

September 09

Time for a
Change in
Japanese
politics?

Is Aso Out?

And what
about
this
batshit-
crazy
Happiness-
Realization
Party?



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JET 2009: The New Breed

On the cover...



Cover art by Chip Boles

Elections are happening, and politics, I'm learning, are one of the more dramatic sides of Japan. Domestic unrest and possible, vast, sweeping changes in the form of reactions to worldwide economic instability, addressing the falling birth rate and rising num-

bers of the elderly, plus the constant underground of youth culture pushing the traditional social limits into new definitions of Japanese-ness...

Actually, I have no idea what I'm talking about - I just wanted to draw Taro Aso's big ol' head. :)

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

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From The Editor...

There's the real world, and then there's Japan. I was recently confronted with this dichotomy during the summer vacation, on a brief trip back home to Australia.

Fresh off the plane from a land where 3,000 yen can easily secure you all the food and alcohol your body can store without giving itself a hernia (unless you make the fatal error of going out to dinner with profligate Japanese teachers), I caught myself loudly bemoaning, to all who would stay to hear, the \$20 main meals, the \$10 you have to fork out for a pint.

In my homeland, I had become what most Australians dread... a whingeing Pom! That's what they call "reverse culture shock," and since you're all here for at least another year, you don't have to worry about that yet. Newcomers have doubtless been warned of the garden variety culture shock, but I'm here to tell you: embrace it!

Back home, you're just another civilian. Here, you're a local hero: the Boss! the King! the Shah! Here in this bubble, you can shut out the bad stuff: in a land without cricket, England winning the Ashes is but so many pixels on a webpage... *and you can always close the page!*

Sure, you have to write a few lesson plans, teach a class here and there, and inhale enough chalk dust to blacken the lungs of a wizened asbestos miner. But you also have in your fellow JETs a network of new friends from all over the planet, and it is they, along with your go-betweens and fellow teachers (the ones who speak English fluently enough



The picture? Some Miki High School students depicted me eating *unko* ice cream. Yeah, it feels that way sometimes...

at least), who are going to help you adjust to the convenient public transport, the cheap food and beer, the beautiful temples, the breathtaking mountains and Asia at your doorstep. And given that I saw many of you at the Welcome Beer Garden wielding (rather proudly) your shiny new iPhones, there's no reason why those friendships can't be nurtured. If there's anything that can really kill the JET experience, it's isolation... so don't be a stranger!

Well, it's election season in these here parts, you all know already just how badly the long-ruling LDP had its ass handed to it. In the September issue, we have a look at the serious contenders... as well as the Happiness Realization Party (chortle).

We bring you the results of our Welcome Party Beer Garden questionnaire (yes, there was a reason we were bothering you all that evening).

In our continuing endeavours to persuade you that being on JET is worthwhile, Chip interviews an ex-JET who has gone on to bigger and better things in Tokyo.

This month we also bring you a Travel Japan in pictures from Fushimi Inari Shrine in southwestern Kyoto, as well as magnificent images of fireworks in Ako. And Andrew continues his series of reviews of *ramen-ya*, purveyors of what is surely the most delicious food ever to have been vomited on a sidewalk. This month he introduces us to three lesser-known ramen shops in Sapporo — the ramen Vatican.

Well, that's all from me... back to the lesson-planning. Don't forget to visit us at the *Hyogo Times* Facebook group, where you can read and leave comments on current and past issues.

— Matt Stott

From The HAJET PR...

Hello Hyogo! I'm glad to see everyone survived the multiple orientations and [pointless] information overload. I'm thinking next year we can just give everyone a little piece of paper that says "every situation is different" and set them on their way.

I personally enjoyed spending my week in Yashiro...the cicadas singing...the freedom of being in the countryside...the wide variety of food and beverages...having full control of my adult life. HA! If only! But it was great to meet everyone, even if I did demonstrate that I now have almost no ability to communicate in English.

I'm excited about the year ahead; I think we have a great

batch of new teachers who all seem ready to embrace their new life in Hyogo. Good luck to everyone in their first lessons: they will probably suck, but things will only get better. Point: if students sit in silence and do not respond, don't worry, they are just Japanese :P Do a little dance and they will lighten up.

Soon (and by that I mean, when the weather cools down) is a great time for exploring Japan (before it gets too cold), so get on the forums and start planning. I suggest rafting in Shikoku, and trying some of the many hiking trails around Hyogo or in Kyoto.

Also, next month is Halloween, a great time for us to show

the natives how weird we all are, so get planning with your costume (I'm debating the idea of not actually going as a Fairy this year!). The whereabouts of this year's Halloween party is TBD... any suggestions? Was it last year that we burnt the place down in Akashi? Hmmm.

I'd also like to put a call out to anyone interested in charity events/fundraising, or some community outreach programs. Hyogo has so many JETs, yet I feel we maybe fall behind other prefectures in terms of what we give back to the community. For those of you who joined the Pepy Ride a few months back, you'll know how much fun it was. I'd like to get some more things like that going. Also, some people were suggesting doing some voluntary work in Japanese orphanages: is anyone interested in that? Drop me an email.

Finally...

Just another reminder/explanation (I'm sorry, I have to... I promise I'll never mention it again): In order for us to directly contact you, please join the Yahoo! mailing list. For general chit-chat and event details, please join the Facebook group. For discussion/planning/ideas please use the forums (www.hyogoajet.net). If you have any queries or need help, please email me at pr@hyogoajet.net.

Love ya,
Kym xxx

— Kym Farrant



I've found my long-lost twin!

Recipe of the Month:**By Emma Nicoletti****Kechina Kitchen**
Keeping Costs Low in the Kitchen: Part 2

First up this month is Hayashi Rice. Hayashi Rice is a Japanese meal derived from Western cuisine (洋食), its name most likely drawn from "hashed beef." Like hashed beef, Hayashi Rice is a thick-sauced stew, something I look forward to after a long day at work.

Also, as Hayashi is a common family name, it's always

fun to tell Hayashi-san that you'll be eating *her* with rice for dinner!

Mabo Tofu is originally a Chinese dish from the notoriously spicy Szechuan area. Of course, the Japanese version is much milder, but a liberal use of chili powder can amp this recipe's taste impact right up.

HAYASHI RICE**Ingredients**

200 g chicken or beef
1/3 cup of flour
1/2 teaspoon of pepper
2 tablespoons of red wine
1 onion
1 packet of mushrooms
1 can of demi glace sauce
1 can of diced tomatoes
1 2/3 cups of beef stock (bullion)
cooked rice (for serving)

Directions

- Start cooking the rice
- Cut the chicken into small pieces
- Mix the flour and pepper in a bowl; coat the chicken in it
- Heat oil in the pan at medium heat, and cook the chicken until it's a golden brown colour
- Add the red wine to the pan and simmer at low heat
- Cut onions into small pieces and separate mushrooms
- Add them to the pan and cook until they have softened
- Add the beef stock, demi glace sauce and diced tomatoes
- Bring to the boil and then simmer at a low heat for about 10 minutes
- Serve on the cooked rice

**MABO TOFU****Ingredients**

100 g chicken or beef minces
sesame oil (any oil is ok)
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 teaspoon grated ginger
3/4 cup of dashi soup stock*
*(1/4 teaspoon of dashi powder (だし) with 3/4 cup of water)
3/4 tablespoon of miso paste (みそ)
1 tablespoon of soy sauce
1 tablespoon of mirin (みりん)
1/2 teaspoon of chilli powder
100 g packet of tofu
3/4 tablespoon of cornstarch
1/3 cup of water
cooked rice (for serving)

Directions

- Start cooking the rice
- Heat oil in a pan at medium heat and add the mince. Break the mince into small pieces with the spatula. Cook the mince until it becomes a golden brown
- Add the garlic, ginger, dashi soup stock, miso paste, soy sauce, mirin and chilli powder, and mix
- Cut the tofu into 1cm cubes and add to the pan
- Shake the pan to mix in the tofu (it breaks very easily)
- Mix the cornstarch and water in a cup until the cornstarch dissolves, and add gradually to the pan
- Bring to a boil, and then simmer on low for about 10 mins
- Serve on the cooked rice

Where Are They Now?

The team at Hyogo Times (all two of us) thanks you for your participation in this questionnaire. Please email the completed form to publications@hyogo.ajet.net

► Name:

Malcolm Gibson

► Age:

34

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

CIR in Hyogo Prefecture

► Current occupation & jobs held since leaving the JET programme:

Senior Event Manager, FIFA Accommodation office (currently based in South Africa), via Japan/Korea World Cup, Germany World Cup and countless other sports events around the world.

► Highlight/funniest part of your JET experience:

Setting up and running a series of legendary pub quizzes at The Hub in Kobe to raise money for Habitat for Humanity.

► How the JET programme has benefited you career-wise:

After leaving JET I went straight to Tokyo to work on the World Cup. The job was through an ex-JET!

► What transferable skills JET gives you:

Language skills, communication skills, event management (if you make them happen!), public speaking (e.g. presenting at Yas-hiro), organisational skills.

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

Malcolm Gibson and Sarah Poretta (subject of last month's *Where Are They Now?*)

career afterwards:

Don't drink as much as I did! Make sure you learn Japanese — get the language skills. Take the proficiency exams. Get out and about and make yourself known. I made the contacts that got me the job in Tokyo at the Renewers' conference (which I had volunteered to present at).

► Any tips for job hunting after JET:

I got my job through the networking while I did JET, so network. Get your CV on to two pages (maximum). Make sure your CV is geared towards the job you're applying for — so many people don't do that.

I now recruit for people in my team and I don't even bother reading CV's unless they're short and relevant. Don't be afraid to put yourself forward.

Making the most of your time on JET

One ALT's JMEC Solution

By Chip Boles

I sat down and talked with Devin McGrath, former JET, about his teaching experience and beyond in Tokyo's fast-paced business world. After JET, Devin landed a job in a top entrepreneurial consulting firm in one of the world's leading economic centers. Read how...

Chip Boles: What's your background, and how did that lead you to JET in the first place?

Devin McGrath: I studied business in college, before working for the U.S. Peace Corps as an Economic Development volunteer and working in Panama for two private businesses. I found myself wanting to learn more about Asian culture, and specifically about the business culture and economics of Japan.

To me, the JET program seemed a great way to give back to children that wanted (ha!) to learn English, and also gave me the opportunity to learn about the cultural and business environment.

CB: What was your reaction to your teaching situation?

DM: Not great. I was placed in

a technical school in which the students had little ambition to learn the language. I made some great personal relationships but don't feel that I made as much of a difference inside the classroom as I had hoped. That being said, I think I succeeded in the "cultural exchange" part of JET.

CB: How did you find out about JMEC?

DM: I found out about JMEC at the Professional Development Seminar that was conducted at the initial conference we had in Tokyo. From the website [<http://www.jmec.gr.jp/en/index.php>], JMEC is "An international training program and competition between teams of Japan-based individuals, to develop the best business plan for an actual company or organization seeking to enter the Japanese market."

CB: JMEC is a very intense commitment for up to six months — was this a difficult schedule to keep up?

DM: Of course it was. I would be lying if I said it wasn't. My main goal in coming to Japan was to learn more about how business is con-

ducted in Japan and that made the challenge worthwhile.

CB: How did the everyday reality of your job at school play into your overall, longer-term goals?

DM: The job gave me the opportunity to learn about the culture, a bit of the language, and also gave me the time to work on my own projects as well as take part in JMEC.

CB: It's not true for everybody, but even ALTs with a full day talk about having free time during their school days. With your schedule at home and at school, how did you best use the available time?

DM: Frankly, it frustrates me when people complain about free time. Time is our most valuable commodity so take advantage! Learn the language! Take an online course! Find a hobby! Volunteer in the community! Start a business! Figure out how YOU are going to make a difference in the world! But please, do something! Before you know it, your year — or two, or three — will be over. Keep the big picture in mind.

CB: What about technology? Is

there anything that you learned was possible over the internet that you didn't know about before? What possibilities might surprise people?

DM: Google Applications was a great way that my team collaborated. Look, we all know the world is getting smaller, and more and more friends and businesses are communicating from miles away. I have been using Skype for a number of years, but this program was incredibly helpful. I used Skype for conference calls every other week with my team, when I wasn't able to travel to Tokyo.

CB: How did the JMEC experience progress over the six months? What did you think differently about after participating?

DM: At first it was lectures in which I learned a lot about how business was conducted and, in general, was exposed to some interesting areas. After the first few months we were put in teams to write a business plan. This phase was a lot more work, but I learned a lot more be-

cause what I was learning in the first phase was actually put to use.

I also learned a great deal by working with a diverse team: three Japanese, one Belgian and another American from the west coast. Team dynamics is incredibly challenging but also very powerful.

CB: How would you describe JMEC's overall impact on your experience here in Japan?

DM: Aside from the friends I have made in and out of JET, it has been the defining part of my experience in Japan. (JET) provided both a personal and professional network for me. It reinforced and added to my business knowledge and it also put it into the Japanese context. It gave me the opportunity to work in a diverse team. These skills helped develop me both personally and professionally, hopefully making me a more well-balanced individual and giving me the tools to succeed in creating my own enterprise.

CB: How did JMEC lead into your

current position in Tokyo? How easy would it be for others to pursue this for themselves?

DM: I tried (to) develop relationships with those lecturers that I was impressed with. My current boss was a lecturer who I connected with, and by chance, offered me a job after the JET program. This is certainly a path that others could succeed in, but in my opinion the main driver should not be trying to get a job in Tokyo — it should be gaining the knowledge that JMEC provides.

Don't set yourself up for disappointment if a job does not come out of it. A bit of luck played into me finding a job, but I also believe that, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." To get a good job in Tokyo, I think one needs a network first and foremost. JMEC provided this for me.

The only thing more important than a strong network is the desire and passion for a given goal.

CB: Finally, what's life like in Tokyo?

DM: BUSY, BUSY and BUSY. I really like it because of the international community and the limitless opportunities for almost anything. I don't really like it because there really isn't a quality of life and it truly is a concrete jungle.

“A bit of luck played into me finding a job, but I also believe that, ‘Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.’”

We Want Your Stories!

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



Submit by the 15th of each month to:
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First Impression of Japan:

Getting Lost in the Inaka

By Esperanza Urbaez

It was pitch black dark at 3 a.m. that Tuesday night. I was freezing because the AC was on full-blast. I didn't think to turn it off due to my panicked state. The windows were getting foggy and the words on the map I was clinching became blurry. It was the night I got lost in the inaka, and I am happy I did. Allow me to divulge.

It was a traumatic day from the get-go. Matt Findlay's birthday party was that evening at the Wadayama Jusco bowling alley, and I was to meet with Gareth Cottam at the 'party house' so we could go together. Total fail.

The directions Valerie Savaria (my pred) gave me seemed simple enough. I was to follow the 312 straight through. The thing about Japanese roads is that sometimes there are signs, sometimes they are only in Japanese and sometimes there aren't any at all. This plus the fact that I have a horrible sense of direction, it was my first long-distance trip, the roads swerve often and are extremely narrow, not to mention the way Japanese people drive in general — it was a recipe for disaster.

You must also understand I am a New Yorker. New Yorkers hardly ever drive — in the city it is best to get around by the subway. Many New Yorkers don't even have a driver's license, and a car is not the most convenient thing to have. My mini (and cute) Kei car is my first car ever, and driving on the other side takes some getting used to. (I keep getting in the passenger side and wiping my windows instead of signaling.)

When Gareth called to check if I was OK, because I should have



been at his house 15 minutes earlier, I was already long lost deep in the mountains, exhausted and going crazy because I kept thinking I saw the Mini Market landmark I was supposed to see. Long story short: I had to turn around, and finally met Gareth at the one landmark no one can ever miss — McDonald's.

Our birthday bowling/karaoke bash ensued and was quite enjoyable. Much bonding with older and newer ALTs was had. Then we wrapped up the night and it was time to go home. This is when the drama broke out. After I dropped off Kenny Wu at his place near Toyooka station, I went back on the main road thinking it would take me home. The more I drove (at night), the more unrecognizable everything became, so I just went back the way I came and decided to start again from the station.

Again it seemed simple enough on the map. I was determined to figure it out. It was pitch-black dark at 3 a.m. that Tuesday night. After hours of driving into one dark part

of the inaka after another, that determination morphed into unbearable frustration. Finally, at 4:30 a.m. I had had enough and stopped at a Lawson's. (They are everywhere!)

With exaggerated hand gestures and the best Japanese I could muster up, I begged the cashier for help. She in her best English tried to explain which right I must take and at which light. We were getting nowhere (literally).

"Chotto matte, kudasai," she said, and I stood there waiting. I must have looked pretty desperate and helpless because she came back in her regular clothes and told me to follow her. She locked up the Lawson's and we were off. I followed her car almost all the way home!

The kindness and compassion this woman showed me was incredible. I couldn't believe it. She wouldn't take the money I tried to offer her for her trouble, but I begged her to take it. She did. This is why I am happy I got lost. The generosity bestowed unto me was worth the agony of being lost.

Umbrella

By Suzie Winterton

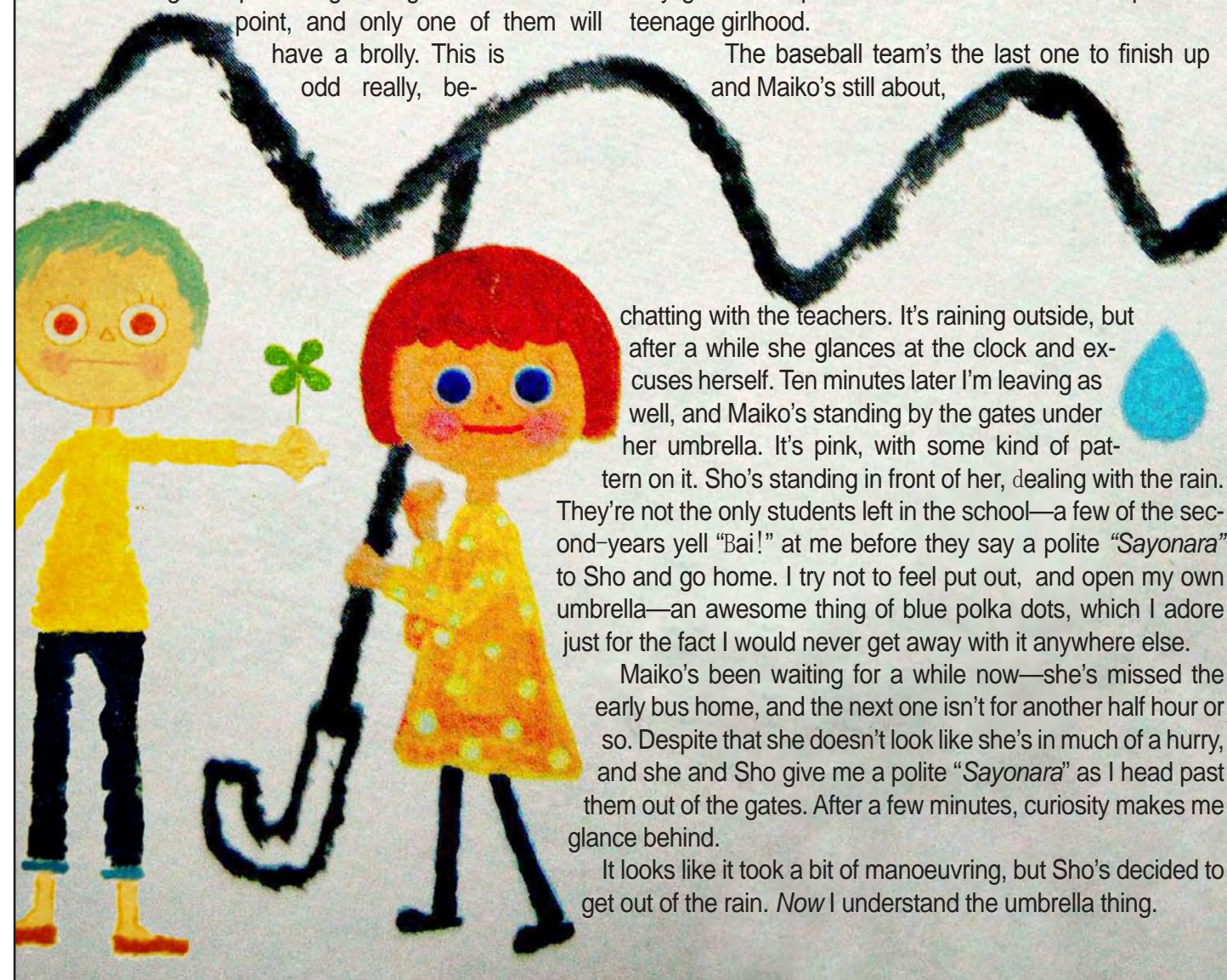
The first time I remember seeing the umbrella thing was in a *manga*, before I even came here. Possibly one by that guy that drew *H2*, which means it was a safe bet the *manga* was a baseball one. Anyway, the umbrella thing. You draw an umbrella. Just a simple one. A stick with a triangle on the top. Down one side of the stick you write your initials. Down the other you write down those of your crush. It's the Japanese version of the arrowed love-heart. I didn't know that at the time, I got to the end of the chapter and read the translator's notes. That was how I found out about it and I thought, "Why an umbrella? It just keeps rain off, for God's sake."

Most *manga* couples will get caught in rain at some point, and only one of them will have a brolly. This is odd really, be-

cause most Japanese people are horrified at the idea of walking in the rain, despite the fact they get most of it when it's thirty degrees out. I do it all the time. The few people who don't think I'm mad are the baseball boys at junior high, and they *are* the Baseball Boys—rough, tough, and almost as tall as me. Once you get past 165 centimetres you don't NEED no sissy umbrella.

Sho's a baseball player—in fact he's the catcher. He's about 180 centimetres tall, and actually has shoulders at the tender age of 15. Sho doesn't look very tender, though. He looks like he could break a brick wall with his head. His girlfriend doesn't, of course. Maiko's 15 too, and even in the shapeless pleated sack that is this school's uniform she manages to look like a particularly good example of the cute-cool look of Japanese teenage girlhood.

The baseball team's the last one to finish up and Maiko's still about,



chatting with the teachers. It's raining outside, but after a while she glances at the clock and excuses herself. Ten minutes later I'm leaving as well, and Maiko's standing by the gates under her umbrella. It's pink, with some kind of pattern on it. Sho's standing in front of her, dealing with the rain. They're not the only students left in the school—a few of the second-years yell "Bai!" at me before they say a polite "Sayonara" to Sho and go home. I try not to feel put out, and open my own umbrella—an awesome thing of blue polka dots, which I adore just for the fact I would never get away with it anywhere else.

Maiko's been waiting for a while now—she's missed the early bus home, and the next one isn't for another half hour or so. Despite that she doesn't look like she's in much of a hurry, and she and Sho give me a polite "Sayonara" as I head past them out of the gates. After a few minutes, curiosity makes me glance behind.

It looks like it took a bit of manoeuvring, but Sho's decided to get out of the rain. Now I understand the umbrella thing.



What's OK and Not OK in the Workplace

By Chip Boles

Editor's introduction: How are you adjusting to life in the shokuinshitsu? For some of us, JET is our first introduction to the curious environs of the office, and we need a little guidance. Chip recently put the following questions to his friends, JET and non-JET alike: "Have you had to adjust to your current workplace, and what may be new standards of interpersonal habits?"

"...Not OK: blowing one's nose with

a tissue. Surprisingly OK: Picking one's nose (once again, over 50 set especially)..."

"Apparently ok - taking out your earwax with an ear pick/picking your nose at your desk. Freaking eww. But still not as bad as toenail clipping."

"Doing absolutely nothing for 8 hours (watching movies/dvds/studying japanese/preparing eikaiwa classes/surfing the internet/shopping online/etc) so long as you do it at your desk. Totally acceptable."

"rules." Email is not. Also apparently OK to sleep and/or read all day during school holidays as long as it's at your desk. At home = Not OK. Even if you're totally free. (Some grey area on this as long as you only take part of your nap at home and get to work to finish it by a reasonable hour)."

As I read this, the guy behind me is clipping his nails. I can hear it even though I am listening to my iPod.

"Apparently OK during summer holidays: - arrive at school before most other teachers (you score HUGE points if you beat the Kyoto) so they know you're serious about your work, then take the rest of the day off at the beach

Not OK: Talking about it."

"...apparently OK: gargling at the sink, brushing teeth. Not OK: doing nothing during cleaning time, even if you have nothing to do"

"Take hour-long lunch breaks."

"Facebook is OK according to the

"New JET alert..... taking notes on all of this. What is the etiquette on farting: Im assuming its universal but I could be wrong considering the OK's so far. And throwing out garbage? Anything there? Coughing? Apparently OK



is asking if I have a BF, my age and if I like Japanese guys."

"Not okay: "Interrupting" an ALT at their desk, no matter how obvious it is that they are not doing anything. First, you must wait for them to turn around and look at you. Then you must raise your eyebrows, gasp, and apologize. "Oh! Excuse me, are you busy? Is it okay? I'm sorry, are you busy?" Then you can ask a question.

"Okay: hovering around an ALT's desk for five minutes, kind of half-facing the other direction, waiting for the ALT to turn around, so you don't have to "interrupt" him."

{Design Ed. note: WHY? This is infuriating!!!}

Apparently OK: Turning up in the late morning or even the afternoon during school holidays. Not OK: Making a song and dance about it.

"Not OK: Pouring yourself a coffee from the drip coffee machine. That's not for general consumption: it's for members of the Coffee Club, that clique of forty-to-fifty-something (usually) female teachers that is harder to infiltrate than a bikie gang. They let first

time offenders off with a warning; approach the coffee machine again and you'll be rewarded with a GTFO neatly gift-wrapped in Gommens.

You want coffee? There's the conbini over there—go buy your own coffee. I usually drink that powdered instant stick rubbish, just to spite them."

"Not OK: Suits and super formal wear OK: Cool biz.....My sensei forty-something lady friend told me I shouldn't be so formal and should dress more comfortably. Huh?

And not OK? Eating outside of the allotted 12-1 lunchtime... OK: Getting lunch, dessert, brushed teeth in the hour. Yay!"

"After a while your lunch time should become more relaxed, you just have to let everyone get used to you first ... once they start thinking of you as just apart of the furniture you get access to the special hidden level of OK:

"It is preferable to not ask for permission to do things, no matter how logical or beneficial. Just go ahead and do them. For someone with a Gaijin card, forgiveness is a LOT easier to come by than permission.

"It is not OK to ask for official permission to do anything unless it's in the schedule already, as this will immedi-

ately invoke panic in your supervisor that will quickly spread to all surrounding colleagues, a staff-wide discussion may take place to decide on the best course of action, and any solution will certainly involve you and your supervisor covered in so much red tape that you'll start to wonder how anything gets done around here."

"This is perhaps a little tangential, but if you're asked to dinner by your officemates in Japan, it is assumed that your wallet is stuffed with 1-man bills."

"OK: For Japanese teachers wanting to practice their English to start a conversation with "Are you busy?" and then continue the conversation irrespective of the answer. This is especially true during exam preparation time when there's more work than hours to do it in.

OK: Encouraging retiring age teachers, who are sleeping at their desks, to take "long walks" after lunch that may just lead them into their cars and back to their houses. After a couple of weeks they may just take the advice :)"

"OK: Bringing a lap blanket to use at your desk in the winter. Not OK: Bundling up with jackets, gloves and scarves at your desk in the winter."

OK: Bringing in food and candies to share (this scores you HUGE points with the staff). Not OK: Eating breakfast at your desk.

"OK: dressing differently from the rest of the staff (within reason! Colours are fun!)

Not OK: Showing any kind of knee (especially true if you are a female senior high ALT)"

The Best of the Block

By Brandon Kramer

Hello Fellow Block-6ians, and welcome to 2-Gakki, the second term of the school year, and a special welcome to those fresh JETs who have started their first term teaching.

September is a hectic time of year for many as we work on shaking loose from the laziness of summer. Getting out to a different prefecture and meeting new people can be a great way to refresh yourself for the next week in front of your students, though, so here are a few upcoming events in our Block.

The Best of... SHIGA PREFECTURE

2009 Art in Nagahama
(October 3-4)

<http://shigajet.eslwell.com/events/2009/10/2009-art-nagahama>

This event is on the first weekend in October, so you have plenty of time to plan accordingly. Word on the street is that this Art Festival is the place to be on October 3 and 4. Come pick up the finishing touches to your new house, Christmas presents (it's never too early!), or presents for your significant other! If you love art, then come support artists from all around the area and take a piece of their talent home with you!

The Best of... KYOTO PREFECTURE

BEE @ Obanzai/Sunshine Café
(September 12 and 13)

<http://shigajet.eslwell.com/events/2009/09/bee-sunshine-cafe-open-mic-vegetarian-buffet-610pm>

The BEE (Bi-cycle for Everyone's Earth) Cy-

cling Team will be stopping by in Kyoto on September 12 and 13! Come meet up with these former JETs and learn about who they are and why they are cycling the entire length of Japan. Both days will feature a vegetarian buffet, so come along to find that great vegetarian restaurant you've been looking for as well! The Sunday event will include an open-mic session, so feel free to sign up and show off your hidden (or not so hidden) talent!

This event is going to be a good time, so come and show your support for the group and the cause they are cycling for! Space is limited at both events, however, so please RSVP by September 6!

O-tsukimi
"Moon viewing"
(September 25)

<http://www.kyoto.travel/events/ot-sukimi-moon-viewing.html>

If you are looking for something a



little more peaceful and relaxing (maybe even romantic!), head on down to Kyoto around September 25.

This is when many "O-tsukimi", or "moon viewing" events will be held around Kyoto. They say that the fall clear skies give the best view of our celestial neighbor, so go check it out at one of the cool spots listed! Now you have the perfect event to which to invite that special person who you just can't get out of your mind. :-)

That's it for September. Until next month, enjoy being back with your students and getting back to work!



Madness? THIS IS JAPAN!!!

By Matthew Stott

Japan is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. Its legal system is based on German civil law, which explains much about the Japanese, including their love of Baumkuchen. The head of state, the Emperor, is (reputedly) descended from a deity; the head of government, the Prime Minister, is the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Lower House.

Here's an overview of some of the key players in this madcap adventure:

Liberal Democratic Party

Leader: Prime Minister Taro Aso

Ideology: Centre-right, conservative, neo-liberal

Founded: 1955

Overview: Formed from a merger of two right-wing parties against the then-popular ruling Socialist Party, the LDP has ruled Japan almost consistently from Day 1, except for a brief period in the early 1990s. The party benefited from clandestine CIA backing until the '70s. The stereotypically Tory born-to-rule mentality manifests itself quite literally in the LDP: over a third of their Lower House seats were inherited from blood relatives. The LDP is the reason Japanese white-collar workers don't get overtime pay.

Electoral prospects: (Ahem.) "E's not pinin'! 'E's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! ... 'E's kicked the bucket, 'e's shuffled off 'is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisible!! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!!"

Democratic Party of Japan

Leader: Yukio Hatoyama

Ideology: Social-democratic, liberal

Founded: 1998

Overview: A merger of several small parties united against the ruling LDP and the "ancient regime," the DPJ now contains quite a few disaffected former LDP

members, including Hatoyama. The DPJ promises to transfer policymaking from bureaucrats to elected politicians, remove highway tolls, expand welfare payments to part-time workers and the unemployed, and make high school "effectively free."

Electoral prospects: The DPJ won over 300 of the 480 seats in the Lower House.

(Irony-meter alert: the LDP is warning that such a victory could spell "one-party dictatorship" for Japan.)

New Komeito

Leader: Akihiro Ota

Ideology: Buddhist-influenced centrism, social conservatism

Founded: 1998

Overview: The NKP is the political arm of the lay Buddhist sect Soka Gakkai ("Values Creation Society"), which became involved in politics in response to the pre-war suppression of non-Shinto religious practices. In the 1990s, and in the wake of the sarin attacks on the Tokyo subway, Soka Gakkai came under increased scrutiny for its allegedly cult-like activities, including the harassment of ex-members and a cult of personality surrounding sect leader Daisaku Ikeda. A voter base of eight million Soka Gakkai devotees, and coalition with the ruling LDP, makes the NKP one of Japan's most powerful political parties.

Electoral prospects: A recent Asahi Shimbun poll has the NKP picking up 5% of the vote. Unfortunately for them, their coalition partners polled only 22%



against the DPJ's 39%.

The Happiness Realization Party

Leader: Kyoko Okawa

Ideology: Radical conservatism, anti-pacifism

Founded: 2009

Overview: They're the political wing of the Happy Science movement, which formed because the founder, who claims to be a re-incarnation of the Buddha, also claims to have chatted with the spirits of Mohammed, Jesus, Confucius and Mozart, all of whom opined that Japan should abandon the pacifist Article 9 of its constitution. Oh, and the founder's also BFFs with the guardian spirit of Kim Jong-Il, who warned that North Korea is plotting to bomb and take over Japan. Hence the HRP platform: nuke North Korea, launch commercial space shuttle flights between Japan and the US, and raise the population to 300 million by relaxing immigration policies (not necessarily in that order). The HRP is fielding 337 candidates in the upcoming election, more than any other party.

Electoral prospects: Rrrrrright.

Getting to Know Some Random JETs

- ❖ **Name:** Leonard P. Krygsman IV.
- ❖ **Please call me:** Len.
- ❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** 加古川東高等学校: Kakogawa-Higashi Senior High.
- ❖ **How we know you:** Probably from a beginning of the year beer garden or something...
- ❖ **Birthday:** January 21.
- ❖ **Born and raised:** Central Massachusetts, USA.
- ❖ **Family:** Two sisters, great parents and two very stupid dogs.
- ❖ **University and Degree:** Calvin College, information systems.
- ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** College Campus Safety Officer, Children's Hospital Boston biomedical engineering technician, system administrator, occasionally a freelance photographer.
- ❖ **Travels:** Not much yet. A couple of places in Japan, England, Canada... always looking for more opportunities to do more!
- ❖ **Hobbies:** Currently? Judo, photography and cello.
- ❖ **Staying another year?** That's the plan!
- ❖ **Favourites:**
 - Food:** Steak dipped in A1 Sauce with a side of potatoes, and sweet corn. Mmm...
 - Sports:** Judo, hockey and cheerleading.

- Music:** Almost everything. E.S. Posthumus, Bass Hunter, Hanz Zimmer, Linkin Park, Muse, Three Days Grace, Mozart, Klaus Badelt, the list goes on and changes constantly.
- Shop:** Norman's Camera Shop.
- TV Show:** probably *CSI: Las Vegas*.
- Movie:** *V for Vendetta*.
- ❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** I think I mostly enjoy celebrating the small victories in life.
- ❖ **Best life experience:** Sitting on the shore of a still lake at twilight with someone dear to me, in, for the moment, perfect peace.
- ❖ **Motto to live by:** Don't chase after money; money is a means to an end. Chase after beauty and experiences, for they have means and value all their own.
- ❖ **I remember when:** I had no fears.
- ❖ **What are you drinking?** C.C. Lemon, of course.
- ❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Albert Einstein had a brilliant mind and a unique perspective on life. I would love to have met him. In the present, I have no idea.
- ❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** You shouldn't. There should be no such office... people should be free to govern themselves as much as possible, and if their government is op-

- pressive, to find a different one. If there was a world government, there's nowhere to go when that government becomes oppressive.
- ❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** I really couldn't say any specific thing... there's just something fascinating and beautiful.
- ❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** Spend it with loved ones.
- ❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I am me, I am unique. I may get on your nerves or even offend you, but it's never by intent. I keep no grudges and thrive on helping others and listening to whatever they have on their mind. Take the time to get to know me — I think you'll be glad you did.
- ❖ **My top tip for teaching:** In high school it seems impossible to get people to volunteer for anything. Find a way to select people randomly, or even better, have them pick each other. One of my methods for "choosing" a volunteer: Hot potato.
- ❖ **When class is TOO QUIET I...** Be honest with them... "Sooo that didn't work..." or ask them if they're sleeping... maybe throw the hot potato at someone... honestly I haven't found any perfect method, if one even exists.
- ❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Students are motivated in all sorts of ways. For one of my schools, bribing with stickers gets all sorts of results; for another school I've had to make participation part of their grade, so lack of participation hurts their grade. Find and target their priorities. But in a fun and loving way, of course!
- ❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** Probably when my younger sister came to visit and one of my students attempted to ask her out. I wanted to give him major bonus points for, first, having the courage to do so, and second, for using flawless English. Kudos.



- ❖ **Name:** Esperanza Urbaez, aka Epi.
- ❖ **Please call me:** Whatever your heart desires.
- ❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Minato Junior High School, Toyooka, Tajima.
- ❖ **How we know you:** The gal who gets lost.
- ❖ **Birthday:** March 30 (I love my birthday and plan on having a party to celebrate. You are officially invited.)
- ❖ **Born and raised:** Queens, New York.
- ❖ **Family:** Sixth child out of eight. Four gents, four ladies, my mama and papi.
- ❖ **University and degree:** City University of New York Hunter College, B.A. in media studies.
- ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Administrative assistant, the girl who collects money from patients for cable in the hospital, babysitter at a daycare centre, Librarian assistant, scrapbooker, reporter, Girl Scout coordinator, church treasurer.
- ❖ **Travels:** Climbed Diamond Head crater in Hawaii, partied in South Beach, Miami, froze during inauguration in Washington D.C., toured Harvard campus in Boston, met Governor Schwarzenegger in California, ate deep dish pizza in Chicago, ate chocolate at the Hershey Company in Pennsylvania, danced salsa in Puerto Rico, learned to tango in Argentina, visited family in the Dominican Republic, rode *vaporetto* in Venice at sunset, learned *kathakali* in India, marveled at the king's castle in Spain, drank wine in Portugal.
- ❖ **Hobbies:** Learning languages (so far I have Italian and Spanish under my belt), poetry <<http://esperanza-epi.blogspot.com/>>, scrapbooking, painting, singing, tennis, drinking coffee, karaoke, vintage clothes shopping, travel, dancing, photography, interior decorating, collecting coins, fashion design, writing, reading magazines, blogging, Facebook (does that count?).
- ❖ **Staying another year?** *Ha!* If a tsunami doesn't wash me away, I'll be here.
- ❖ **Favorites:**
 - Food:** Ice cream and Dominican food

- (mostly my mama's).
- Sports:** Tennis (love Serena) and baseball (let's go Yankees!)
- Music:** Everything! Literally! I am an equal opportunity lover of music.
- Shop:** Vintage / thrift / antique shops. Old things have character.
- TV Show:** *Charlie Rose* and *General Hospital* (I love Sonny Corinthos). My guilty pleasure ;)
- Movie:** *Beauty and the Beast*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Memento*.

- ❖ **Most proud achievement:** has not been achieved yet, but it will be receiving my Pulitzer (yes, I said it).
- ❖ **Best life experience:** Being an aunt to my three adorable A's (Abby Blu, Adam and Aniyah).
- ❖ **Motto to live by:** Matthew 7:12.
- ❖ **I remember when...** I met (then) Senator Barack Hussein Obama.
- ❖ **What are you drinking?** Just discovered ITO EN Teas' Tea NEW YORK.
- ❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Future me.
- ❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** Should you? Can there be a president of the world? (Sometimes I like to answer questions with questions. Boggles the mind.)
- ❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** The kindness bestowed unto me at my most dramatic points of desperation and helplessness and the breathtaking beauty I'm surround by every day!
- ❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** Bear hug everyone in sight. I



- love hugs.
- ❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I like to read the Bible, used to be a blonde and was once the fly girl for a Christian reggaeton music video.
- ❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Remember your most favourite teacher and do what he/she did. Plus, giving high fives rocks.
- ❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** will play some of the most popular current tunes the kids seem to like.
- ❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Ay... I wouldn't call it bribery. It's more like motivational tools of encouragement.
- ❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** Well, not so much funny as cute in my opinion. One of the 13-year-old baseball players in my junior high school seems to be taken by me. I've discovered this by his super staring, bashful smile, constant office visits to chat with me (even though his English skills are minimal) and then the incessant walking by the office and shyly bowing his head when I catch him lookin in. Aww!

Travel Japan

A Photo Essay: Fushimi-Inari Shrine

Fushimi-Inari Taisha in Fushimi-ku, south-west of Kyoto city, dates from the 8th century. Fushimi-Inari is the head shrine of Inari, the God of Business, and is home to countless sunset-orange torii winding a trail up the mountain.

In an attempt to get in the good graces of Inari, all of the thousands and thousands of shrines are donated by businesses hoping for success. At the top of the mountain are tens of thousands more small torii placed in worship to countless personal shrines.

Also unique to Inari shrine is the worship of the *kitsune kami*, or fox, who served Inari as his messenger.

How to get there: Take the JR Nara Line from Kyoto Station to Inari Station. Outside of Inari station will be a large set of Torii. Follow them to the shrine. Walk 3 minutes.



Photos by Paul Schuble



Rockin' at Summer Sonic '09

By Tuwhakaroa Biddle

This year Summer Sonic was a three-day event; it used to be two, which may mean more green (¥37,000), but it also means more bands and an extra day of awesome.

Other than bands I'll mention specifically, this year's lineup included: CSS, Keane, Ne-yo, Limp Bizkit (lol), Sonic Youth, The Flaming Lips, My Chemical Romance, Razorlight, Kasabian, Mogwai, Girl Talk, Soulwax, The All-American Rejects, Hoobastank, Linkin Park, The Ting Tings and Klaxons.

Rather than write about everything and everyone I'll just mention a few things.

マキツマム・ザ・ホルモン

I'd seen these guys live before and they're awesome, so I had no problem taking my friend there to head-bang for the first time to this Japanese metal band. Since seeing them, my friend, Joy, may her JET soul rest in peace, hasn't been able to get them out of her head. Look up their song *Koi no Mega Lover* — think you'll like it.

Lady Gaga

I expected much from this fame/straight-up whore, and she delivered. Her set was full of crowd interaction (e.g. air wank-

ing during *Poker Face*), costume changes, sexy noises, Gaga playing instruments, Gaga-groin-rubbed drumsticks being thrown into the audience, and Perez Hilton, who stalks her in real life, not just on his blog.

Beyoncé

B, not wanting to be outdone, took to the stage with eight sexy dancers and a shitload of others. Apart from a couple of slow songs and a Disney Princess moment, everything was Beyoncgaemic.

She is so good that we felt like we weren't even watching a human (we suspect she's an android made of gold). At one point she moved to a smaller stage in the middle of the crowd, putting us a row away from her. She even touched the girl in front of us (so close! <scretams>).

Beyoncé's lil' sister

She's no Beyoncé, but she seems to think she is. At one point the sound was a little off and she got the audience to sing with her



"Hey Mr. Soundman, you better get your shit together." In her next song the sounds she made could have exploded cats; we left, she better get her shit together.

The Vaselines

This band from Scotland was unknown to us, but turned out to be a very interesting and funny band: especially the lady singer with talk of blowjobs and a Scottish Island that entices you there with LSD.

Katy Perry

She may have kissed a girl and liked it but she cancelled and we didn't like that.

Boo bitch, boo...

Dragonash

Take a groundbreaking Japanese hip hop/rock group, give them two dancers that don't really go with the band's image or the music and what do you have? Something so wrong it's right... in Japan.

Boom Boom Satellites

They are a Japanese electronic/rock group who I'm happy I got to see live, not only because they rock, but also because I rang my friend who loves them and let her listen to them through the phone, before laughing at her



and hanging up.

Nine Inch Nails

Legends. When the lead singer wasn't jumping between instruments, he was belting out songs in epic rock poses — but not epic rock poses for Jesus like Creed.

Placebo

I was really looking forward to seeing these guys, but when the first song finished the singer fainted. He was carried away and their performance was cancelled. I'll let you off this time, but next time a little less heroin and a little more E please: follow Kasabian's example.

The Telephones

This is a Japanese band

that is on the rise. I had to queue 45mins just to see the last 15mins of their set. Worth it? YES! Their newest single is 'Monkey Discoooooo': look it up on YouTube and seizure-dance to it.

Summer Sonic '09 was another great Japan moment, one which, in student-talk, is a "life long memory from happiness get that I'll keep in heart for future smiles. Yes I think so". It may have been 36 degrees on Saturday, and it may have rained on Sunday (how Glastonbury), but I'm blacker from the experience and now own a poncho. Linkin Park also annoys me a little less than they used to.

So 2010?



On a balmy evening atop the Sogo Building in the middle of August, we plied unsuspecting newbies with much beer and dodgy beer-garden fare, then plied them with a few questions.

We apologize in advance for any misspelled names, but please consider the circumstances under which the responses were recorded: bad lighting, little space, much amber fluid.

Name: Jillian Marshall

Location in Hyogo: Awaji! Fukura!

First impression of Japan: Surreal

Best thing about Japan: No matter what I do, I'm karui.

Worst thing about Japan: I am exotic to everyone: tall, blonde, white! WTF?

Name: Rebecca Marshall

Location in Hyogo: Kamikawa

First impression of Japan: HOT

Best thing about Japan: The generous people who cook me dinner.

Worst thing about Japan: It rains on me whenever I ride my bike.

Name: Trevor

Location in Hyogo: Tajima, Ikuno

First impression of Japan: Busy

Best thing about Japan: The freedom to do whatever you want without worrying whether you are going to be mugged.

Worst thing about Japan: I don't speak/read the language, yet.

Name: Taryn Senkiw

Location in Hyogo: Kamikawa-cho

First impression of Japan: Genki

Best thing about Japan: The kind people and the FOOD!

Worst thing about Japan: Gokiburi in my apartment.

Name: Valerie Huang

Location in Hyogo: Fukusaki

First impression of Japan: Orderly

Best thing about Japan: Having so many great people to meet!

Worst thing about Japan: Being confused half the time.

Name: Eliza Jones

Location in Hyogo: Kobe, Hanayama

First impression of Japan: Awesome

Best thing about Japan: The public transport and the culture.

Worst thing about Japan: Creepy people who take your photo on the train.

Name: E-von Lai

Location in Hyogo: Aioi

First impression of Japan: Humid, hot but beautiful

Best thing about Japan: The food, the culture.

Worst thing about Japan: It's hot and humid.

Name: Justine

Location in Hyogo: Nishinomyia

First impression of Japan: Not flat, no

stars!

Best thing about Japan: Friendly ppl, culture, rice paddy fields.

Worst thing about Japan: Too many ppl crammed into too little space!

Name: Jonathan

Location in Hyogo: Awaji

First impression of Japan: Fucked

Best thing about Japan: Onions. Awaji onions. Sweet, sweet Awaji onions.

Worst thing about Japan: Bugs. Hot, hot bugs.

Name: John Rotko

Location in Hyogo: Awaji

First impression of Japan: Fucked

Best thing about Japan: Bugs, humidity, onions, students, teachers, predecessor, Jonathan Cooper

Worst thing about Japan: Bugs, humidity, onions, students, teachers, predecessor

Name: Brodie

Location in Hyogo: Ako

First impression of Japan: Sugoi

Best thing about Japan: Emma lives here! (Editor's note: Easy, tiger!)

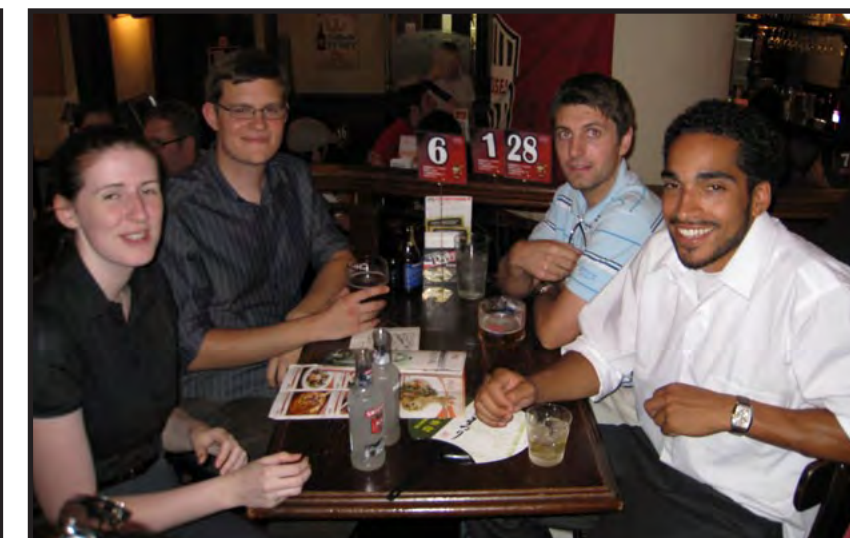
Worst thing about Japan: Over-politeness



See More Pictures and Responses on the Next Page



JET 2009: The New Breed (cont.)



Name: Anonymous
Location in Hyogo: Unspecified
First impression of Japan: Different
Best thing about Japan: Everything is cute.
Worst thing about Japan: Overly-cute Japanese girls.

Name: Jessica Dovey
Location in Hyogo: Kobe-shi (Port Island)
First impression of Japan: Delicious
Best thing about Japan: Japanese people are friendly, and eager to feed me.
Worst thing about Japan: The land of 1,000 unspoken rules.

Name: Anonymous
Location in Hyogo: Unspecified
First impression of Japan: Sugoi! ☺
Best thing about Japan: Beeru suki desu!
Worst thing about Japan: Where are the garbage cans!
Name: Lana Olvera
Location in Hyogo: Awaji-shi
First impression of Japan: Dank
Best thing about Japan: Cute stuff
Worst thing about Japan: The squat toilets

Name: Travis Love
Location in Hyogo: Aioi
First impression of Japan: Bipolar
Best thing about Japan: The culture surrounding food.
Worst thing about Japan: The assumption that foreigners require English to communicate.

Name: Jonathan Shalfi
Location in Hyogo: Harima-cho
First impression of Japan: Hot
Best thing about Japan: Shop clerks actually care about their jobs.
Worst thing about Japan: Where are the snack machines?
Name: Dan
Location in Hyogo: Himeji

First impression of Japan: I like it.
Best thing about Japan: Weather
Worst thing about Japan: Yashiro!
Name: Alisa
Location in Hyogo: Hanayama, Kobe
First impression of Japan: Humid.
Best thing about Japan: Giftwrap/packaging
Worst thing about Japan: They walk too fast or walk too slow.

Name: Adam Hoyt
Location in Hyogo: Kobe
First impression of Japan: Disciplined.
Best thing about Japan: The polite, friendly nature of Kansai people!!
Worst thing about Japan: The fact that it's a highly developed country and they still use squat toilets.



Miki Summer Camp 2009

The most fun a man can have wearing a dress!

By Matthew Stott

If you keep an eye upon the Hyogo AJET mailing list around May or June (so consider this fair and early warning), you may notice calls for assistance from ALTs for various English summer camps being held over the break. Answering Miki Senior High School's call, Emma and I, along with Eric Lord and Shellian Forrester, joined the home-ground ALTs Michael Anziliero and Amy Louie and 40 MIC (i.e. advanced English course) students for three days of controlled chaos at Ureshinodai Lifelong Education Center, Yashiro. (Ureshinodai? That's the "other Yashiro"—not the *Full Metal Jacket* Yashiro you're thinking of.) The MIC Summer Camp provided yet another glimpse into what magic can transpire when the minds of Japanese high school students are temporarily permitted to run around in the exercise



yard for a bit—but then you will see that for yourself at your own school's *bunkasai* next year.

Each ALT was assigned a group of 6 to 8 students, with whom we were to share meals, advice and moral support as they prepared for their singing and drama contests. On the first night, our groups interviewed us and pre-

pared posters based on the results, which they presented to the rest of the class. I was not offended in the slightest that mine depicted me as Dracula in a polo shirt.

We were also assigned lessons to deliver to the groups on a rotational basis. Shellian was in charge of "Describing Someone," Eric led his kids on a Treasure Hunt; Amy's lessons yielded some delicious chocolate. Emma occupied the director's chair for Drama lessons, and Michael hosted a Quiz which, seeing as I am currently in the middle of compiling my Semester Two teaching programme, he should consider stolen. For some reason it fell to me to ~~run~~ run the Music lessons and help prepare the students for their choral competition—despite my inability to hold a tune to save my life, as anyone unfortunate enough to have attended karaoke sessions with me can attest. In any case, all of the groups performed admirably in the chorus contest on the morning of the final day, no thanks to me. And Eric, I agree: your girls were gyped by the Japanese judge! (And



I can't get "Country Road" out of my head.)

The highlight of the camp, as I think all who participated would agree, was the drama contest. AFAIK the brief was to (i) take a well-known fairytale and (ii) modify it slightly; (iii) write the script in Japanese, then (iv) translate it into English; (v) make the costumes and (vi) learn the lines. The kids managed steps (i) to (v) with aplomb; but, damn it, we ALTs on the judging panel (a.k.a the nosebleed section) were there to be *entertained*—and the occasional well-timed stumble into fits of uncontrollable (and infectious) giggling because of unremembered lines was precisely what we had paid to see. *Meccya kawaii!* I also learned an important cultural lesson that evening: hormonal, painfully-shy yet too-cool-for-school teenage boys . . . REALLY LOVE DRESSING UP AS WOMEN! Needless to say, the vibe of the camp lifted several atmospheres in the wake of this event.

There is always a danger when working with students of this caliber at summer camps, ESS seminars and the like: you can lose sight of the fact that your own students might not have the same level of English competence. Nothing is more disappointing, from an ALT's perspective, than bringing home a great idea that worked really well with high-level students, only to see it fall flat on its face in



your own classroom because it is too difficult. Still, I envy Michael and Amy for the privilege of being able to work with the MIC students on a regular basis, and I've been inspired enough at least to consider running a drama contest in my own classes. Rampant transvestism aside, what's the worst that can happen?

"S A Y THEIRS"

By way of a P.S., here's a little game that went down a treat with my music lesson students. All you need is a deck of playing cards placed in the middle of the table, and a category: let's say, "musical instruments." Going around the table, each player announces their instrument (e.g. "Guitar," "Trumpet," "Piano," etc.), and everybody else repeats it. Have all players repeat together each player's words in sequence, so that everyone remembers everyone else's word.

Players then take turns drawing cards from the deck, laying the cards face-up in front of them on the table. If two cards match (e.g. 1=1, A=A, etc.), those players must race to say each other's

words first. The winning player takes the loser's pile of drawn cards: these become "point cards" and are placed face-down in a separate pile from the winner's drawn cards. A drawn card remains in play until it is a player's turn to draw again, in which case the new card is placed face-up on top of his or her pile of drawn cards. Losing players relinquish only their piles of drawn cards; they get to keep any point cards they have won.

The game continues until there are no more cards left in the deck, at which point players add their point cards to any drawn cards they still have on the table. The player with the highest total number of cards is the winner.

The ideal number of players for this game is around 8 to 10. If you have less, you might try matching suits instead of numbers to get more "duels" happening. This game is a winner, but don't thank me: thank the team behind the wonderful ESL Teacher Talk podcast (<http://www.eslteachertalk.com/>).



A Hyogo Times Ramentary Restaurant Review:

Summer Ramen, Had me a Blast!

By Andrew Tamashiro

This summer I spent three weeks studying Japanese in Sapporo and chasing ramen down wherever I could find it. Sapporo is the home of *miso ramen*, and a plethora of shops with variations ranging from adding cheese and butter to extra fat and oil. Needless to say, I was certainly more than willing to make my rounds. What follows are a few of the better shops I managed to find.

Those with some experience in Sapporo may know about Ramen Yokocho (Ramen Alley) in Susukino, a narrow corridor of ramen shops of all shapes and colors. What you might not know is that the typical Sapporo dweller views them more as tourist traps/late night last resorts, and one would be better served to ask a local for their recommendations. I had my issue of *Ramen Walker* in hand, but mainly relied on my host dad's advice, as he seemed to be just as obsessed as me.

**Iori Ramen**

First up is Iori, a joint just around the corner from the Japanese school and mentioned in various publications for their *miso ramen*. Sapporo's signature noodle dish features much thicker noodles than your typical bowl, with a bit more chew to them. Think half-way between your typical ramen egg noodle and *udon*. Iori also had

some fantastic *chashu* and a broth that was out of this world. I hit this place four times in three weeks, mainly on those tough days after a beer garden.

**Arata Ramen**

Next is Arata Ramen, a small place known for their spicy ramen. It may not appear so, but the broth is closer to black than red, courtesy of black *goma* soup. It was also deliciously spicy, spiked with peppers and *ra-yu* chili oil. Arata offers free rice with their ramen, presumably to help stave off the mouth burns until the noodles are gone. I left with a full belly and a big smile, albeit with bright red lips.

**Asahikawa's Ichikura Ramen**

A quick two-hour bus ride up to Asahikawa offers a chance to try another of Hokkaido's varieties of ramen. Asahikawa is home to the coldest temperature in Japanese history (-40C), but it was a scorching 32 when I was there. I popped into Ichikura Ramen, and tried their original ramen. It was absolutely swimming

in *negi*, to the point that all I could see were little green tubes under a sprinkling of julienned onions. The *miso* base was light but full-flavored, the noodles average and the *negi* chewy but mild.

**Tsukemen Shin Ramen**

Finally, I was taken to Tsukemen Shin by my host dad, and was absolutely blown away. I had only had *tsukemen* (a sort of deconstructed ramen, with plain noodles dipped into a super thick soup base and consumed sort of like *soba*) once before, and didn't know what to think of it. Well, Tsukemen Shin has officially made me a fan. The porky soup had bits of *katsuo* in it, as well as onion and pork. I ordered the *buta soboro* (diced pork style) and dug in to an over-sized bowl of noodles as thick as *udon*. The flavors, textures, and smells were unlike any ramen dish I'd ever had before, boiling hot soup combining with cool noodles to make them just right. Fish flakes, onion and pork provided slightly different tastes in each bite, causing me to polish off my noodles in rather rapid order. After the noodles are gone, Shin dilutes your soup with water and apparently a bit of sugar, and you drink the resulting concoction. Despite initial wariness, I was happy to find it was a very light way to end a rather heavy duty meal and was very impressed by the entire experience. If I'm ever in Sapporo again, I'm going back for sure.

Maigo in Hyogo



Where on earth is this Hyogo landmark? (And why on earth didn't you guess last month's *Maigo in Hyogo*?) Post your wild stabs-in-the-dark on the Hyogo Times Facebook Group discussion board. If you're the first person to guess correctly, we'll announce your name in the October issue. Then women will want to sleep with you! Thanks go to me, the editor, for the pic. If you have a photo of a Hyogo landmark that is appropriate for *Maigo in Hyogo*, please send it to publications@hyogo.ajet.net

Solution to last month's Maigo in Hyogo: Midorigaoka Park, Itami.

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Photos by Robert Miller

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**The fireworks as seen
over Ako's annual summer festival**