock to Kanazawa for is fish. The waters off the coast are very cold and full of catch! If you head down to the more commercial area of Kanazawa, you can walk through Ohmicho Fish Market where you will find every fish imaginable laid out for the customers to examine. The massive squid with ridiculous price tags, big huge fish with beady eyes staring back at you, and rolling sea grapes stuck in the current in the tank are all worth a photo or taste. You can find several little sushi shops mixed in-between the fish stalls, but expect to wait for a seat as they are very popular. Give yourself some time and go to the one with the longest line...it's got to be the longest for a reason right?

The last must see in Kanazawa is Myoryuji Temple or Ninja Dera. This temple was never actually associated with ninjas, but does have some very cool escape routes, hidden passageways, and trap doors from which the local rulers could escape should there be a threat. Every inch of the temple is designed with precision and built with a purpose. Walking through the temple made the 12-year-old boy in me come out and want to be a ninja! The tour is guided in Japanese but you receive an English supplementary brochure for a little extra help.

Getting to Kanazawa is easy. From Osaka, the Thunderbird Limited Express is the quickest way at a travel time of just over 2 ½ hours (departures once an hour), and a cost of 6390yen. You can take non Limited Express trains, but



. The name means "marsh of gold," and the name is based on an old legend from when peasant Imohori Togoro was digging for potatoes and happened to come across some gold flakes that had found their way into the soil.

Gold has carried the city from the times of Imohori Togoro all the way until now. Kanazawa Haku is gold leaf that has been beaten down paper-thin and is used in everything from famous Kanazawa lacquer ware design to stunning screens and prints. The gold leaf that coats the famous Kinkaku-ji in Kyoto is made in Kanazawa. You can visit the Kanazawa Yasue Gold Leaf Museum and watch them press the gold, buy a few gold souvenirs, or even sample some tea with swirling gold flakes at the bottom of your cup. The gold is considered good for your health and vitality. Drink up!

After leaving the Kanazawa Yasue Gold Leaf Museum, across the Asano River, you are only a few blocks away from the Higashi Geisha District, where an entire street is lined with well-restored Edo period wooden houses. Walking

up and down this street, which happens to be one of the most photographed streets in Japan, gives you a chance to experience the country pre-modern boom. You can even enter some of the homes to see how life would have unfolded during the Edo period. There are fantastic displays of some geisha combs, instruments, and other décor.

From the Higashi Geisha District, it is easy to access Kanazawa Castle and the most famous attraction in Kanazawa, Kenrokuen Garden. Kenrokuen Garden, occupying 25 acres, is one of the top 3 gardens in Japan and is beautiful in any season that you wish to visit it. Reserve some time for it in your day because hours can be easily lost wandering through trails, admiring the waterfalls, and sipping tea in the lakeside teahouse. Just next door is the Kanazawa Castle, but living in Hyogo and holding bragging rights to Himeji Castle might be reason enough to just snap a few photos from the outside. It burned down in 1888 (as seems most castles in Japan have) and is currently undergoing major restoration.

If local food is what you're after, then I hope



expect to be traveling for over 5 hours...and the savings are less than 2000yen. Once arriving at the newly built, esthetically pleasing Kanazawa Station, stop by the tourist information desk (English spoken) in the station where the kind staff will gladly point you in the direction of the sights, help you with accommodation, or supply you with a map. There are a number of budget accommodations in Kanazawa that you can find

Images: Left > Right: Gold Screens, Yasue Gold Leaf Museum, Kanazawa Station, Edo Period Street, Ohmicho Fish Market, Famous Wajima lacquer ware (Nick Kay and Jeff Weese).



with www.jalan.net or you can call the tourist information desk and ask for a recommendation (076-232-6200).

There is much to do and see in Kanazawa, so be sure to reserve an entire weekend for it! If you have any questions about Kanazawa or any other featured destination from the Hyogo Times travel column, don't hesitate to send an email to me at ilovenatto@mac.com. Happy Travels.

The Full Moon Goes Full Out in Thailand

kaila krayewski

As our boat approached Haad Rin beach, my nerves prickled with excitement. I could hear the drum and bass thumping. We had to go around to the other side of the island – no boats were allowed to dock on Haad Rin on this night. We disembarked and climbed up a vertical ladder – a problem when you’re wearing a dress and there are people directly below you, but no matter.

Greeting the boats were tables spilling over with buckets. Inside each bucket was a small flask of whiskey, and bottles of Red Bull and Coke. Lineups formed; few could resist the price, at less than \$5 a bucket.

I followed the crowd through town. The stores were open late with no sign of closing. Shopkeepers lined the streets, but shopping was the last thing on most people’s minds. Bathrooms popped up periodically, costing about 30 cents per use. I was happy to pay – at least there would be toilet paper. One stand displayed glow-in-the-dark tattoo designs with customers kneeling in front, being used as human canvases.

As I neared the beach, the thumping of the loudspeakers ringing in my ears, booze bucket-laden tables seemed to take over the street side. I pushed my way through the throngs of half-clothed, bucket-toting 20-somethings, to finally catch a glimpse of a mass of people no one could have prepared me for.

Thousands of faces infused the beachfront, bobbing up and down to a powerful concert of sounds. Various clusters decorated the beach, dotted at their centre by performers criss-crossing balls of fire around their bodies. Loud cheers gushed periodically from the surrounding crowds.

Beckoned by the moon, the waves pushed themselves onto the shore, washing over unsuspecting feet. The moon, a brilliant white ball of light, glazed the creamy sand. In the distance, the words “Koh Phangnan” hung off the jagged rocks in ruby red lights, a vivid tribute to the island hosting this epic event.

As I tripped past the sweaty, drunken drum and bass ravers, and made my way down the crescent-shaped beach, the music morphed; it was almost as if I’d entered a new world. Faces were contorted into wide-mouthed shouts, everyone jumping up and down to “Y-M-C-A”, arms flailing in every direction. I looked back at the heavily-tranced drum and bass crowd just three metres away, in awe at the proximity of the juxtaposition.

Further down the beach, rock music rang out so clear it sounded like a live performance. Long-haired, shirtless men kicked up sand as they got lost in their favorite songs, their neon tattoos gleaming in the moonlight.

After being approached by a French deaf-mute who proceeded to drag me across the beach to his friends (I obliged, intrigued by what he could possibly want), who tried to sell me liquid mushrooms, I attempted to find shelter.

I came upon a club called Coyote. Its three floors were shaking with hip-hop and R&B music. The inside was so jammed you had to snake, shove and shimmy to any unoccupied space. Girls danced on platforms surrounding the bar, the people below bumping body parts with every step.

The air hung thick, and sweat was pouring everywhere. Glistening, I squeezed out of Coyote to get some fresh air.

It seemed that everyone had the munchies—line-ups for restaurants had spilled into the streets. Italian spaghetti, American hot dogs, Lebanese Shawarma; there was food to satisfy each discerning taste. And my drunken peers were devouring it without inhibition. The bathroom line-ups were equally daunting. The toilet paper was going so fast that they were handing rolls to us as patrons went in the stalls.

As if in a trance, I felt drawn back to the beach by the pulsing bass. The moon had moved farther up in the sky, but no one seemed to notice time had passed. The sand looked increasingly comfortable as the alcohol percolated through my veins.

Time passed quickly, and before I knew it, the warm feeling of morning sunlight coated my face. Partiers were still jumping up and down to the thumping bass, though the crowd was admittedly smaller – it was, after all, breakfast time.

Haad Rin beach was like a different world in the morning. The sunshine made everything seem so much more real, having lost its mysticism of the night before. People were passed out on chairs, speakers, and anywhere else they could find, their neon tattoos smeared across their sand-speckled skin. Amidst the crowds were some kind volunteers going around with garbage bags, picking up last night’s debris. Every second store seemed to have turned into a restaurant boasting “American” breakfasts, and they were all jammed with people.

As I walked around, I felt increasingly uncomfortable as I was growing tired: it was 8 a.m. and I had not slept. I must have looked it, because it seemed that every other person was inviting me to come and sleep in their bed. No. Thank you.

I had missed the 6 a.m. boat back to my beach, so I had to take a taxi. The ride, which would normally cost no more than 10 dollars, cost me thirty – and I had to bargain hard to get that price. Taxi drivers love to rip off tourists at the Full Moon Party.

The Full Moon Party was started by a small group of backpackers entranced by the perfect-for-dancing light of the full moon. Word of the party spread quickly, and now crowds in excess of 10,000 trek to Haad Rin Beach for the full moon of each month. Entry is completely free. Recently, Half Moon Parties and Black Moon Parties have popped up, but none are as popular as the original.

As the taxi bumped and jostled along the unpaved road back to my resort, my stomach nauseous and my head pounding, I smiled to myself, trying to figure out when I could make it back to Haad Rin to dance again under the full moon.



A Different Type of Travel:

robin crowder

Habitat for Humanity in the Philippines



When I left Kansai airport on March 17th, I was embarking not only on my first trip to the Philippines, but on my first experience volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. When I returned to Japan two weeks later, I was certain that neither of my firsts would be my lasts.

Though I would never have admitted it to anyone one at the time, fear – not excitement – was definitely the prevailing emotion on departure day. Essentially, I was going to an underdeveloped country I knew almost nothing about, with people I had only just met, planning to take on physical labour I had no experience in doing, all while trusting that I would be safe spending time in part of the dirtiest, roughest slums of Manila: I honestly had no idea what to expect. As it turned out, my initial qualms were unfounded, and fear ended up being the only competitor missing in the emotional tug of war I played for the next week.

Like many Southeast Asian nations, the richness of the Philippines' natural beauty starkly contrasts the absolute poverty that much of its population lives in. While working with Habitat for Humanity at their largest Manila building site, Baseco, this poverty was something that our group experienced daily. Baseco is actually a squatter's shanty town built on top of a garbage dump: the people there are literally living in their own filth – and that of all the other people in the city. When a fire stripped many of them of their belongings, Habitat for Humanity and other humanitarian organizations joined forces with the goal of not only giving the people a more stable environment, but of returning them their dignity. Though there is still much work to be done, these organizations have done a fantastic job of helping over 1000 families create a place they can be proud to call home.

Unfortunately, one of the saddest things I realized on this trip is that the people living in the Baseco slums are actually some of the better off: even those still living in shanties have at least some semblance of a home. From what I could tell, there is no middle class in the Philippines – people either have everything, or they have nothing. Manila's poverty spills out into the busy city streets where children beg for money; it tries to hide in the quiet parks where entire families live under the trees; it makes itself blatantly obvious outside the giant shopping malls whose sporadic locations only further accentuate the gap between the rich and the poor. The skewed distribution of wealth is never clearer than when you step outside the air-conditioned comfort of pricey North American stores populated by well dressed women laden down with shopping bags, and into the smoggy heat of streets populated by tattered people laden down with the weight of the world.

The experience of fundraising, working with HFH and coming to understand what poverty actually means is not something I would trade for the world, but it also left me feeling distinctly depressed. It is mind boggling to realize that the amount of money I spent simply to go on that vacation is more money than most of the people living at Baseco will ever see in their entire lives...more money than the people living on the streets could ever fathom. It certainly made me feel guilty for ever complaining about life as an "impoverished university student" because, clearly, I was never even close to being poor. Similarly, as much as it felt like I was doing a good thing by actually working at the site, it also made me feel like something of a rich snob. I put in my hours of labour, but I also got to take an hour for lunch (and eat like a queen), take morning and afternoon breaks (and snack on a fruit smorgasbord), and leave at the end of the day (and go home to a nice air-conditioned



Opposite page: A few kids give us big smiles before heading off to school.

This page: (clockwise from left):

1: The large majority of our time in Baseco was spent painting – a somewhat tedious job, but at least one where you could really see the fruit of your labour.

2: Many children spent their days hanging around and "helping" us paint the homes.

3: When you take a closer look at the garbage in the landfill, it is layer after layer of plastic bag. Hey Japan – can you guess where the remnants of your individually wrapped everything ends up?



hotel, a cleansing shower, a bountiful dinner and a comfy bed). The partner family workers and people who live in the homes I painted have almost none of that...

Conversely, what the people lack in material goods, they more than make up for in spirit. During our time at Baseco, we were constantly surrounded by smiling, friendly people – many of whom offered us food and drinks when they so clearly couldn't afford to be sharing. The daily greetings and continued shouts of "Hello!" made me feel welcomed and appreciated. And, though again I would never have admitted it to anyone at the time, one of the best parts of the experience was the children who latched onto us and followed us from house to house, begging hugs, asking to help, and just wanting to be loved. It was nice to see that kids are always kids, no matter where they grow up. These childrens'

big dark eyes still reflected the wonder of new faces; they played the same games as my little cousins and laughed at the same jokes as my little sister. In one light, it was refreshing to see that children can always make the best of any situation; in another, it was difficult to try not to think about the fact that, for all their similarities, these kids will never have the same opportunities that my little cousins or sister do.

Somber thoughts aside, the intermittent giggles and pokes in the back from children who looked like they needed a bath, but ultimately just needed to be showered with love, continually reminded me of why I was spending spring break standing in garbage in the 35°C degree heat, being swarmed by flies and getting as much paint on my body as on the houses: because, as Habitat for Humanity says, it's not just building a house, it's building a future.

Above: The whole team: Jenn, Rob, Paul, Cathy, Robin, Jerome, Jill, Mackenzie, Brad, Chad, Christine, Aileen and Jane.
Left: Eventually, the whole community will be paved and planted to create a nice neighbourhood.



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10am - 7pm except Mondays

E-mail: info@krac.org

FOR AN INFORMATION PACKAGE AND AN APPLICATION FORM

☆ at my desk ☆



My favourite thing on my desk: My computer! I would be lost without my computer and internet... what would I do if I couldn't check my emails 50 times a day?

Hi, my name is Angela Nicholson and I work at Sasayama Homei High School. My desk is in the corner of the room, separated from most teachers and right next to the door that is constantly opened and closed by teachers and students. On one side of me is Brandon, your lovely new PR, and on the other side is Yamauchi sensei whose signature clothing is red track pants that are about 3 inches too short. He doesn't talk to me at all. In fact, I would almost go so far as to say that he doesn't like me at all... perhaps because I'm foreign... perhaps because I'm a woman... who knows? Anyway, this is my desk!



The most useful thing on my desk: My computer...I know you're all in the same boat... (What's that? Not everyone has a computer at their desk? Bummer!)

The cultural things on my desk: I have a statue from Okinawa, a frog from Thailand that when you run a stick over its back it makes 'froggy' sounds, a packet of Chocolate cigarettes, some origami cranes that were given to me

by some students and a Homer head cube... sorry I forgot to put that in the picture... it's hiding because every time I finish it (I have to use the hints off the internet) Brandon comes along and messes it up again. If he does it one more time, I swear there will be some blood shed.

The other interesting things on my desk: At the moment, an Amazon box - full of goodies that just arrived!!! I love Amazon... :) There is also currently a list of teachers with an area for them to mark if they can come to my Super-Duper Spring Lunch in two weeks. I have invited all staff to come to a Western-style lunch (that I will cook)... it wins me points with the teachers and office staff and gives me something to do to overcome the boredom of holidays!

ESS: English sensei spirit

project ideas!

With the start of the new school year and lessons to plan for the entire year (if you are re-contracting at least!), it is a really good time to consider "Long Projects". Projects can use up a whole month of lessons...yeah ya!

This project was submitted by Lora Travers Moncure (Travvy!). It is a great project as you end up with some nice decorations for your classroom.... Or the hallway if you don't have a special English room (woe for you!).

English Speaking Countries

Level: mid to high level high school

Weeks: 3 to 4 weeks; more for lower level students, less for high level.

Bonus: You can include a speaking test at the end

Week 1- Hand out the assignment. You will need to ask the computer teacher if you can use the lab: the students will need to research the answers. Students should get into pairs, or groups of 3.

The Assignment: Make a poster advertising your assigned country. You will present your country to the class, using your poster as a visual aid. Each person in the group must speak for two minutes, and you must answer the questions below.

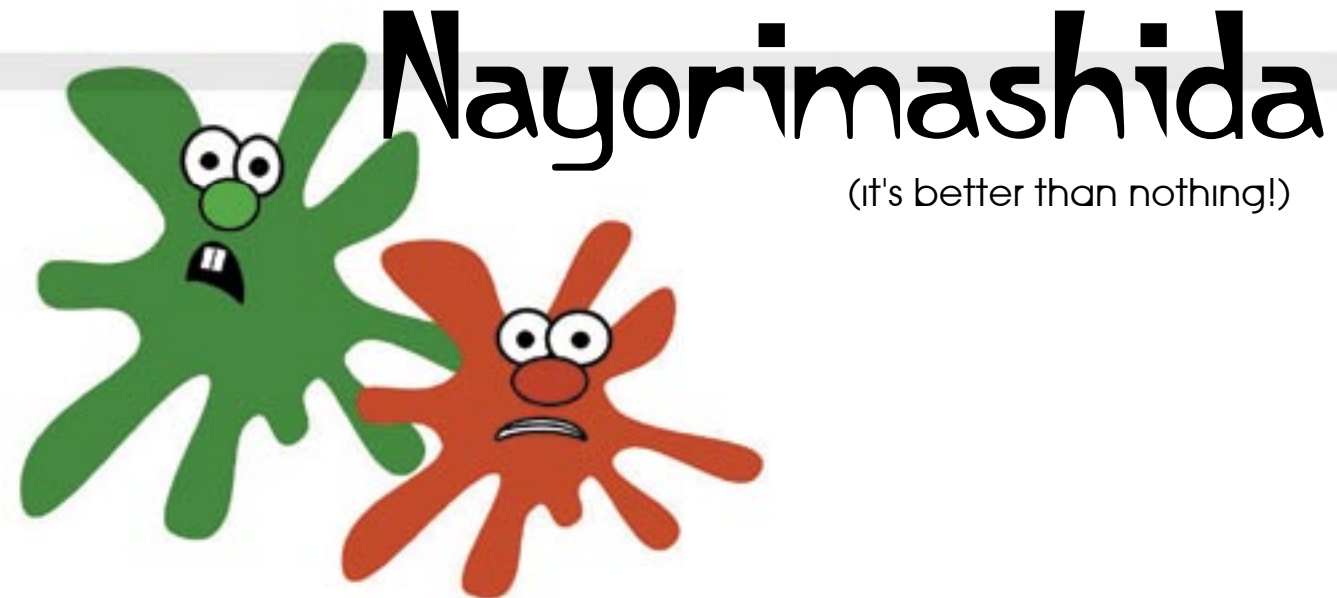


1. How many people live in your country?
2. What other languages are spoken in your country?
3. Which religions are practiced in your country?
4. What are the popular tourist spots in your country?
5. How big is your country compared to Japan?
6. How long does it take to get to your country from Japan?
7. What are the two biggest cities in your country?
8. What are the most popular foods in your country?
9. What is the capital of your country?
10. What is the currency of your country?
11. What are the biggest exports of your country?
12. What are some popular symbols of your country?
13. What kinds of animals live in your country?
14. Describe the geography of your country.
15. What is the national anthem of your country?

Week 2 and 3- Check the sentences, hand out poster sheets (you can probably get coloured cardboard from your office ladies). You can collect the sentences before you let the students put them on the posters; or comically leave them as is. Whatever floats your ALT boat, really.

Week 4: Students present their posters to the rest of the class. Travvy says: "On presentation day, I gave the students paper for comments, and everyone listened to the presentations, gave comments, etc. Then, at the end of each presentation, I asked the students 1 question from the 15 that they already answered. One student in the group repeated their sentence out loud, another student wrote their sentence on the board, and all students wrote down the info on the board for each country (1 sentence from each group). I told the kids they would be tested on it to instill fear, and on the test I would have multiple choice questions on the info from the board, plus each student would have to answer questions (what is the population of your country, etc) on their respective countries. My kids' skills are pretty low, but per usual the ones who were motivated tried and did great, while the others did not so great. I think it was a good project but a lot of work for both teachers and students... but at least we have some visuals in the classroom now!!"





Nayorimashida

(it's better than nothing!)

私の家に来て下さい。
(watashi no ie ni kite kudasai)
“Please come to my house.”

Straightforward enough, right? Well, the thing to note is that little particle, に (ni), right in the middle. It's a directional thing and most of the time you can get away with translating it as “to” in English. You know, come TO my house. Go TO the library.

What about this though?

いすに座って下さい。(isu ni suwatte kudasai)
“Please sit on the chair.”

On. Not in. Not to. On.

So, what does that mean for translating an elaborate Japanese text, let alone having conversation with your high school-educated Japanese buddy?

“Please come on my house.”

Er... No.

Though, while we're on the topic of particles, perhaps I'll lay out my generalizations of uses, in hopes that they might help you understand what's going on.

に (ni) – in, at, on

で (de) – by, at

を (wo) – direct object marker as in 本を持って下さい。(hon wo motte kudasai) “Bring the book.”

が (ga) – topic marker

は (ha, pronounced wa) – subject marker

Uh... Sorry about the は and が thing, but I think if I tried to fully explain it, your heads would explode. They're interchangeable for the most part, but there is some hidden rule of grammar behind it all (one that even eludes my Japanese teachers). I've picked the brains of three English teachers, but I'll let you know what the 国語 (kokugo) “national language/Japanese” teacher says. Don't hold your breath. Last time I checked, she didn't know that めしあがる (meshiagaru) was the 丁寧 (teinei) “uber formal” form of the verbs “to eat” and “to drink”. *sigh*



let's enjoying fun!



submitted by
chris mckernan



Please be inspired to send in anything amusing that you come across, such as a sign,

a t-shirt, an incident, or whatever.

Student submissions get some of the best feedback.

Please submit them in their original writing, warts and all.

You can send a story or a picture or both to:

submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

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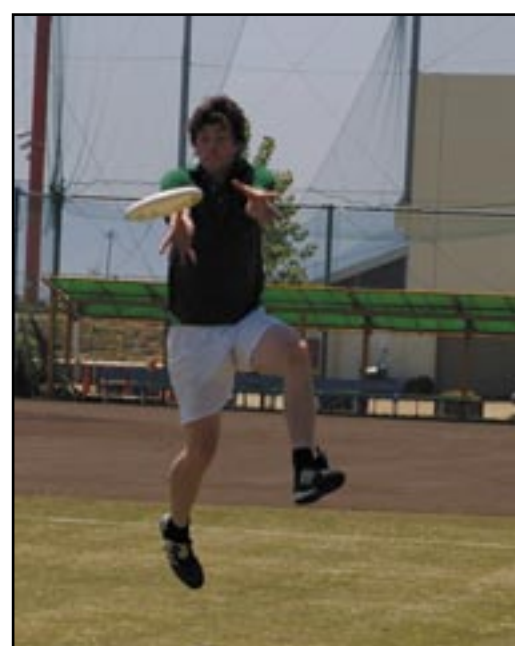
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OUT AND ABOUT IN HYOGO...



HAJET HANAMI
himeji castle
- karen



awaji frisbee
- robin

Hematology Astrology

robin crowder & phil booth

march 2007

TYPE A



It's time to overcome your occasionally ambiguous nature: the more specific and certain you are about what you want, the better your chance of getting a clear end result. This is especially true during a slight miscommunication at work. It is also imperative to remain open-minded. A chance opportunity may come from an unexpected source.

Single As: Though a strong emphasis on your view point might be the key in other parts of your life, voicing too strong an opinion (or feelings for a certain someone!) might scare them off – best to play it cool this month.

Attached As: It's time to lead your relationship down the road less traveled. Though your partner may be happy with the comfortable routine of the same old, your sense of romantic adventure is about to kick into high gear!

TYPE O



If you don't like something, change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Lately, you have had no option other than to remain in a not-so-enjoyable frame of mind. Luckily, the April showers are almost over and the May flowers are starting to push through the dirt. Take advantage of your new disposition to push for some long awaited changes.

Single Os: Your charming new attitude and outlook on life wins over a new suitor, but be careful – the person may not actually be interested in what you have to say or offer, but what you have.

Attached Os: Everything in your life seems to be popping up in new bright colours – everything except your relationship that is. The warmth and comfort of your "winter blanket" seems too smothering in the fresh spring air...take some time to think.

TYPE B



If you lead a horse to water and it refuses to drink, try putting some salt in its food: you'll need a clever idea to achieve a stubbornly elusive goal. Use the creativity typical of your type to help you devise a crafty plan that will have others giving you pats on the back.

Single Bs: Is that elusive goal a romantic obstacle? If so, May is the month to tackle the course!

Attached B: Sit back and smile – after a few bumps in your relationship, it's smooth sailing from now on! Or, at least for the next few months

TYPE AB



Though generally easy-going in nature, lately you have been feeling more and more frustrated with your chosen path in life – or lack of chosen path as the case may be. Remember that history was not written in a day (nor was Rome built!) and stop worrying so much about what tomorrow will bring. Everything happens for a reason, though it may be years before you understand that reason.

Single ABs: Maybe, just maybe, something romantic will happen...but then again, maybe not. Enjoy the single frolicking fun that the season can sometimes bring.

Attached ABs: Once a relationship has become an integral part of your daily life, it is easy to take it for granted. Take some time to show your partner how much you care.

MAY/JUNE EVENTS: KANSAI

compiled by amanda brown

CONCERT LISTINGS:

May 21 - Stone Sour
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
6000yen

May 22 - Stratovarius
Osaka Big Cat
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
6500yen

May 23 - Eddi Reader
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 19:00, Start 20:00
6500yen

May 23 and 24 - Nine Inch Nails
Zepp Osaka
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
8000yen

May 25 - digitalism
Osaka Club Karma
Start 23:00 - all night event
4000yen + adv drink charge

May 27 - cold war kids
Osaka Banana Hall
Open 17:00, Start 18:00
5000yen

May 30/31 - Copeland with Anberlin
Osaka DROP
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
5500yen

May 31 - The View
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
5500yen



June 5 - Queensryche
NHK Osaka Hall
Open 18:15, Start 19:00
7500yen

June 6 - Aqualung
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
5800yen

June 8 - Red Hot Chili Peppers
Kyocera (Osaka) Dome
Open 17:00, Start 19:00
S-reserved seat, 9000yen, A-reserved seat
8000yen

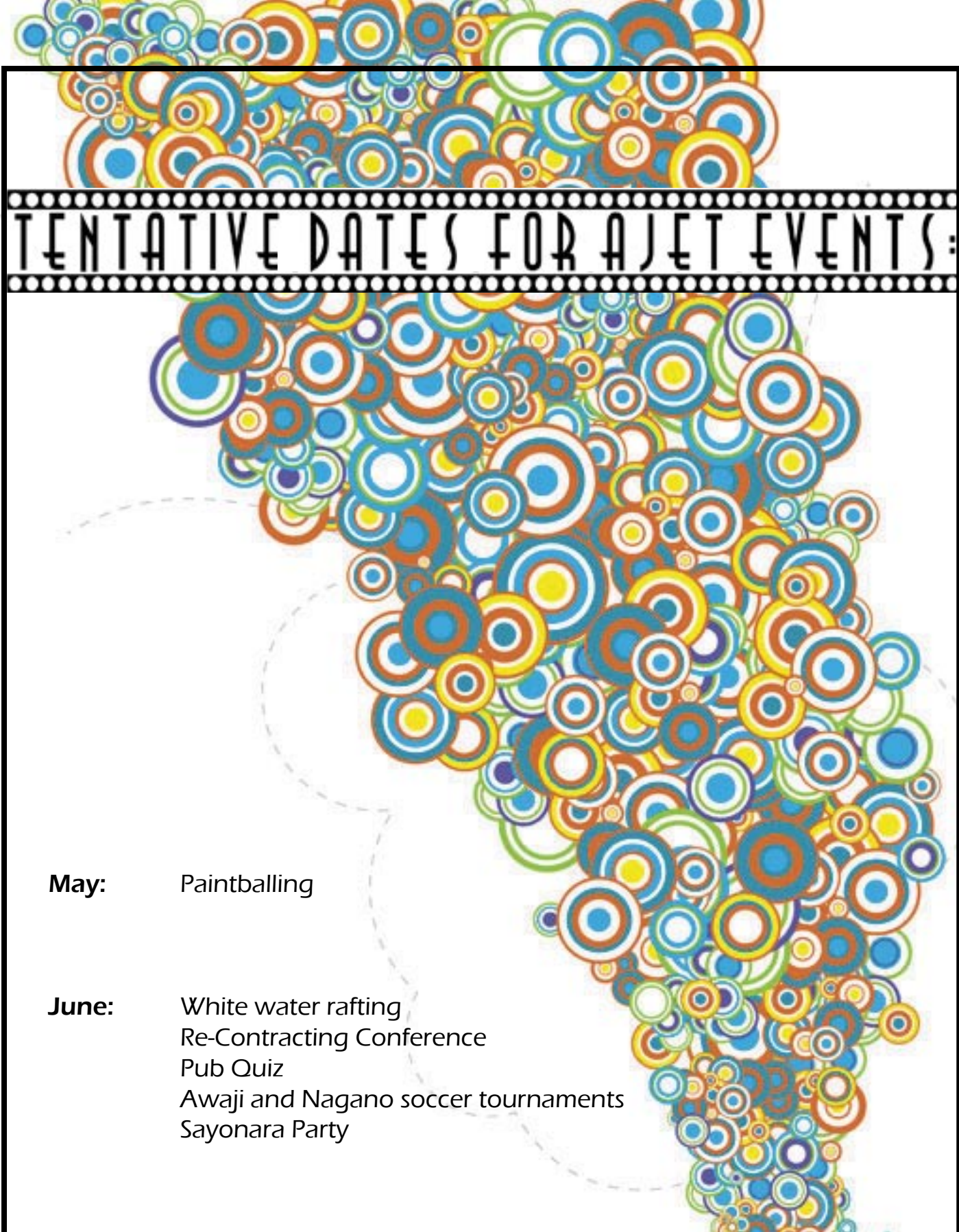
June 14 - Charlotte Hatherley
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
6000yen

June 18 - I Hate Kate
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 18:00, Start 19:00
5500yen

June 24 - Your Song Is Good
Shinsaibashi Club Quattro
Open 17:00, Start 18:00
2400yen

Coming soon to Kansai: (July)
FUJI ROCK FESTIVAL!





TENTATIVE DATES FOR AJET EVENTS:

May: Paintballing

June: White water rafting
Re-Contracting Conference
Pub Quiz
Awaji and Nagano soccer tournaments
Sayonara Party

To stay updated about upcoming events please join our
Hyogo Ajet yahoo group at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hyogojets/>

