

COMING SEPTEMBER 2008

HIMEJI-JOE

VS.

ULTRA
TAKOYAKI!



HYOGO TIMES PICTURES PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH CONTRIBUTING A.L.T.S INTL. A HYOGO JETS PRODUCTION HIMEJI JOE ULTRA TAKOYAKI

CHIP BOLES DEVIN MCGRATH "HIMEJI JOE VS. ULTRA TAKOYAKI!" ALSO STARRING THE CITY OF HIMEJI DAN CARTER JEFF WEESE

MUSIC BY BON JOVI EDITED BY ANN CHOW DESIGN EDITOR JEFF MORRICE COVER BY CHIP BOLES



HT

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On the cover...



Cover art by Chip Boles

This month's cover is the least traditional cover I've done so far. The idea started when I was drawing Himeji Castle from a nearby park and clearly saw a face in the castle and imagined it standing up. I like giant monsters/heroes and couldn't resist. The problem was deciding who he would fight. At first it was a giant Ganguro girl, but I decided on Ultra-Takoyaki cause its just funnier to me. (And since some folks have asked, Yes, prints are available!)

Hyogo Times Staff

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

Submit by the 15th of each month to:

submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

Visit us online at:

<http://hyogoajet.net>

From The Editor...

Konnichiwa minasan! I hope your summer went swimmingly well and that you are getting (back?) into the swing of things.

There was much to do in August, including TWO beer gardens, and there is more to come in the following months! There are a few three-day weekends (or one of which can be easily made into a four-day one) coming up, so you can easily jet to a neighboring country without missing too much work, and there are tons of festivals happening within Japan's borders, so take advantage of the combination of events and free time! For more info, read Jeff Weese's suggestions and Bren-

da's Best of the Block column!

This month we have two restaurant reviews from two new JETS, Andrew Tamashiro and Lester Somera. Andrew's is about a ramen place he likes to frequent and Lester's is... well, not about a ramen place, but I promise it's much more interesting than I make it sound, so read on because it is rather fascinating!

Aside from the various Sports Days everyone may have during one of those three-day weekends, there is also the *enkai* which the school will have at the end of that day. Word to the wise: try not to make too much of a fool out of yourself there or you may not

want to see your co-workers the following working day! (Or if you have teachers like mine, you'll hear about things you didn't think they should share with the ALT. Then, they'll not want to see you the following working day!) And with Sports Day coming up, there will be plenty of chances to use Bob's recipe on how to make your own sports drink without having to shell out obscene amounts of money for bottles of grapefruit-flavored drinks every time you need to quench your thirst!

One more thing, find out if you need to participate in your school's Sports Festival because I can say it is *not* a nice surprise when they tell you that you are supposed to "miracle jump" your way past student teams about 10 minutes before you go. Then again, it's never a nice surprise when they tell you about 10 minutes before you need to do something to do it, for example, teach a class. So go out there, explore, find things out, ask questions, keep hydrated, and have fun!

And send your submissions to submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com! Just do it!

— Ann



And From The PR...

Say hello to September, Hyogo-ites!

Welcome to Japan's second summer, which for some reason is affectionately known here as 'autumn.' And with the theoretical change in seasons comes "back 2 skool" time for another exciting term of English magic! I hope you all had a fantastic, refreshing holiday and are ready and raring to unleash that inner teaching ninja.

To all the new ALTs, especially, *ganbatte ne!* Good luck with your introductory speeches (you are doing them in Japanese, right? :D) and your very first class in Japan — it's definitely an experience.

And talking of experiences, over the holidays I caught up with a lot of friends who were leaving Japan with the change of the JET year. As you do in situations like this, we all spent some time reminiscing about all the experiences we'd had during the previous year.

I was really surprised at just how many things we had collectively seen and done here in Japan. Running mostly naked through the streets of Saidaiji in the Naked Man Festival; climbing the imposing Mount Fuji to see the sun rise; partying all night in the trendy clubs of Osaka; exploring ancient temples and treasures in Kyoto; digging for clams and sea urchins on local beaches; wearing a *yukata* and *geta* at summer festivals; being invited into the houses of random local people to drink sake; shopping in the neon madness of Akihabara and the fashionable streets of Harajuku; and eating strange and interesting foods like *nattō* and raw horse heart. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

What I realised from all of this is that, although it's not always noticeable, there really is a lot of diversity here in Japan. Maybe not so much multiculturally (hehe), but there is definitely an astounding amount to see and do all over Japan, in terms of both modern and ancient Japanese culture.

The point I'm trying to make is that Japan is probably one of the richest places in the world to live in terms of the life experiences you can have.



If there is one recommendation I can make about living here, it's that you get out there to explore and experience as much of it as you can. Be confident, take every opportunity and discover. There need never be a boring moment during your time here!

And on that note, remember to keep an ear out for upcoming HAJET events! One of our aims this year is to make sure you have the opportunity to get out and about both in and around Hyogo-ken, to enjoy the diversity I just mentioned.

To kick things off, we're heading down to beautiful Shikoku in late September for a weekend of crazy rafting action, and there's plenty more on the drawing board for later in autumn and through the winter. So take care, enjoy the return to school and hope to see you all out there enjoying what this amazing country has to offer!

— Daniel

A Hyogo Times Review:

Indiana Jones

and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

By Movie Mogul

For all you Indy fans, waiting for the fourth installment seemed like it took years. Nineteen years to be exact. And while the hype concerning this movie has been building since the sixty-five-year-old Harrison Ford said that he would still do many of his own stunts, the movie itself was a bit of a let-down.

Let's recap a bit. *Indiana Jones* was born from the minds of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. Any kid who grew up the '80s and '90s worshipped these two blockbuster masters.

Indy told the tale of an archeologist adventurer who spent his time going after rare and lost treasure, defeating Nazis and winning the woman. We last saw Indy riding off into the sunset with his father (Sean Connery) after drinking from the Holy Grail, said to give those who tasted its waters everlasting life. The story was finished, complete, no more scripts need apply; we had our happy ending.

Flash forward nineteen years (coincidence?) and the Nazis are defeated and the new enemy, those Russian commies, are trying to take over the world using ancient artifacts and supernatural powers. And of course Indy is in the thick of it. I won't go into the plot points, but will mention the pros and cons of this film.

What I liked

Awesome performances by Cate Blanchett and John Hurt. Harrison Ford was definitely showing his age, and at one point in the film, I wondered why they didn't just call the film *Indiana Jones and the Curse of Senility*.

What I didn't like

The film seemed to try too hard to be an Indy film, thus rendering it not an Indy film. The dialogue was cheesy, the plot all over the place, and while the stunts would have been awesome twenty years ago, most of them have been played to death in the action/adventure movie category.

Overall

This is an entertaining film. I did enjoy it, but came out wondering how I really felt. It's "good," but not "great" by any standards. It didn't live up to the other movies in the series either, but for a Sunday matinee it was alright. I would recommend waiting to see it on video, or watching it free somewhere.

Two stars out of four.**Recipe of the Month:**

JET Dakara H2O Sweat

Home-Made Sports Drinks**By Robert Hollands**

September is really an extension of summer rather than a prelude to autumn that I've come to think of as *August II: The Sequel*. For much of this month, the oppressive heat continues unabated, and many of us find ourselves spending a great deal of yen on endless bottles of Pocari Sweat, Dakara, Aquarius, or my personal favorite, Super H2O (though I've long suspected it's the same drink in different bottles).

I know what you're thinking. "But Bob," you say, "I just drink plain old tap water. It's free!" I can't deny that you have a point there. For most people, re-hydrating with good, old-fashioned water works perfectly well, however, for those sportier individuals among us I feel I must issue a word of caution: when you sweat, you're not just losing water, you're losing salt, and you have to replace both in order to avoid becoming dehydrated.

Enter the glorious invention, the sports drink. From the time Florida Gators coach Ray Graves, along with the help of team doctors, invented (then) Gator-aid to help their players perform better during the hotter months, the humble sports drink has gradually evolved to contain carefully engineered proportions of water, sodium, potassium, carbohydrates, and the inevitable artificial colors and flavors. Of course, you have to pay for all the fancy research that went into making the icy beverage you're holding, usually at 150 yen a pop. It adds up after a while. Fortunately, the drink's essential components, what you're actually paying for, can be found in even the most poorly stocked ALT kitchen.

To make your own, gather the following ingredients:

- 1/3 liter of your favorite fruit juice (I recommend apple)
- 2/3 liter of water
- 1/4 tsp. salt

The next step? Mix. That's really all there is to it. The sugar from the fruit juice will replenish the carbohydrates you lose during activity, keeping you energized. The salt will keep your body's sodium levels in check and will help fight off dehydration. And of course, the water will serve its primary function of keeping you alive. The best part, though, is how much you just paid for a liter of what you were previously shell-ing out 150 yen per half-liter bottle. Carry it with you throughout the day, especially if you're planning on being outdoors and even more so if you plan on being active while you're there.

So it's not exactly the kind of recipe you all anxiously turn to this column expecting to see, and for that I apologize. In order to make amends, here is an incredibly simple and delicious recipe that's also appropriate for this last month of unbearable heat and humidity. It's what's known as "stamina food," which is characterized by spicy dishes high in protein, and are best eaten in hot weather. Enjoy!



Gaijin love sweat!

Dry-Fried Shredded Beef**Ingredients (serves 4):**

- 350-400g beef steak
- 1 large carrot
- 2-3 sticks celery
- 30ml sesame oil
- 1 tbsp rice wine or sherry
- 1 tbsp chili bean sauce
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp light brown sugar
- 2-3 spring onions, finely chopped
- 1/2 tsp fresh root ginger, finely chopped
- ground Szechuan pepper (optional)

To prepare:

- Cut the beef into matchstick-sized strips. Thinly shred the carrots and celery sticks.
- Heat the sesame oil in a preheated wok (it will smoke very quickly). Reduce the heat and stir-fry the beef shreds with the rice wine or sherry until the colour changes.
- Pour off the excess liquid and reserve. Continue stirring until the meat is absolutely dry.
- Add the chili bean sauce, soy sauce, garlic and sugar. Blend well. Then add the carrot and celery shreds.
- Increase the heat to high and add the spring onions, ginger and the reserved liquid.
- Continue stirring, and when all the juice has evaporated, season with Szechuan pepper and serve.

A Hyogo Times Restaurant Review:

Ja-ran, the Reggae Ramen

ジャラン (Ja-ran Ramen, Asago)

兵庫県朝来市山東町一品

1 7 2 - 4

Open 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Last order: 8:15 p.m.

Average check: under 1,000 yen

By Andrew Tamashiro

I'm no expert on food; I just know what I like. When I like it, I try to learn about it. Hopefully there's a bit of info in this for everyone, even if making a trip for a meal is out of the question.

The proprietors of this Ja-ran obviously have a soft spot for Bob Marley, as his face decorates their walls and their menu. Reggae regularly comes out of the speakers, and red, green and yellow are ubiquitous; Jah-land seems an appropriate name (Jah is the popular term for God used by Rastas, but has its roots in the Hebrew word Jehovah).

It's a small place, seating maybe 15, but there always seems to be a line. I've eaten here at least seven times in the first month, which isn't a surprise to those friends of mine who know about my affection for a good bowl of noodles. There's A/C, manga, magazines and a lovely couple that makes sure your bowl is hot and water pitcher is full.

The first time I went with the regular ramen with al dente/hard noodles (*katamen*). What I got was an oil-rich *tonkatsu* (pork bones) broth with a couple pieces of fatty (read delicious) chashu and green onions as toppings.

The noodles were cooked nicely, a bit chewy without being difficult, and plentiful. The soup was full-flavored, with sesame seeds and *negi* wafting through the light brown broth. The added dimension of what seems to be sesame oil as a flavor enhancer cemented this base's place in my list of happy addictions.



Little known fact: Bob Marley's one love? Ramen! True story!

The second time I ordered the tomato ramen. While it might not sound particularly appetizing, I was pleasantly surprised. Bok choy, small pieces of chicken, and of course tomato chunks were spread through a bowl of even richer broth, a combination of the pork bone and tomato-infused bases.

Even though I was told it was a bit lighter (*assari*) than normal, it certainly didn't taste that way. I threw in some of the spicy veggies on the table and basically knocked out the entire bowl in about seven minutes, including conversation.

I've since tried the corn ramen,

chashu-men (just more meat), fried rice and *gyoza*. My friends seem to enjoy the kimchi versions, and *cham-pon* is getting served every time I'm in house as well.

This is apparently the most popular ramen joint in the area, and I can see why. There are friendly owners, a nice small setting, relaxing music, and some good eats. Just don't take my seat.

Directions: It's on Route 427, just south of where it hits Route 9. Also, they've got 2 spellings of their names...Jaaran and Jaran. My navigator pulls Jaran, but the signs in the store say Ja-ran, I believe. Go figure.

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*products not included



Rockin' Summer Sonic

By
Tuwhakaroa Biddle

My anticipation for Summer Sonic '08 started when I couldn't get tickets to last year's, so this year I made sure I was free and had my 26,000円 two-day ticket as soon as they went on sale.

As Aug. 9-10 approached, I checked the website as often as possible to see who was added to the lineup. I wouldn't say I was disappointed with the final lineup. I just wasn't as excited by it as I was by the one I'd missed. The line-up for '07 included the Black-Eyed Peas, Gwen Stefani, Arctic Monkeys, Bloc Party, Interpol, Klaxons and CSS, to name a few.

This year's included its fair share of oldies (Sex Pistols, Devo, Fatboy Slim, The Verve and The Prodigy) and bands whose new music I hadn't heard due to my Japanese isolation (Panic at the Disco, The Kooks, The Fratellis, Coldplay and Alicia Keys). But I



was quite excited to see the Japanese bands that I listened to, like マキツママ ザ ホルモン, Radwimps, Perfume, Funky Monkey Babys and ET-King.

On Saturday, as expected, Osaka was hot as hell and the place was busy. I met a friend on the train and we arrived just after noon in time to catch the end of ET-King's set, which had the crowd going crazy.

Over the rest of the day I saw:

Vampire Weekend, a band I had never heard of but now love; Junkie XL, crazy dance time; The Kooks, who I found a little "meh"; Radwimps, an awesome Japanese band that is gaining popularity; Skindred, a ragga-metal band who enjoyed swearing at the audience; Hadouken!, who surprised me by not being Japanese; and Alicia Keys, whose music I probably would have enjoyed more in a concert hall than an outdoor festival.

After Keys, it was time for the perfect closer, Coldplay, who sang a song in Japanese and even moved through the crowd to a smaller stage in the middle of everyone. After the last note had faded away, fireworks lit up the sky. After this, began a three-hour wait/journey back to Umeda.

Sunday was hotter and busier than Saturday, but after a coffee, beer and donut breakfast, we were ready for another day of rocking out. We again arrived at around noon and caught the end of the Funky Monkey Babys, whose high energy and crazy male DJ (who wore a singlet

tucked into his tight denim hot-pants) had everyone hyped.

We then tried to see the gigantilla kawayusu Japanese trio known as Perfume but were disappointed to see a large queue waiting to get into the packed Dance Stage. We also tried to see Blood Red Shoes but ended up at the back of another long queue.

I did however get to see: Band of Horses, another band new to me, but one I really enjoyed; Zebrahead; The Fratellis; Lostprophets, who are a bit too Emo these days; and マキツママ ザ ホルモン, the band I had been waiting all day/several months for.

マキツママ ザ ホルモン were obviously going to be popular as thousands of people were wearing their fan shirts, so I went to the Sky Stage über-early to get a good position. As soon as the band hit the stage, the moshing began. In between songs, the band did little comedy routines which made me regret that I don't know Japanese (I quickly got over that).

By the end of their hour-long set, I was ready to faint from physical exhaustion but was nonetheless mentally psyched for more. It was then time for the closing



acts. The Sex Pistols were a closing act that everyone (except me) had been looking forward to. It turns out they were unapologetically 20 minutes late and had lost their voices in Tokyo (also singing at Summer Sonic).

I, instead, went to see The Prodigy, who were closing a different stage. They were good but it would have been nicer to see them at a smaller venue. In the end, we didn't wait for the end as we decided to head to the buses

to avoid a mission home like the night before.

All-in-all, Summer Sonic was a two-day, six-stage, music extravaganza of crowd-surfing musicians, with a crazy-yet-polite atmosphere and, of course, insanely-dressed Nihon-jin and their unique dancing. I can't wait for '09!



A Confederate in our Midst

By Lester Somera

Deep in the forest of the Hyogo countryside, any trace of civilization is barely existant. The mountains loom large above the valley, and mist rolls off their tops in gentle waves.

South of Asago, the roads only accommodate one car's width, the buildings are raised off the ground to prevent nightly insect visitations and the muted melodies of clear rivers are all that disrupt the stillness. So obviously, if you were in Japan this is the first place you would look to find an American frontier-themed restaurant with a Confederate flag proudly displayed above the door.

The Country Hut Fly Fishing Station Cafe Antiques (sic) and Cafeteria, run by Mr. Wada and his wife, is open from sun-up to sun-down and serves a variety of food that you won't be able to find without visiting a bigger city.



It also offers a brand of kitsch that you probably won't be able to find anywhere else in Japan, unless you know of another restaurant run by a kindly old Japanese man who used to call Montana home.

Mr. Wada, who was a bit of a walking anachronism in his overalls, ponytail and red bandana, regaled us after lunch with stories of when he was a young Ameri-

can immigrant and being called racial slurs. He also has quite a collection of cowboy hats.

The first time I went there with some of my elementary school teachers, we all had fresh-baked naan bread with curry dip and hot chai. The naan was quite good, if thoroughly out of place in a frontier restaurant which exhorts cowboys and Indians alike to "wipe the shit from [their] boots" prior to entering. They also serve pizza, inexplicably.

Unfortunately, both times I tried to return they were closed. When they say, "sun-up to sun-down," this appears to actually be code for, "we'll be open when we feel like it," or some such equivalent.

Some research suggests that a phone

reservation in advance might be necessary, considering that the owner apparently goes canoeing when there's no business, so it may be wise to get a more fluent speaker to call ahead.

Also, they accept payment in gold coins or gold dust, so if you're ever panhandling in a stream and strike it rich, this is the place to check out.

Country Hut (tel #: 0796-77-1892)

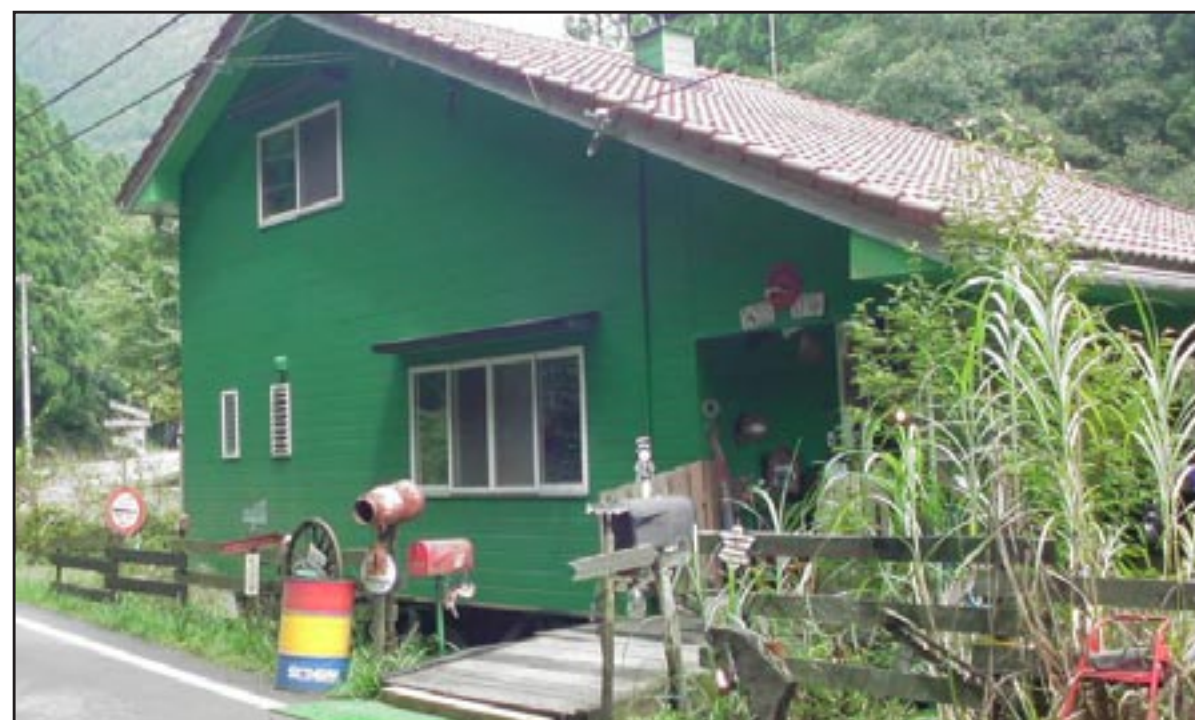
Directions:

Take Route 312 (leading to Asago City), then turn onto Route 70 into Asago proper. On Route 70, follow it south past the Nii train station, pass under the bridge and keep going straight. Drive along the long, winding road for about ten minutes, then turn



onto Route 429 and follow it until eventually runs parallel to a river. There will be a sign for "Country Hut," a green cabin on the right with highly conspicuous American paraphernalia everywhere around it (Route 66 signage, a

motorcycle, cowboy hats, guitars, deer antlers, fish mounted on the walls). It can be very hard to find, because of its remoteness, so asking someone for directions before setting out might be a good idea.



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The Best of the Block

By Brenda McKinney

Typhoon season is upon us! Before you decide to make best friends with your tatami and vow to stay inside until the winds have died down, here are some upcoming events from around Block 6 that might make you want to pull out the umbrella and get out to explore regardless!

What's Happening Around Hyogo Prefecture

Annual Shikoku Rafting Trip

Join Hyogo AJET for our annual rafting (and canyoning) trip to Shikoku Island from Sept. 26-28. Email <hajetevents@gmail.com> to RSVP or for more info.

Martial Arts Festival

Been dying to try aikido or get your hands on a Japanese bow and try out kyudo? The Hyogo Budokan (martial arts center) in Himeji is one of the largest dojos in Japan. Come spend a few hours trying out a martial art of your choice with some of the best instructors around, or watch local dojos compete in the after-

noon. There is no fee for the event, held on Nov. 3, but please call in advance for registration (079-292-8210).

Nada no Kenka Matsuri

Come watch over 200 loincloth-clad, o-mikoshi-carrying men duke it out in a gladiator-like stadium tucked into a mountain at the Nada no Kenka Matsuri (Nada Fighting Festival). The event will be held Oct. 14-15 in Shirahama-cho, off the Sanyo line, near Himeji. Feel free to go straight to the mountain area, or start at one of the participating shrines, walking in the parade-like atmosphere alongside one of the o-mikoshi (moving shrine) teams!

Hyogo International Association Language Classes

Are you new to Japanese or do you want to improve your Japanese ability? Check out the Hyogo International Association's website for information on their



free language classes, held twice weekly at the Hyogo International Center near Sannomiya (next to the Earthquake museum). Registration is now open.

If You're Hanging Around Shiga Prefecture

2008 Lake Biwa Bike Trip

Join Shiga JETs for a two-day bike trip around Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake, on Sept. 27-28. Meet at Nagahama Station West exit on Saturday at 8 a.m. and return around 5 p.m. on Sunday. Bike rental is available. Cost depends on bike rental & pension meal options, but plan on somewhere between 7,000 and 13,000 yen. If you are interested, RSVP by Sept. 19 on the ShigaJET page on <www.ESLwell.org> or email <block6@ajet.net> if you have questions or need help!

Biwa-ko Water Sports Weekend

If you are keen to have some fun in the water or just hang out in the sun, then come to the Westside for the weekend and have lots of fun!!! This is a two-day water sports event running Sept. 13-14, but you have the option to choose either day. Also, Monday, the 15th, is a holiday so you will have time to recover from the weekend. Costs include lunch and access to the following activities and professional instruction: kayaking, sailing boat, water skiing & windsurfing. Shiga AJET is booking this weekend



and there is a cancellation fee, so email <pukepoutasi@gmail.com> as soon as possible if you are interested.

Over in Kyoto Prefecture

Arashiyama Music Festival

Enjoy this outdoor concert in the tranquil Arashiyama district from Sept. 20-23. Listen to jazz, classical, Hawaiian, pop and many other genres at different stages around the area. A charity

concert of "Niko" (Chinese string instrument) and acoustic piano will be held in the Yuun-an of Tenryu-ji Shrine for the victims of the cyclone in Burma.

Dragon Procession at Kiyomizudera

On the other side of Kyoto City (Higashiyama), Kiyomizu Temple will also be hosting a dragon parade from Sept. 15-17. Legend says that Kyoto has been protected on all sides by four gods, and one of them is Seiryu (a sacred dragon guarding the

east side). For the "deep appreciation" to Seiryu, Kiyomizu holds a Buddhist ritual called Kiyomizudera Seiryu-e, including a dragon procession, each spring and autumn.

Also Close by...

Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri

Check out Japan's answer to the Running of the Bulls! The Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri, the most famous of Japan's cart-pulling festivals, will be taking place on the long weekend, Sept 13-14. Still going strong after 305 years, this festival celebrates the harvest as members of the Pulling team run as fast as they can, hopping and dancing around as their "danjiri" (carts) move faster and faster. This is guaranteed to be one of the most exciting matsuri you'll see in Japan... just beware of the out-of-control danjiri careening around corners! {Editor's note: I totally recommend this one. It's insane!}



Building a Better ESS

By Chip Boles

I have heard people describe a variety of experiences in working with their ESS/English Clubs. Some folks have huge groups, while others have two students who treat it as a tutoring session; some have a good mix of boys and girls, and others have uni-sex membership.

At Himeji Higashi Senior High we are lucky in many ways. It is a high-level academic school, and the JTEs are very capable — many with experience living abroad. Most of the students can handle the basics of English well enough that last year when a JTE became seriously ill and classes had to be reorganized, I was able to teach without a JTE present.

What I most want to describe to readers are two projects that the ESS had a good time with. In both projects, the ESS translated a story from Japanese to English, divided it up into parts for each member, and practiced to read it in public. They even illustrated the story they were reading in a way that was appropriate for their chosen venue.

Our first story, *Little Red Riding Hood*, brought up more than the obvious pronunciation practice that the title implies (Seriously, try to get your students to say it). They divided up the parts and the narration so that



they each had equal speaking time. I think they really enjoyed it, and the group as a whole could certainly pronounce "Big Bad Wolf" much better than before.

For the pictures, we decided on a visual style of using fabric scraps instead of coloring the images. This did not limit the look of the pieces to one student's style, and it also gave the less artistically-inclined something important to contribute.

The performance was for our school festival. We were able to project the completed images on a huge

screen for the crowd while the students read their parts. My involvement was limited to helping finish off the art and making the Wolf's snoring sounds (no Oscar nominations yet, though...).

For our next project, the students decided to translate a story about a famous samurai named

Musashi that has some history with Himeji Castle. Since our school is pretty much next door to the castle, they decided to practice the story and make pictures that could be told and shown to tourists at the castle.

Again, we worked out the translation, weighing words' descriptiveness against their difficulty. For the art, we went with watercolors on paper in a large sketchbook. They would turn the large pages as they told their story. Afterwards, the students handed out an information sheet about their story with the ESS' email address, in case tourists would be interested in dropping them a line.

Some of the specific benefits of these projects were, first, translation and speaking practice. When students read something from a worksheet in class, it can be more of a mechanical process of sounding out some foreign words. What I like most about practicing English for a performance is the chance to work in-depth on intonation, pronunciation, and natural speaking rhythms.



I encouraged them to memorize as much as possible, too. This really helped them own the lines they were saying. The translation was a chance to answer questions about difficult words and discuss some of the subtle differences between descriptive terms.

The second benefit was the art. Some folks know that my background is in art, illustration specifically. One of the main ways I introduced that into my teaching was by working on how we illustrated the stories themselves.

First, we had to decide how to divide up the story into beats to help us figure out the appropriate number of pictures for telling the story. *Little Red Riding Hood*, a three-page story, had about 15 images, but *Musashi* (only one page long) had only six images, and these numbers worked pretty well relative to the length and complexity of each story.

Next, I gave each student the assignment of making one or more very simple thumbnail sketches for each section. Then we compared these sketches looking for what people did or didn't include. Most often we would combine a few students' ideas into

one image that told that part of the story best.

After deciding on an approach to each image, we even talked about viewpoint. I explained this by comparing it to holding a camera — is the image better when we are looking up at the Big Bad Wolf in order to emphasize his size, or do we go with a view of him

experienced a feeling that was new to me. When the tourists would walk by, often scowling through the blinding summer sunlight while fearfully/angrily determining exactly what our group wanted from them, I felt very protective of my kids.

While I understand the irritation of having someone try to sell you something in the street, I was also able to see the difference between the typical Western response to our group, and the typical Japanese one. Many more Japanese would stop curiously and listen politely, looking carefully at the pictures even if they couldn't understand the English.

While there were some very kind Westerners who were generous with their time and attention, the curious percentage was much lower overall. The lesson for me was the feeling of identification I had with my kids and my school. After leaving the castle on the first day, I felt thankful for the stable and mostly kind environment of our school. I never even considered what it would mean to identify with my kids more than the foreigners, but hey, if you try these projects out, maybe you will be surprised, too.



Better Know a Ken:

By Sophie Danner

Part 9 in our ongoing 47-part series highlighting the lives of JETs living in other prefectures. Yes, we blatantly stole the idea from Stephen Colbert's 434-part *Better Know a District*. If you know someone living in another ken, have them send in their story and pics to submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com.

I'll start with the great news that the prefecture of Akita, way up in northern Honshu, has recently been demoted from its title of highest suicide rate in all of Japan! It now only has the second highest! We are still, however, number one in sake consumption! And when you produce some of the most delicious sake in the country, is that any surprise? The link between the two rates, however, is another topic altogether.

Aside from sake and tragedy, Akita has a lot to offer. Like many other parts of Japan, Akita has beautiful beaches, beautiful mountains, and plenty of beautiful rice fields. It is perhaps most famous for its boogeymen, or *namahage*, who frighten little children into behaving well, and occasionally scare female onsen-goers just for fun.

On New Year's Eve, men from Akita's Oga Peninsula dress up in the *namahage* costumes and visit local homes, asking "Do any misbehaving children live here?!", at which point the children usually burst into tears. Oga Hanto's rocky coastline also provides a dramatic setting for the GAO Aquarium,



home to the friendliest polar bear in Akita, Gato.

Akita also boasts the deepest lake in Japan, Tazawa-ko, a gorgeous spot for swimming, swan-boat-ing, hiking, and onsens, including the group of Nyuto onsens. The Nyuto onsens are ancient natural hot spring baths with

sulfurous waters renowned for their healing properties set deep in the forest connected by mountain trails. Nyuto was a subject of a *New York Times Magazine* article last year, including a photo shoot of Japanese models dressed in luxury brand names in and around the snow-surrounded onsens. Tazawa-ko Ski-jo's trails overlook the lake with impressive views. Tazawa-ko is rivaled by, and not to be confused with, Towada-ko, in the northeast of the prefecture.

Near Tazawa is Kakunodate,

Akita



The Kanto Festival performers.

an old town of samurai houses, many of which are impressively preserved and open to the public (for a price!). A stunning long, curving row of cherry trees flank the river in this town, which is a perfect spot for a spring-time walk. Handmade cherry-bark crafts are popular souvenirs here.

As for hiking, the crown jewel of Akita is Chokai-san in the southwest of the prefecture. At 2,236 meters tall, this volcano is sometimes called Akita-Fuji and offers a challenging but rewarding day hike with views of the Sea



of Japan.

Winter festivals are a lively way to cheer the Akita winter blues. One of the most unique is the Kamakura festival in Yokote city, in mid-February. Igloo-like snow houses are made along the streets, and inside, locals serve visitors sweet *amazake* and *mochi*. In Odate city, candy is celebrated at the *Amekko-ichi* festival in February. Candied strawberries are popular treats and hard candies are strung to trees

throughout the town. Daisen's Giant Tug of War and Misato's Takeuchi Bamboo Pole Fighting festivals are also fun, if sometimes dangerous, winter events that break up the season's long doldrums.

Akita's Kanto festival joins Aomori's Nebuta festival and Sendai's Tanabata festival as one of the three biggest and best summer festivals of the Tohoku region. Candle-lit paper lanterns are strung to a bamboo frame and balanced on a pole, representing an ear of rice.

These top-heavy struc-

tures are then perilously balanced on performers' palms, hips, and foreheads. The largest weighs about 50 kgs, extends 12m into the air, and holds 46 lanterns. The brave and talented performers do sometimes accidentally drop the structures, adding to the excitement. Flutes and drums play traditional songs during the festival, which represents hope for abundant harvests of rice in the coming season. Later in August, the All-Japan Fireworks Competition

is held in Omagari city, drawing thousands of visitors to watch a night-long display of *hanabi*, supposedly the largest in the world.

Lastly, Akita has been working on making a tourism draw from Akita dogs, the most famous being Hachiko, for which a statue stands in the square outside Shibuya station in Tokyo! This loyal dog was born in Odate city in Akita. He walked with his master, a professor at the University of Tokyo, to and from Shibuya station on his way to and from work everyday. After the professor suffered a stroke and died at the university one day, Hachiko continued to wait for him, looking for him at the station everyday for years at the arrival time of the evening train.

I'll never forget what Akita's last JET prefectural advisor said at orientation last summer, "I haven't stayed here this long because I love teaching nor any particular aspect of Japanese culture — it's because I love this place, Akita." After being here for a year myself, I can easily see what he means.

Perhaps Hachiko was not waiting for his master, but instead for a night train to take him back to his hometown in beautiful Akita.



Travel Japan

Making the Best of Three-Day Weekend Mania!

By Jeff Weese

There are a plethora of three-day weekends in the upcoming months that are waiting to be taken advantage of! The three-day weekend is a perfect opportunity to explore what Japan has to offer, and if you can take a day of nenkylu on either end, there is the opportunity for a truly fantastic adventure! Below are a few different trips to get your wheels turning...

Takayama is an incredibly well-preserved (especially the old town) city hidden in the mountainous regions of Hida in Gifu Prefecture. Between the picturesque old-town, open-air folk village where several old-style buildings are carefully kept in their original condition, morning markets, and bizarre Sukyo Mahikari (a new religious movement.... some might even say a cult) headquarters, you will not struggle to find things to do!

There is also a Yatai Kaikan, which is home to many festival floats that are used in the famous Takayama festivals that take place in April and October. If you book NOW, you might even be able to take advantage of the October three-day weekend and see the floats in action!

In Takayama you will not be thirsty! The sake brewed in Takayama is some of the sweetest nectar that will ever



Takayama's old-fashioned beauty

touch your lips. You could easily spend an entire day hopping from local brewery to local brewery in the old town tasting the heavenly brew. You can access Takayama by normal trains to Gifu, and then limited express from Gifu to Takayama.

Nikko literally means sunlight, and as the rays shine over this World Heritage Site, you will understand what all the hype is about. Just North of Tokyo, Nikko sits in the mountains of Tochigi Prefecture waiting to be explored. Nikko is famous for housing the mausoleum of Shogun Tokugawa, Futarasan Shrine,

which dates back to 767, as well as a number of famous hot springs and compelling natural beauty.

It takes, at the very least, a full day to see this huge temple complex and there are fantastic trails and waterfalls to explore in Nikko

National Park. If by chance you have an extra day (you probably won't with the amount of stuff to see) Lake Chuzenji is a sprawling beautiful lake only a bus ride away from Nikko and worth a visit.

Getting to Nikko, first you need to make your way to Tokyo by train (Shinkansen is about 26,000 yen return) or plane (Skymark airlines has flights from Kobe to Haneda for 20,000 return) or night bus if you want to make the most



Takayama's Yatai Kaikan festival



Fukuoka's Canal City shopping and entertainment district



Beautiful Lake Chuzenji in Nikko National Park.

of your time and money (<www.123bus.net> has night buses for as cheap as 3,900 yen return). Once you arrive in Tokyo, take the Tobu line to Nikko.

Kyushu is Japan's third-largest island and Fukuoka is the key to an exhilarating weekend of fun! Fukuoka is a great place for nightlife with a number of pumping dance clubs and bars; your evening schedule will be jam-packed! Canal City is another attraction of Fukuoka and is a city within a city. Shopping, theater, restaurants, and more!

The list of things to do in Fukuoka is never ending. Visit Hakozaki Shrine, Fukuoka Tower, Shikanoshima Beach, Fukuoka City Museum, or take in a Soft-

bank Hawks baseball game at Fukuoka Dome. Whatever you end up doing in Fukuoka, just remember to get your fill of the delicious Fukuoka Ramen on offer from any ramen shop in the city!

How to get to Fukuoka? Shinkansen is the fastest way and trains arrive in Hakata (just another part of the city). Round trip from Shin-Kobe is about 27,000 yen. If you book early enough, you can find flights with ANA or JAL for about 24,000 yen return. Visit <www.ana.co.jp> (English available) or <www.jal.co.jp> (Japanese only) for more information. The



Make sure you don't miss Fukuoka ramen!

night bus is another option, but while it is a steal to get up to Tokyo, it is not as much of a bargain in this direction.

I hope that you decide to take advantage of your long weekends and get out and see Japan! It's waiting!

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Getting to Know Some Random JETs

- ❖ **Name:** Caoimhe McGarry.
- ❖ **Please call me:** Quee-va, Q or Queevers.
- ❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Akashi Nishi SHS, living in Harima-cho.
- ❖ **How we know you:** You don't.
- ❖ **Birthday:** August 24th.
- ❖ **Born and raised:** Dublin, Ireland.
- ❖ **Family:** An older sister and a younger brother..
- ❖ **University and Degree:** Trinity College Dublin, Microbiology.
- ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Teacher of science and maths, worked behind the bar of a hotel all during school and college.
- ❖ **Travels:** I've been all over Europe, and have also travelled to Canada and South America for a few months. I'd like to travel more while I'm here too. Have been to Australia, South Korea and Indonesia, but also want to see more of Japan.
- ❖ **Hobbies:** I like playing soccer, reading, drinking chu-hi...
- ❖ **Staying another year?** Obviously.
- ❖ **Favorites:**
 - Food:** I like Indian food especially, but since living in Japan, I like Japanese food too. I miss brown wholemeal bread and cheap fruit though.
 - Sports:** I played hurling in Ireland. Here, I play soccer and go running sometimes. I love to ski but am useless at it (right Jeff???). Just need more practice! {Ed. - which she'll get this winter at Hachikita!!!}
 - Music:** Amy Studt and Director.
 - Shop:** Local supermarket.
 - Movie:** I like old classics like *Indiana Jones* (haven't seen the new one yet though) and *The Goonies*.
- ❖ **Best life experience:** JET, so far.
- ❖ **I remember when...** I set the lab on fire on my first day in the lab in college...



but they had given us flame throwers and alcohol, so really, what did they expect?

❖ **What are you drinking?** Tea. I'll drink chu-hi later though. Lemon, or lime, or maybe a mix of both...

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** My co-worker's parents. I'd love to know how he came to be who he is today.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** I would make sure that chu-hi could be bought in every country in the world for a very cheap price. {Ed - I'm noticing a trend here Q...}

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** The people I've met... and chu-hi...

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** Drink chu-hi.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** When I was getting vaccinated for my trip to

South America, my doctor injected me with an un-attenuated strain of rabies, so basically he gave me rabies. Then, three weeks later I had to get treated for having rabies.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Smile!

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** offer them stickers to get them to answer questions. Even the boys love stickers.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Definitely... it makes the games so much more competitive and fun.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** I met a really cute guy in Osaka last year. We switched numbers at the end of the night and he emailed me the next day. The next time I met him was in school the following Monday morning in his uniform... ONLY JOKING!!! I don't have any particularly funny stories...

- ❖ **Name:** Andrew Newell.
- ❖ **Please call me:** AJ.
- ❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Harima-cho, Harima Minami Koukou, Kinjou Koukou.
- ❖ **How we know you:** You probably don't.
- ❖ **Birthday:** September 25, '84.
- ❖ **Born and raised:** on the playground is where I spent most of my days...
- ❖ **Family:** I lived with my mom until I went to college..
- ❖ **University and Degree:** Union College, biology.
- ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Bar manager.
- ❖ **Travels:** a bit of Europe.
- ❖ **Hobbies:** reading, writing, fighting.
- ❖ **Staying another year?** Probably no.
- ❖ **Favorites:**
 - Food:** if it was cute and breathed, I'll eat it.
 - Sports:** Football (American, you

- pansies).
- Music:** Deathcore, or anything else that melts your face.
- Shop:** wha?
- TV Show:** *Meet the Press*.
- Movie:** *Braveheart*.
- ❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Pretty general, getting my degree.
- ❖ **Best life experience:** My term abroad here in Japan during college.
- ❖ **Motto to live by:** *Death is certain, life is not.*
- ❖ **I remember when...** I rejected this survey in September 2007... lol...
- ❖ **What are you drinking?** Beer for sure.
- ❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Sam Harris.
- ❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** You really, really shouldn't.
- ❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** Hitch hiking all the way around Shikoku. Though I complained the whole way, it made for some sick memories.

- ❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** drink, fuck and take some pills.
- ❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I have a black belt in karate.
- ❖ **My top tip for teaching:** pretend you care — they love that.
- ❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** stare around menacingly.
- ❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Why not? It always worked on me, and look at me now...
- ❖ **Funniest story involving a student?** I plead the fifth. {Editor's note: For the non-Americans, "pleading the fifth" refers to the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution. It is the right to refuse giving an answer under oath in a court of law if the answer given can be used as evidence to convict the testifying witness of a crime. Yes, I just went all "legal" on you people. Now AJ, the real question is what did you do?...}



First-Year Survival Guide:

Phrases Every JET Should Know

**By Joy Feddes
& Suzie Winterton**

Last time we gave you the basics, so we thought we'd step it up a bit now and give you some helpful phrases.

Note for pronunciation: the "u" at the end of "desu" is used seemingly at the whim of the speaker. More often, it's not used, but if you accidentally say it, no one cares. Please to enjoy!

1. Shumi wa nan desu ka?

Meaning: What are your hobbies?

Uses: You might not know it, but your hobbies are about to become more important than you thought. I've never had any actual hobbies to speak of — not painting, soccer or playing piano, but to have no answer is to have no life, so you better come up with something.

Possible answers: Let's be honest here — they ask you this because they don't know what else to say. Use it — lie, cheat, and steal pieces of your great-great uncle's legend to make yourself a better person.

If they actually remember what you say, maybe, just maybe, you could make yourself live up to the you inside your head. Unless you said you could fly.

2. ____ wa doko desu ka?

Meaning: Where is ____?

Uses: Need to pee? Need to find the train station after getting lost wandering around Osaka? This one's a keeper, but it works best if you know directions in Japanese too, although it's not always essential. Gesturing is the universal language.

Examples: eki (train station)



toire (toilet), kombini (convenience store)

Directional words: ushiro (behind), mae (in front), migi (right), left (hidari), tonari (next to), (insert-number-here)-kai (insert-number-here floor).

3. Irrashaimase!

Meaning: Welcome/May I help you?

This is what those girls are screaming at you on the street in the cities and in any store you go into.

Uses: You'll never use this, unless your love of yelling at strangers is greater than the appeal of JET, but it's just nice to know what that girl is yelling

Where you'll hear it: anywhere with a cash box, or something fancier.

4. Kekko desu

Meaning: No, thank you.

Uses: I use this constantly, mostly to discourage kombini staff from putting the coffee and chocolate that I'm going to eat in 2 minutes into a plastic bag.

Careful though, you have to be on your game to catch them before your purchase has been bagged, bringing the number of times your purchase has been packaged up to 10.

Where you'll use it: kombini, grocery store, getting rid of creepy old men who ask you to sit with them for a while — "kekko desu"

is acceptable under any circumstances where "No, thank you." / "I'm fine, thanks." would be.

5. ____ ga hoshii desu (ka)

Meaning: I want ____ / Do you want ____?

Uses: I haven't worked out if this is too straightforward or not but, hell, there's no misunderstanding, "Lady, I want STRAIGHT WHISKEY."

6. ____ suki desu ka?

Meaning: Do you like ____?

Uses: After my self-introduction, I was asked "____ suki desu ka" a million times over. Questions ranged from "What food do you like?" to "What beetles do you like?" (yea, I teach elementary school, so it was a legit question). This is a good one for small talk with your students and teachers.

Examples: supotsu (sports) tabemono (food).

Possible Answers: This question is much like the shumi one. If you teach Junior High or below, almost any reply you give will be met with "EEEEEEEEH?!"

Depending on your level of Japanese or how much your JTE is willing to translate you may find out if this is because dear LORD, the Gaijin ALSO knows about soccer, or because they really do consider you a freak.

WHEEL OF JEOPARDY!

Time for the H.T. Quiz: Whoops! Missed a month edition! By Joy Feddes

1. Are you ready to start teaching?

- a) Can't wait to start imparting knowledge and shaping young minds!
- b) And by teaching, you mean playing games. Yeah elementary school!
- c) So far, I'm great at the sitting at my desk part.

2. Your get-ready-for-bed ritual:

- a) Taking off all of my clothing, turning on all my fans and laying on top of my bed.
- b) Cranking the AC to 15 degrees and cocooning. Electricity bill be damned.
- c) Calling you up... wink wink, nudge nudge.

3. Are you studying Japanese during your time off?

- a) Hail!
- b) I opened my Japanese textbook yesterday. Does that count?
- c) I learn by osmosis.

4. You like your men:

- a) Tall, muscular, knows how to swing an axe.
- b) The bigger hair the better!
- c) By the dozen.

5. You like your women:

- a) To apply makeup with a trowel.
- b) Tottering on heels, clutching my arm to make me feel manly.
- c) (insert obnoxious barefoot/pregnant/kitchen joke here)

6. You think the word "yes" means:

- a) No, but if I say no, they will think I'm rude, so I'll just say yes.
- b) Yes, right?



c) I'll say yes to this, and then take no action on what was asked, and hope the person forgets about it.

7. Believe it or not, this summer is cooler than last year's:

- a) You mean it could get worse?
- b) It's cooler because Kanye West introduced some wicked awesome sunglasses!
- c) I only sweat profusely for six hours a day.

8. Were you following the Olympics?

- a) Yes! Michael Phelps, blah blah blah.
- b) No, the Olympics is a waste of time and money. And my country is terrible at them.
- c) How did I not know ping pong was an Olympic Sport?

What your answers mean:

Mostly As: When I went home for two weeks, I brought back two loaves of

multigrain bread. When I went through customs, the guy went through my suitcase and saw it, but let me take it into Japan. The moral of the story is: don't forget the importance of fiber, Mostly As. It's important.

Mostly Bs: You'll suffer for fashion, but I know you're smarter than Kanye, right? Right. I know you are because you're still reading this quiz. Wait... uh, yes. Sure. Be sure to floss, and cherish your toothpaste from home, which actually has fluoride. Although my hippie sister is anti-fluoride, I think it's still a good idea, and she also doesn't like microwaves.

Mostly Cs: Let's meet up for drinks some time. I'll give you a slice of bread for a chu-hi. It'll be grand. Till then, be sure to take off the bathroom slippers when you leave the bathroom and everyone will love you. And memorize some katakana. I learned hiragana first, and I now see the error of my ways.