

JETAA.NY

Newsletter for The
Japan Exchange
and Teaching Program
Alumni Association,
New York Chapter

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THE "FATE & FAME" ISSUE

Where are we going? How are we getting there? And who cares?

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JETS ON A "MISSION": PROSELYTIZING & THE JET PROGRAM

BY ALEXEI ESIKOFF (FUKUSHIMA-KEN, 2001-2002)

There's been a slow rumble building the last few years at the annual CLAIR conference about one of the touchiest, most personal, deeply felt issues any person can have: religion. Or more specifically, what to do with a JET participant decides to share their own personal, deeply felt beliefs with their students and their community.

Predominantly Christian, there have been an increased number of JETs who use their time abroad to complete missionary work. Some Japanese co-workers have told CLAIR that JETs with an overly religious bent can make for uncomfortable situations.

Here in New York, a broad social generalization would be that proselytizing JETs are not a problem. But other sections of the country, especially the Utah and Hawaii chapters, have been vocal about addressing this in the screening process. As of right now, there is no specific policy addressing the issue of missionary JETs.

In talking with JET alums and other JET representatives who interview potential JETs, it becomes clear that there isn't much guidance. The interviewers are given general guidelines (i.e. professionalism, flexibility, personality, motivation, etc) with which to base their interview, but the final decision on acceptance is essentially left in the hands of the three-person panel.

Religion is generally an unasked question. "It's a tricky line because it is stated in the literature that there is no discrimination based on race, sex, or religion, so I suppose if

it were questioned in too much depth and the applicant wasn't admitted, then challenged it could create unwanted conflict," said one experienced interviewer. Interviewees do bring up their religious beliefs occasionally but the interviewers can't do much more than suggest that the applicant limit her extracurricular proselytizing.

Another interviewer added: "We cannot and will not discriminate against an applicant simply because they need to complete their missionary work. All we ask is that they do their work after the JET Program."

Holding a Bible study class or two seems to be permissible, but having religious work make up the bulk of time is against the contract since JETs are not permitted to do "outside work." Again, there's no definite boundary in either direction.

What the interviewers stressed over and over is that while they have no objection to those with strong religious beliefs, it is a misuse of JET monies and reputation to blatantly proselytize. "The whole purpose of being a participant is to be an ambassador and represent our country, not to use the program to complete other priorities."

Of course, religion is a major part of American culture, which is a point religious JETs rightly make. According to a current pious ALT, culture is made up of a gamut of national and personal identities. Being Christian is part of who many of us are. Sharing who we are with people around us is part of what JETs are sent to do.



(See "Missionary JETs" continued on page 12)

The "Fate & Fame" Issue

Welcome to the "Fate & Fame" Issue, where we try to give everyone their fifteen minutes of pre-destined fame. (We're not sure if being in the Newsletter constitutes "fame" per se, but as editors we're allowed to dream a bit.)

So what does religion have to do with famous JET alums? And grad school? And where does ramen fit into the big picture?

Shoujiki ni iu to, we're not exactly sure. These are all tough topics to tie together. But they're stimulating so we figured we'd throw them all in to the big metaphorical bowl of ramen, let you taste them, and then decide for yourself how the themes fit together. We have great faith in our JET alum readership.

Also, have a look JETAA Society Page, where are newest reporter, *Yoku Shitteiru*, lets you know that JETAA NY is alive and very active, and the *Funny Notebook English Contest*, the first ever contest we've offered in the Newsletter.

So start reading, and be prepared to meet your destiny.

Steven and Jody

REQUEST FOR FALL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS!!!!

The Fall 2003 Issue will be all about jobs, careers, networking, and anything else that'll help JET alums find their dream job or find a job period. Or maybe even figure out how to spend your time if you don't have a job. If you have an interesting job, a solid job, a boring job or any other kind of job and want to write about it, let us know. And if you have any other ideas, thoughts or just want to kill time while seeking gainful employment, then share those ideas with us at newsletter@jetaany.org.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Steve & Jody:

Ever since returning from the JET program many *tsukis* ago I have always looked forward to the periodic newsletters and announcements that we receive as ex-JETs. Be it the CLAIR updates, the international newsletters from my own Mie prefecture or the venerable JETAA New York Newsletter. As I was in Barcelona since January, I figured that I would have to just wait until I got home to read the latest editions. But, along came the PDF version of the JETAA NY Newsletter and instant gratification was possible.

Somehow reading it onscreen just didn't cut it so I printed it out and took it with me to the nearby UPC campus in Barcelona where I thoroughly devoured the "Issues" issue, started planning my own Nobu visit and thought about *kanji* in a different way. Needless to say I am big fan of the PDF version of the Newsletter and look forward to reading it in Mexico City this coming year and wherever I have a connection in the future.

John Sandoval
Mie 1992-1994

The JETAA NY Newsletter welcomes letters to the editor regarding all aspects of the Newsletter's content and JETAA life.

JETAA NEW YORK SOCIETY PAGE

by Yoko Shitteiro

What's going on with the upper crust of JETAA NY society these days? Here's the scoop for those of you not on the guest list or too busy summering in the Hamptons.

A most excellent **happy hour** was held at the Boat Basin on August 8. Organized by **Matt Jungblutt** it was about as nice a place to gather as you could ask for. About 30 total JET alums plus friends showed up, including a surprise appearance by long lost JET alum **Sandi the Clown**.

The following Wednesday was the monthly **Nihongo Dake Dinner**, organized this time by **Michael Madrid**. Not only was it well attended by a perfect balance of Americans and Japanese, everyone pretty much stuck to the script and spoke Japanese through the dinner (with a couple lapses into Spanish and German.) Sure it feels goofy asking a fellow American to pass the soy sauce in Japanese, but it's fun once you get over yourself.

Perhaps the most unique (semi-) JET event was August 1 at Brooklyn Borough Hall where JET alum **Anthony Bianchi** was honored by the Borough of Brooklyn for his recent election as an Inuyama City Councilman, the first ever American to hold an elected position in Japan. Representing the JET alums were **Alex McLaren** and two other alums associated with this fine publication (see the article inside) who were able to finalize invitations with Anthony's help.

Not sure how much to read into it, but the **JETAA Bookclub** is getting good turnouts, in part due to good book choices and in part because of **Rosie DeFremery's** intelligent and perceptively led discussions. The best thing is, it's still fun even if you haven't read the book. (Trust me, I've done it.) Plus you can always read up on Amazon.com before you leave work if you don't want to be totally clueless.

That's all for now. Next issue I'll fill you in on the fall's activities.

GET INVOLVED

WRITE FOR THE JETAA NY NEWSLETTER

EMAIL Steven at newsletter@jetaany.org or Jody at editor@jetaany.org

MR. BIANCHI GOES TO INUYAMA

How a Boy From Brooklyn Became an Elected Official in Japan

by Nichole Hebert

"Don't ever tell a kid from Brooklyn he can't do something. Because then he'll go out, and he'll do it!"

-Marty Markowitz, Brooklyn Borough President, August 1, 2003

Thus was Brooklyn native and JET alum Anthony Bianchi (Aichi-ken, 1989-92) welcomed back to Brooklyn in a recent ceremony for becoming the first ever North American to hold an elected position in Japan. In April the Boy from Bensonhurst, now living and working as an English teacher for fifteen years in Japan, was elected to a city council position in Inuyama City.

How did this come about? And who is this Anthony Bianchi? Surely his mother, in attendance at the ceremony, would be able to offer some insight.

"We never expected *anything* like this," she confided.

And perhaps it makes sense that his mother wouldn't expect anything like this from a regular guy who, almost apologetically, explained to us that he's not a politician.

"I'm from the U.S., I live in Japan, and people ask me, 'Who are you?' he tells everyone in attendance in a sincere, relaxed tone. "I just tell them, 'I'm Ant'ny, from Brooklyn.'"

As we put away Sicilian rice balls and sushi, noshed on cake decorated with an American, Japanese and Italian flag, and washed it all down with Sapporo beer, we managed to get a handshake in with Anthony. But clearly we had a lot of competition. Many a friend and rela-

tive had come to see him for one of his few visits back to the States, all of whom were just as proud and eager to speak to him as we were.

And as we observed Anthony meeting and greeting everyone in his down-to-earth manner, certain skills such as a natural ability to connect and communicate with people became apparent.

As if to provide further evidence, a friend of Anthony's from Inuyama named Nagase-san, visiting the U.S. for the first time, explained that as a public school teacher, Anthony used to work with the other teachers and the Board of Education as they butted heads with the PTA. Nagase-san was the head of the PTA at that time, and he is now a major supporter of Anthony's.

Marty Markowitz, in his introduction, noted that since being elected in April, Anthony had already passed a proposal that makes transcripts from Inuyama City Council meetings available to the general public.

An accomplishment such as this in a political system notorious for lack of responsiveness to the public further hinted at Anthony's ability to communicate and bridge gaps in any culture.

Anthony says it was an off handed remark about a simple con-

I'm not trying to redo Japanese society. Most of the things I want to do are what the average person wants to see. I can say things that everyone is thinking, but can't say because of social pressure.

(Continued on page 7)

HAVE FUN!

WRITE FOR THE JETAA NY NEWSLETTER

EMAIL Steven at newsletter@jetaany.org or Jody at editor@jetaany.org

LEARNING HOW HE BOWED:

Bruce Feiler, author of *Learning to Bow*, talks about writing the original JET book and what he's been doing since then

by Lee Uehara (Chiba, 1993-95)

(NEW YORK) For someone with two New York Times best-selling books to his name, JET alumnus Bruce Feiler says he sure doesn't feel famous.

"For years I ate tuna fish, lived in a tiny apartment and made no money at it," Feiler said during a telephone interview from his home office in Manhattan. "So after all these years, I've been able to break through. I feel like a survivor, not at all like a star."

The author of *Learning to Bow: Inside the Heart of Japan* (1991) - the personal account of his experience working for the Ansoku

Board of Education in Tochigi prefecture - told JETAANY that he "feels really lucky" to do what he does. His two most recent books, *Walking the Bible: A Journey By Land Through the Five Books of Moses* (2001) and *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* (2002), are New York Times best sellers.

Feiler, who just returned from his honeymoon in Mo-

rocco, said he became a writer because of Japan, where he sent any letters home describing daily life during a home stay and semester abroad at Kansai Daigai in 1986.

The informal beginning of *Learning to Bow* began with his first letter home, he said. Feiler shared the reaction to his host mother's preparation of her favorite dish, liver pie.

"The one thing I would never eat was liver - I ate the liver pie," Feiler said. "Then I went up and started writing in my journal - I didn't have a journal before then. The next morning, I woke up and soon learned that breakfast was cold leftovers from the night before. I wrote a letter home 'You're not going to believe what happened to me...'" The letters were passed around his hometown of Savannah, GA, where people gave him compliments when he returned.

Since so many people thought his observations of Japan were of interest, he sought a literary agent after becoming a JET. Feiler called up contacts and sent out book proposals. *Learning to Bow* has since been reprinted in paperback in

1992 and is required reading for courses about Japan at many universities. The second paperback edition will be issued in May 2004, Feiler said. Actually, the publisher interrupted this interview to assign a deadline to Feiler for a new cover image for the new edition.

However, lest aspiring writers think that getting a book published is easy, Feiler says it can be difficult. "I know a lot of writers who are better at aspiring than writing," Feiler said. "Being a successful writer is a combination of talent and determination. My number one advice to writers is to write."

He suggests writing every day and understanding individual strengths.

"Write little descriptions in a notebook, write in the JET Newsletter, do things to get your stuff in print, write in



the church newsletter, write in the local paper, write in local magazines," Feiler said. "Learn what you are good at. Are you good at descriptions? Are you good at humor? Are you good at analysis? Are you good at fiction? Those are all different skills."

Wait, there's more.

"Get the experience of being edited, and have someone say, 'I don't care about that, I care about this,'" Feiler said.

For example, Feiler says he was heavily edited during the writing of LTB because he wrote it like a high school essay with introductory, middle and concluding paragraphs. He said that on his own he had to learn about dialogue and character development by writing the book.

"The editor lopped off all of those first and last paragraphs. She said, 'Trust yourself enough to tell the story so that people get the story,'" Feiler said.

With an estimated one million copies of his books sold

(Continued on page 11)

WHERE'S THE BEST RAMEN IN NEW YORK?

JETAA Newsletter Gets to the Bottom of the Bowl

by Dorcas Casey (Nagano, 1996-99) and Steven Horowitz

There's a lot of ramen out there in New York. But where do you go when you want to impress your guest? Or after you've sang your last *karaoke* song for the night?

We decided to ask the experts: The Japanese ex-pats in the City and their American co-workers.

The top choice for most folks was a place called **Chikubu** (at 12 E 44th St between Madison and 5th). According to Christina Covely, a recruiter with Interesse International Inc., "As far as ramen shops go, Chikubu on Fridays offers the best ramen in the city by far." Jo Sonido from UBS Warburg (and also our esteemed JETAA NY Treasurer) recommended Chikubu's Friday ramen special. "Friday is always packed with virtually all of the Japanese clients slurping the ramen special lunch. This is a well-crafted bowl of sublimely flavored *shoyu-aji* broth, perfectly done noodles (perhaps hand made?), and the best roast pork outside of Japan. You get a bowl of rice and *tsuke-mono*. Go early or endure the wait - it is definitely worth it!"

For those looking for a special treat off the beaten path, Mina Shimada, a recruiter with Quik USA recommends heading out to Astoria, Queens (the growing epicenter of Japanese culture in New York) to **Restaurant Shima** at 29-13 Broadway in Astoria (#718-721-5566). Shimada explained, "When you get to the restaurant, you see a sushi restaurant. But if you ask for ramen, they'll make it for you. They make their own homemade noodles, and they're perfectly *al dente*!" She also explained, "Their soup is made from *tonkotsu* (pork bullion soup) mixed either with miso or soy sauce. In the summer, they also serve cold egg noodles with a couple of different sauces." Restaurant Shima is located next to the *Family Store* (a Japanese food market) which makes it very easy to find.

Also highly regarded is **Menkui-tei** located at 56th between 5th and 6th. Mika Nomura, a recruiter with Interesse International Inc., claims that Menkui-tei is number one in the City. Jo Sonido adds, "[Menku-tei] reminds me of the typical ramen counter type of restaurant that I have frequented all over Japan. No frills - with those big plastic bowls heaping full of broth, noodles, and your choice of various preparations. This is the only place where I have had something that closely approximates my favorite ramen combination: Miso ramen and fried rice."

Another ramen worthy of high praise is **Menchanko-tei** (which has two locations: 131 E. 45th Street (between Lexington and Third) and 43-45 W. 55th St (between 5th & 6th). Nomura rated this the second best shop in the city. And Jo Sonido from UBS Warburg provided more insights into this

establishment's great offerings: "Menchanko-tei is a part of the corporate empire that runs Onigashima, Menchanko-tei, Ony and Katsuhama, but don't be put off by the empire! They put out very good hand-made menu items for very reasonable prices. A recent trip to Menchanko-tei did yield an updated menu with lunch sets of mini-ramen and mini-donburi for about \$8.00 plus tax and tip and, if you have the extra cash, don't pass up on the excellent shrimp gyoza!"

He added, "Menchanko-tei also offers familiar ramen standards such as *kikuzo* ramen (soy-sauce based), *miso* ramen, and *tonkotsu* ramen (featuring the thick pork broth of Kyushu). In addition, they also make their own signature ramen/nabe creations called, simply enough, Menchanko (a fusion of the terms for noodles and the familiar mixed nabe consumed by sumo wrestlers all over Japan - *chanko nabe*). I highly recommend it for the very hungry, and it's great in the winter."



Another popular suggestion was **Ajisen Ramen** located at 14 Mott St. (between Park Row and Pell Streets, #212-267-9680). According to Quick USA's Shimada: "This Ramen shop comes from Kumamoto, Kyushu, where their ramen is well known for its rich flavor of tonkatsu soup. Though it may sound a little bit heavy, you can customize your order and request your soup to be heavy, regular or light." For those who like a thick, rich bowl of ramen, Shimada recommends their wheat noodles with the heavy soup. Mr. Yamamoto of Quick USA ads, "If you're trying to work the alcohol out of your system, you can choose the light soup just like a lot of Japanese people do after a big night of drinking."

But wait! Don't make up your mind just yet. The good folks at Bremar, a recruiting firm, recommend two other ramen shops: **Ryoyu's Ramen** at 10 E. 52nd St. (between Madison and 5th) and **Sapporo Restaurant** at 152 W. 49th St. (between 6th and 7th avenues).

And at least one Newsletter editor puts his vote in for **Sapporo East** on the corner of 10th Street and 1st Avenue where the noodles have just the right texture and Sapporo-style butter ramen is on the menu.

OK, now now you know where to go to satisfy your ramen cravings in the Big Apple. So get out there and start slurping!

(Continued from page 4)

cept made by a friend who had once been active in politics that gave him the idea that he should consider running for office in Inuyama.

"Common sense. Things that the average citizen wanted to see done were not being done." According to Anthony, getting a street light fixed can prove to be a big challenge in Inuyama. "But we've gotten one fixed, and we've gotten one put in where people had wanted one for a long time."

As a city councilman, Bianchi is now able to ask the hard questions to the civil servants who were once reticent to give any answers.

"I can deal with things directly. I don't have to ask someone else to be my spokesman on any particular issue." And so far Anthony says he's noticed that there are a lot more people willing to cooperate than he anticipated.

So what does Anthony hope to accomplish as a city council representative?

"I trust the wisdom of the average citizen to know what is best for Inuyama. I hope to give the average citizen more of a voice in the process. I'm not trying to redo Japanese society. Most of the things I want to do [e.g., increase transparency in local government] are what the average person wants to see. I can say things that everyone is thinking, but can't say because of social pressure. That is what I think people expect of me the most."



But though Anthony is now an Inuyama resident, he had a little help from his hometown New York Yankees during the campaign

season. After slugger Hideki Matsui was signed by the Yankees in March, Bianchi used the teams' popularity as a campaign pitch and decorated his headquarters with posters, pennants, and other Yankees paraphernalia. He even thought about posing for his campaign picture wearing a Yankees jersey, but opted for the more traditional route in a coat and tie due in part to concerns about violating Japan's strict campaign laws.

Even with all of the excitement in politics, Anthony let us know that he still makes his living as an English teacher and even asked us to refer any good people to him that might be interested in teaching English in Japan or setting up any type of intercultural exchange with Inuyama.

And as JET alums well know, an English teacher is always a prime target for difficult English grammar questions. Even from the Deputy Consul General of Japan, Masahiro Fukukawa, who in his speech asked, "Bianchi-san, since you are an English teacher, I am hoping you can explain this word to me: Fuggedaboutit??"

Fortunately for the citizens of Inuyama City, Anthony from Brooklyn hasn't forgotten who he is.

(Steven Horowitz also contributed to this article.)

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A YEN FOR AN MBA

How to Ride Your JET Experience Up the Corporate Ladder

by John Sandoval (Mie, 1992-95)

At some point after spending some time in Japan, many JETs decide that going to grad school is a worthwhile endeavor. I decided that pursuing an MBA would be the best option for me. As you can imagine, there are more than enough books and services geared towards telling you what the MBA is all about and how to get into the best programs. Instead of regurgitating this info I'd like to share my observations of the MBA and how your JET experience fits in, as an applicant and as a student.

Getting In

All in all I would say that the typical JET experience strengthens an application to b-school. Admissions officers want to build a well-rounded and diverse class, and for that they need well-rounded and diverse people. Spending 1 to 3 years in Japan definitely makes you a more interesting person and allows you to bring a whole different perspective to the classroom, club activities and your future business career. But that doesn't mean that JET alone will be enough. During my visits to a number of b-schools I met an assortment of ex-JETS and every one of them had done something besides JET, (usually, but not always, business related.) There were even some that had stayed in Japan, but moved on to work for Japanese companies. If they stayed in education, they managed a juku or something similar. Overall the JET experience is a great supplement to your other pre MBA job or jobs.

Specifically you can spin JET in a number of ways to help the admission committee see how valuable an experience it is and why you should be a part of the class of 200X. B-school is all about team work: the majority or assignments, particularly in classes like Marketing or Corporate Strategy, are done in groups, and even independent classes like Accounting or Finance have components. As a JET we can readily offer teaching experience as team players and give lots of exam-got results.

Spending 1 to 3 years in Japan definitely makes you a more interesting person and allows you to bring a whole different perspective to the classroom, club activities and your future business career.

The JET experience also gives you a tremendous amount of material to answer the multiple essay questions that come with each b-school application. Questions like "Describe your most challenging experience," or "Talk about a group work experience you had, what your role was, and your effect on the end result," or "Describe a time you failed at something, what did you learn?" Given the multitude of experiences had in a 1- to 3-year stay in Japan, it's not hard to address these questions.

Similarly, JET can give you a reservoir of experience to draw upon in the b-school interview. The questions are often tangents of the essay questions, but in general there will be a focus on getting to know you, why you are applying to b-school at this time, and why X school is the right one for you. Often this line of questioning is referred to as "walking through the resume" and this is your chance to explain why you chose to do JET, why you did Y after JET and why you are now applying to b-school. Maybe you got that entrepreneurial bug through teaching privates. Or perhaps you realized how rapidly the world is shrinking and how business is becoming more global day by day.

Another way that JET can help your candidacy is through JETAA, or more generally, anything that you do post JET that shows a continuation or long-term commitment to the things you started in Japan.

Quite a few people apply to b-school because they need to punch their ticket in order to get to a higher rung on the career ladder. Once their two years are over and the degree is theirs, they disappear, often never to be heard from again. By showing active involvement in JETAA, or tutoring in your spare time, or informally coordinating pen pal exchanges with your old school you demonstrate your commitment to whatever it is that is important to you. If you do this for JET then it's not too hard to translate this to your future MBA alma mater. B-schools place a lot of value on their alumni networks. If you can convince them that you will not only be a strong and committed student but also a loyal alum then this might win you a few more points.

During B-school

Now that you are in b-school JET can also help you. As mentioned earlier group work and study groups are huge parts of business school. To the extent that you picked up some good people skills in Japan (or even something as simple as more patience), then you have some real assets that will help in the study group dynamic. Typically most student bodies are a quarter to one-third international. A big part of that international piece are students hailing from Asia. Chances are you will be teamed up with one or more students who speak English as a second or third language and may be hesitant to speak up and contribute. Applying the skills you developed on JET can go a long way toward making a positive group experience.

One of the reasons why teamwork is stressed in business school is the understanding that in many cases you will rely on your classmates to help you get that finance valuation method down or master that obscure accounting rule. Communication skills acquired from your teaching experience will make your particular expertise clearer for your fellow group members. Not only will this be of immediate help to your group, but it will also help your reputation as a good person for group work. This can be a real advantage as new groups are formed in the future; no one wants to have a dead weight member.

Most b-schools are parts of larger universities and there will usually be an Asian or even Japan studies program. There will probably be a chance to take Japanese language classes or investigate other topics that you have been curious about since leaving Japan. Odds are there will be film series or speakers invited to campus: I had one visiting professor give a lunchtime talk on enjo kosai.

Overall I think the experiences, skills, and attitudes developed on the JET Program are applicable to nearly everything we do after leaving Japan. Use your JET experience together with your MBA to open doors. Gambatte!!

John Sandoval recently graduated with an MBA from the University of Michigan Business School.



TO GRAD SCHOOL? OR NOT TO GRAD SCHOOL?

That is the question.

Addressed by Nate Hall (Yamaguchi-ken, 2000-02)

“So you’re thinking about grad school”... would have been the title of this article if it ran in *People* or *Reader’s Digest*, gracing the table at your dentist’s office. As I am thinking about graduate school myself, this article has forced me to consider options, fickle things that they are.

You may want to consider whether graduate school is necessary. An opinion that has been presented to me numerous times over the past several years is that if you have a good job with upward mobility and plenty of chances to learn through experience, then your time is better spent in the work force. How-
position similar to week of August), best, uncertain, then two of prolonging the be just in order.

If you are not in off the future or if the and now, many com- offer to pay tuition for This is a great way ity of a paycheck of academic

If you have time are a number of

on more obscure fellowships with less competition. More prestigious fellow- ships, such as the Fulbright have a much higher acceptance rate if you apply to countries that are less popular destinations. Obviously, England, Ireland, France will have many applicants, but if one were to apply to someplace like Tajikistan or Cambodia, the acceptance rate goes from 2% to around 30% (just a made up statistic, mind you). Obviously, to a former JET, the prospect of going around the world is less intimidating while the prospect of anything free is more attractive than either prospect would be to a non-JET.

Studying abroad is often much cheaper than study- ing in the U.S. Several JETs have gone to the London School of Economics, which is an excellent institution for anything in the way of international politics. One friend of mine who followed JET with a one-year Master’s pro- gram at the LSE now graces the halls of the UN here in New York. As most European programs are only one year, you can get a degree in half the time, and usually for less money.

Many people are interested in going to Law school or to Business school thinking that such a degree will solve all of their employment problems forever, and the illusion of stability is rather tempting. However, the start- ing salary as well as the job placement rate for recent law school graduates has been going down, according to *New York Lawyer* (Aug 1st, 2003).

And besides, don’t we have enough lawyers yet? “The first thing we do let’s kill all the lawyers” (Shakespeare, *Henry the 6th Part 2*, Act IV, scene 2, line 78). The original context of that quote was actually flattering. The vil- lains were plotting a coup, and the lawyers were the major obstacles that stood in the way. But I am suggesting that there is a glut of lawyers right now, driving down the market price of their services. The way for lawyers to make more money is to either have more litigation, or to have fewer lawyers and fewer law-firms competing for clients.

The *New York Lawyer* suggested the economic downturn as the cause for the troubling statistics, but I’ve been waiting for this to happen all my life, and I am prepared to back my liberal, unorthodox interpretation of Shake-



speare on this one.

Besides, being a first year student of Law means that you are not much else. Many people have trouble handling that kind of stress, having only considered the end result: the degree, which alas, must be worked for or often dropped out of.

An MBA is a grand idea as well. The way it has been explained to me is that you go to school for a couple of years, don’t learn too much, but party with your classmates quite a bit, which is called *networking*. Then when you graduate, along with your degree, you are given a Rolodex which is filled with all of these business contacts and you get a huge starting salary, signing bonus, gym membership, 401(k) and all the rest. Not too shabby, if that’s what you’re into. Differ- ent strokes for different folks, I guess.

Of course, conventional wisdom says it’s not worth going unless you get into a prestigious program, and you must pay, through the tooth as it were, to get a degree from a presti- gious program. Oh yeah, and the market for business school graduates kind of sucks right now. According to my friend’s brother at NYU’s Stern School of Business, only 65% of 2003 grads have found jobs – *officially*. Unofficially, word is that it’s closer to 60%.

Maybe the students would benefit from reading a case study about making money running a business school, be- cause the schools seem to have a pretty good business model going.

Due to the investment of time and money that goes in to graduate school, you (read as I) would want to deeply con- sider what you want out of it career-wise and in the way of personal development.

Due to the investment of time and money that goes in to graduate school, you (read as I) would want to deeply consider what you want out of it career-wise and in the way of personal development.

I’ll leave you with two last schools of thought on a decision about grad school.

On the pro side, it’s often a lot easier to get through grad school when you’re younger and have fewer life obli- gations. Though one law school grad pointed out to me that often the older and married folks often did a better job of prioritizing, organizing and focusing. Still, it’s a tough balance.

On the con side, don’t go un- less you know why you’re going and what you want to do with it. This goes especially for law, business and public policy school. Like you, many other

students may not be sure of why they’re going and what they really want to do. But many of them are also driven by pres- tige and fear of failure and therefore might have a higher *gaman* threshold than you for a life of corporate drudgery. Unless you kick major ass in some way, these folks are a major constituency against which you’ll be competing when you go to find a job.

I’ve told you what I think. But when it comes down to time to make a decision, you’ll be relying on your own com- mon sense and gut instincts. And as far as I know, there’s no grad program for that.

JETTING ON

WITH

JODY MOUSSEAU (Kagawa-ken, 1997-2000)

Interview by Steven Horowitz

In this issue, we interview JETAA NY Newsletter Co-editor Jody Mousseau and learn about her unique cross-cultural career in Human Resources consulting.

Steven: *When did you come back from Japan?*

Jody: I came back from Japan in September of 2000, after spending three years as an ALT in Kagawa-ken on the southern island of Shikoku and then traveling around Southeast Asia for a very brief period.

S: *What do you do now?*

J: I am a Senior Project Associate for a human resources consulting firm called ima consulting that specializes in working with Japanese companies operating in the U.S. ima [spelled with a lowercase "i"] helps Japanese companies to set up performance management systems, conducts cross-cultural business training, and assists clients with various other HR issues. Effective HR is an important part of how companies are able to maintain effective business operations.

S: *How long have you been at your current job?*

J: For about two and a half years.

S: *Why did you pursue a career in Human Resources?*

J: When I came back from Japan, I wanted to work in a Japan-related job in a communications-based field. Many of the positions that I looked into after retuning happened to be in human resources, because HR encompasses a lot of the skills that I wanted to apply in my career. Since ima specializes in both Japan and HR, it seemed like a perfect fit.

Working with HR in Japanese companies is especially interesting because it uses many of the cross-cultural communication skills that we developed on JET. Many of the senior managers in Japanese companies operating in the U.S. are expatriate staff here on a rotational basis. Some of these expatriates do not have an understanding of American business practices, including American employment law and managing locally-hired staff, before they come here. Japan has traditionally been a society of "lifelong employment," whereas people in the U.S. may hold several jobs even by the time they turn 30. It is often difficult for Japanese managers to manage their locally-hired staff efficiently and productively due to the differences in business practices and cultures in the U.S. and Japan.

S: *What is the most interesting part about your job?*

J: The most interesting part would definitely be consistently

working with a wide range of issues and projects. Our clients are from various industries, and the range of projects that we are working on at a given time may vary. Although there is a standard range of services that we provide to clients, working closely with clients on projects keeps the work very interesting and no two days at work are quite the same.

S: *Would you recommend HR as a career?*

J: Definitely. HR is always in demand. It is an "inelastic field," so to speak. Companies always need HR, whether they're expanding or downsizing. They can choose to have an internal HR department or to outsource to an outside consulting company, but they still need to manage staff performance and deal with any issues that arise. Not having an HR department or specialist assisting them with their HR issues can be very problematic for companies. In the past, HR has played an administrative role in many companies.

Many companies have been changing and expanding HR's role within their entity to be a more "strategic player," and help the company manage certain aspects of a business, such as staff performance, benefits, compensation, etc., in ways that can help to expand the business. HR is a career that will never disappear.

S: *What advice would you give to someone pursuing a career in HR?*

J: I would say to make sure that you're a people person that likes to think in terms of gray areas. Although many issues that HR professionals deal with are clearly black and white, HR also throws a lot of curveballs that do not always have predetermined or uniform solutions. It is a very important and professional field, while also being creative and innovative. In addition, working in HR in a Japanese company operating in the U.S. also gives me the opportunity to apply the cross-cultural experiences.

If you have any questions about pursuing a career in Human Resources, you can contact Jody at mousseauj@hotmail.com

THE FIRST EVER OFFICIAL JETAA NY NEWSLETTER

FUNNY NOTEBOOK ENGLISH CONTEST

*"Like sliding the surface of the water, I love to go things smoothly. How did you spend today?
When you feel sad or lonely, let's play with me. Sure you'll be in joyful mood."*

*"Wet and happy naturally. Ameo and his friends are famous posers. It's more 'high fives'
all around. What could be more fun than a pose?"*

Any JET would probably know in a heartbeat where funny English sentences can be found in plenty, and where the funny English sentences above came from. Yes, you guessed it. From the front of Japanese notebooks.

In order to pay a proper tribute to the caliber of great funny English that can only be found on the front of crazy, funky Japanese notebooks, we, the co-editors of the NY JETAA Newsletter, are holding a "Funny Notebook English" Contest in two categories: 1) real examples of funny notebook English that was *actually* found on a notebook, and 2) your boisterously creative idea of the perfect funny notebook English.

The best three submissions for each category will be featured on the JETAA NY website.

Please send submissions for the JETAA "Funny Notebook English" contest by September 30th to Jody Mousseau at

mousseauj@hotmail.com

(Continued from page 5)

worldwide, Feiler says that his experience in Japan has affected his life because it's still the "basic outline" of his life: "Going to some place where I don't know anyone, where it's a strange environment and sort of plunging deep into the culture. That paradigm of deep immersion, that experience, is still what I am trying to do with all of my work," Feiler said. "Moving to Nashville, buying a Winnebago, going to the Middle East and saying I want to read the Bible. That is still to me the basic experience of Japan."

While Feiler has focused his attention on other parts of the world in the last decade, he says he still keeps in touch with people in Japan and other JETs he met. Feiler also said he cannot imagine having done the JET program without e-mail or living "without that degree of [human] contact."

However, the growth of the Internet when online research about any thing or fered with the book's standing as a pri-

"I think the Internet is good for inter- the GDP of Tochigi prefecture [right learn about places; you don't find stories

Feiler has successfully shared his Looking for Class: Days and Nights at Top: A Season with the Circus (1995); Judd, Wade Hayes and the Changing

Journey By Land Through the Five Books of Moses (2001; and Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths (2002.

Feiler's next project is a documentary based on Walking the Bible. He also says that there is a lot of writing about Japan he would like to do.

"I still feel incredibly connected, there's a lot of people who know me from that book [LTB], they consider that my best book," Feiler said. "My life has been focused on Middle East for the past few years. So, I feel a longing to reconnect to Asia."

FOR SIDEBAR:

Favorite Japanese food: "I certainly eat a lot of sushi, eat a lot of tempura. In recent weeks, I've had a craving for okonomiyaki."

Favorite Japanese restaurant in New York City: "The place above St. Marks Bookshop on 9th Street [and Third Avenue]. It is the one place in New York City that smells like Japan, and the menu is not in English. And it's full of Japanese young people. It's like a bar, not a fancy dining restaurant."

Learning to Bow was recently released in paperback. For more info check out www.brucefeiler.com.

(c) 2003 Lee Uehara

Lee Uehara's work as a journalist has appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Japan Times*, and *The Asahi Shimbun*. She is currently in her second - and final - year of the NYC Teaching Fellows program.

(Continued from page 1)

But is sharing one's beliefs regarding explaining St. Patrick's Day to students the dynamic particularly sensitive in a saving face holds such high value, and make people uncomfortable?

Often such discussion is perceived as an attack on Japanese beliefs. "The main question I got [from Japanese co-workers] was why Christians aren't happy with the number of believers they already have," said one returned CIR whose predecessor was a missionary.

The non-missionary CIR had a very positive initial reaction to her presence from both co-workers and students, pleased to have somebody who drank alcohol and didn't change the words of traditional songs ("We Wish You a Merry Christmas") to be more religious ("We Wish Jesus a Happy Birthday"). They questioned why she *didn't* bring up Christianity as an important subject. "They were curious why I didn't feel as 'strongly' as he did about religion and why he felt a need to convert people."

Professionally, there should be a definite line: discussing baseball is okay. Describing family structure is fine. Teaching "Jingle Bells" – entering a potentially gray area. But most JETs, JET alums and Japanese co-workers would probably feel telling someone to accept Jesus Christ so they can go to heaven is infringing upon personal beliefs and inappropriate for the work environment. (Then again, of course, this is a highly subjective area.)

Since the issue of missionary JETs has increasingly been raised with CLAIR regarding proselytizing JETs, perhaps clearer guidelines may be necessary.

As before, interviewers will undoubtedly not be permitted to discriminate based on religion, which would be unfair and illegal. But CLAIR may want to ensure that the JET Program is not used to spread a personal cause.

It is up to CLAIR and the JET interviewers to determine the true intent of each applicant. Most importantly, it is CLAIR's responsibility to construct tangible guidelines regarding missionary JETs.

**Is sharing one's beliefs
regarding Christianity
analogous to explaining St. Patrick's Day
to students and co-workers in Japan?**

ing Christianity analogous to and co-workers in Japan? Is culture such as Japan's where such direct discussion can

(Continued from page 14)

festivalgoers alike.

This one episode, while small compared to the many other stories recounted in *Brokered Homeland*, offers a suggestion of what positive developments might be waiting in the future of a multicultural, multiethnic Japan that honors the differences among the various segments of its population. For *nikkeijin* in particular, it might yet become a homeland – only in ways they'd never expected

IMPRESS YOUR FRIENDS!

WRITE FOR THE JETAA NY NEWSLETTER

**EMAIL Steven at newsletter@jetaany.org or Jody at
editor@jetaany.org**



FILM REVIEW

by Co-Editor Jody Mousseau



RINGU

(1998, Video)

When I was in Japan as a JET, I heard endless critiques about the great, new modern horror film *Ringu* directed by Hideo Nakata. After *The Ring* came out in late 2002, *Ringu* was released on subtitled video in the U.S. For this issue's film review, I wanted to see what the hype for the original *Ringu* was about.

The film begins with two high school girls discussing a mysterious video that they have heard some kids have watched and then died seven days later. One curious journalist, Tomoko, played by Miki Nakatani, decides to investigate the strange phenomenon (that apparently nobody else has yet decided to investigate), and gets caught up in the dangers of the video and the mystery of *Ringu*. Nakatani delivers a good performance, although her acting seems a bit overdramatic in several scenes.

One downside of hype is that after all the type has been made and expectations raised, that the actual product usually can't live up to the hyped-up version. *Ringu* is no exception. Although *Ringu* sets up a solid plot, it does not fit the great horror movie genre that many Japanese directors have mastered. The film drags on slowly in certain parts, setting the viewer up for the next scene while giving them time to read the paper.

Despite its failure to live up to the reputation that it had as a "really scary Japanese movie" just a few years ago, *Ringu* offers a more interesting storyline than the 2003 American remake *The Ring*. Although many components of the story are the same and the characters parallel, Naomi Watts, who plays the same character as Miki Nakatani in *The Ring*, gives a relatively flat performance without much passion when compared to Nakatani. The relationship between Nakatani and an emotionally distant absentee father in *Ringu* is much different than the parallel relationship between Watts and her co-star in *The Ring*. However, interestingly enough, both relationships maintain the plots of the movie and the idiosyncracies of romantic relationships in each culture. And as for the ending, *Ringu* brings the whole story together much more dramatically and with significantly more suspense than the American remake *The Ring*.

Although *Ringu* was not as suspenseful of a viewing

experience as anticipated, the screenplay is certainly an original concept. *Ringu* deserves two and a half stars, somewhere in between *ma ma* and *omoshiroi*, for its effort and originality.

MYSTERY TRAIN

(1989, Video)

Mystery Train, an American flick directed by Jim Jarmusch, is a set of three different stories that occur simultaneously in Memphis. But fret not. American film it is, but it does have a Japan connection. The first story in the set is about a young couple from Yokohama who travel to Memphis to visit Graceland and other landmarks that pay tribute to music greats.

The first scene when the Japanese couple arrives at the Memphis train station accurately sets the tone for their relationship, which in a sense seems to be typical of many Japanese relationships. The gender roles are slightly adjusted, however, when the young couple travels to the U.S. and the woman is the only one who can understand any English. On the flip side, although she has the upper hand in communicating with outside parties during their travels, the relationship exclusively between the two in Japanese is controlled primarily by the man.

Although the movie has a Japan connection and is genius in how the stories are linked together, the dry plot moves unexceptionally slowly. Some scenes have a better-than-average merit, including a curiously funny scene where the Japanese couple engages in a unique sort of "debate" about who was better, Elvis or Carl Perkins. And the cinematography is interestingly developed. However, although the ending loosely ties the three stories together, the movie still seems as if it should be broken up into three different short films independent of each other.

Based on the lack of a consistent and interesting storyline in the film, and lack of a "good" ending, *Mystery Train* gets a *ma ma* rating of two stars.

Rosie Reviews

BROKERED HOMELAND: Japanese-Brazilian Migrants in Japan

Author: Joshua Hokata Roth (Reviewed by Rosie DeFremery)

Joshua Hotaka Roth, author of the recently published *Brokered Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Migrants in Japan* and an American of Japanese descent, describes this quasi-homecoming experience as motivated by “expectations of self-understanding.” Roth explains that at first he did not identify himself as Japanese-American, “but rather as someone whose mother happened to be Japanese,” only later coming to identify himself as *nikkeijin*. However, his transition of self-discovery stands unique when viewed in the light of the fact that he made it alongside Brazilians of Japanese descent, many of whom shared his curiosity about how they would be received in the country of their ancestry.

Nikkeijin were initially thought to be more desirable than other foreign workers because they shared Japanese blood and therefore were essentially Japanese, so government immigration policy was constructed around this premise. This opened the door to large numbers of *nikkeijin*, many of whom very much wanted to feel a sense of belonging in what could be referred to as the *bokoku*, or mother country, whose idealized descriptions they’d heard from parents and grandparents. Some identified with the suffering of Japanese during World War II, having known great hardships themselves as immigrants. Called *Japonês* by other Brazilians, they wondered if they would indeed find common ground with the Japanese they would meet. Their relationships with Japanese, as it would turn out, would often be colored by economic and social factors at play within the workplace.

Roth conducted the majority of his field work for *Brokered Homeland* in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture, which is home to the largest population of Brazilians in Japan. Known for the industrial giants which had their start there – Suzuki, Yamaha and Honda among them – Hamamatsu experienced a nearly 400% boom in foreign-born residents since the late 1980s. Of those, Roth notes, “nearly 70% were *Nikkeijin* from Brazil and Peru” and “most of them worked for subcontractors that supplied parts to the larger manufacturers.” While most Japanese would have a direct relationship with their employers as full-time workers, “*Nikkeijin* were generally hired through intermediary employment brokers – terms of employment that put *Nikkeijin* in a distinctly marginal position in relation to Japanese workers.”

Roth witnessed the dynamics of this relationship firsthand while working on the assembly line of a motor company’s manufacturing plant. Some Japanese workers there complained about the Brazilians’ lack of a strong work ethic, declaring that they “should live by Japanese rules and not expect special treatment.” There was a perception that the *nikkeijin* and other foreign workers were paid well despite their lack of skill and motivation, and so Japanese workers who were already disappointed at their lack of advancement within the company might turn their frustrations towards the foreign workers. (Those who read David McConnell’s *Importing Diversity*, a survey of the JET Program’s early years, will note similarities in complaints voiced by some JTEs who found it disturbing that brand-new college graduates with no teaching experience could draw comfortable wages, ostensibly because they were foreign, while young, new Japanese teachers were awarded much lower salaries.)

However, *nikkeijin* did not necessarily enjoy benefits equal to their Japanese counterparts. By virtue of their status as temporary brokered workers, *nikkeijin* often found themselves the first to be laid off – if not by the company, then by the employment agency itself. In a country which had prided itself on the virtues of lifetime employment,

these workers found themselves an expendable commodity which could be done away with when economic conditions became less favorable. They were physically and visually segregated using a variety of means, housed in separate dormitories, required to bathe in separate washrooms, and given different hats and uniforms. Despite this, Roth claims, it was only after disagreements involving workplace injury compensation and other such serious matters that *nikkeijin* became disillusioned with their treatment in Japanese society.

Considering the liminal status of these workers, Roth writes, “the system of employment brokers also relieved manufacturing firms of the legal obligations toward their employees,” and so many employers would not offer health insurance to their foreign employees. Interestingly, some local governments including the Hamamatsu city government stepped in to offer health insurance (local or national) where none was available to *Nikkeijin* workers. After this practice took hold, the Ministry of Health and Welfare issued a memo in 1994 advising local governments to have workers to obtain such benefits directly from their employers instead. This did not often result in increased accessibility to such benefits for the workers in question. Some *nikkeijin*, faced with exclusion of this sort, wondered why their Japanese heritage did not gain them greater admittance into Japanese society and began to turn their eyes longingly back to Brazil.

Ironically, it was often those *nikkeijin* who identified so strongly with Brazil who stayed in Japan, forming their own community. Although they had originally arrived with the purpose of saving money and returning to Brazil, in later years *nikkeijin* opted to adopt a slightly more consumerist lifestyle so that they might more fully enjoy themselves in Japan. Signs of their intention to stay became evident even in the local Portuguese-language papers. In one telling example of a trend towards long-term residence in Japan, the Portuguese paper *Nova Visão* began publishing at least one page of articles in Japanese using simple kanji for Brazilians and Japanese interested in Brazil.

Building on the interest in celebrating things Brazilian within Japan, a *nikkeijin* named Luís Horikawa established the Hamamatsu Brazilian Culture Center, which he envisioned as a community space in which Brazilians could gather and honor those traits and influences which made them distinct from the larger culture – precisely because they intended to stay in Japan as a distinct ethnic minority within Japanese society. The Center offered classes in Japanese language, samba, guitar, and *oshibana* (pressed flowers), and it even organized a massive celebration on Brazilian Independence Day which drew over 1,000 participants and spectators. Although the Center eventually folded due to lack of financial stability, its very existence demonstrated that Brazilians were forming their own self-sufficient community rather than returning to Brazil, as they originally planned on doing, or assimilating into Japanese society.

On the Japanese side of things, interestingly enough, there were some developments which encouraged the expression of a distinctly Brazilian identity. In those instances, it was Japanese blue-collar workers who of nationality and identified with their Brazilian coworkers through their shared class status. During the Hamamatsu Kite Festival, one Japanese man named Kimpara successfully lobbied for the incorporation of samba into his neighborhood association’s celebration to great success, greatly pleasing Japanese and Brazilian

(Continued on page 12)

THE "FATE & FAME" ISSUE TOP 14!

There are many things we wish we'd never said. And yet they were destined to be said and fated to appear in this Newsletter. And now destiny calls with...

THE TOP 14 STATEMENTS JETS WISH THEY'D NEVER MADE

14. One year's enough for me, thanks. I should be able to earn just as much when I get home. (2002)
13. Why sure, I've got a few moments to help you with your English while we ride the train. (1988-2002)
12. Hey buddy! Yeah, you with all the tattoos! (1993)
11. You're on! Another tall glass of *show-choo* for me. (Every year)
10. See, if you hold up two fingers like this when I take the picture, all my friends back home will know that Japan's a peaceful country. (1987)
9. Yamaichi Securities is giving away *tamagotchis*? Heck, I guess I'll invest all my money with them. (1994)
8. A delicacy? Well then it must be good. I'll take a plateful.
7. How can I explain "tv antennae"? Let's see. Hand me that bowl of rice and those chopsticks... (1990)
6. No, I'll be fine sitting *seiza* for the whole tea ceremony. "When in Rome..." as I always say.
5. Nobody really uses the word "should" in normal English. Let's change the phrase in the textbook to "you had better." (1986)
4. My friend at Stanford wants me to invest in some yahoo computer company his friend started. But I think I'll just spend my JET savings on a trip to Guam when I leave. (1997)
3. Finally, I've found a "health club" in this podunk town. And in *this* neighborhood of all places.
2. I'm tired and low on cash. Let's just stop in at this "pub" for a cheap beer. (1988)
1. What you guys need for your karaoke machine are a few good Carpenters' tunes. Here, take my CD. (1988)



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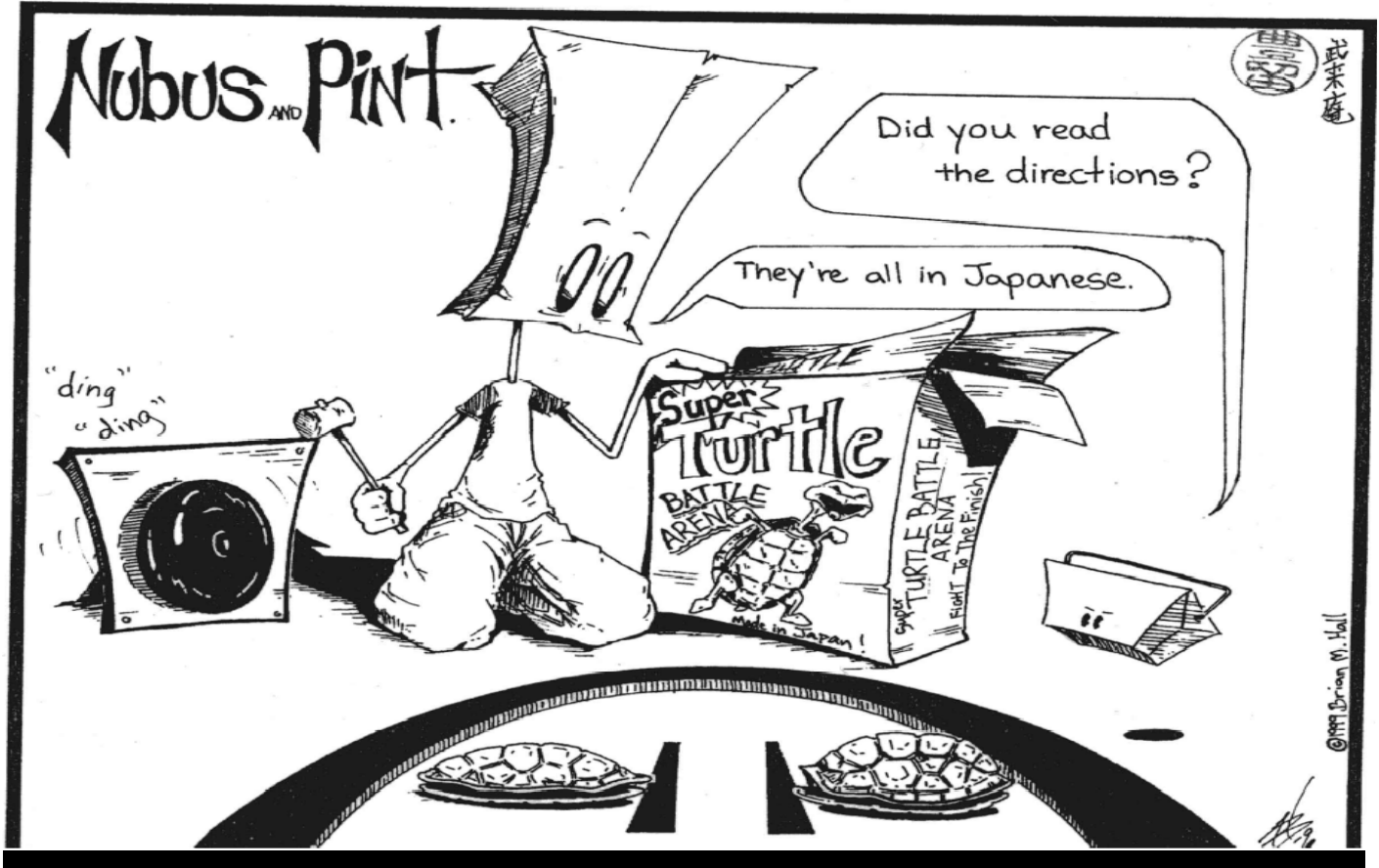
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