

# JETAA.NY

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

Vol. 13, Issue 2

SPRING/SUMMER 2004

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### SLOW BOAT FROM CHINA

Columnist Nate Hall is currently in transit between China and Texas but will be back in the next issue.



## THE FIRST-EVER JET ALUMNI PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SURVEY

*The results are in! If the U.S. Presidential Election were held tomorrow, and only JET alums (including Canadians) with e-mail access who actually responded to the survey were allowed to vote, John Kerry would beat George W. Bush and Ralph Nader in a landslide.*

*Here are the overall totals along with comments from your fellow JET alums and a breakdown of JET alum survey results by state.*

*Many thanks to all of the JET alums who participated in this survey.*

BUSH ★ 11 ★	KERRY ★ 72 ★	NADER ★ 2 ★	NEITHER ★ 1 ★
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### WHAT DID YOUR FELLOW JET ALUMS HAVE TO SAY? READ ON...

Thanks for asking! I will be voting in November to reelect President Bush. Although I do not agree with him on every issue, I know that he will be able to continue to attack terrorism and, hopefully, eventually, we will all live in a more peaceful world, more like the life we knew prior to September 11, 2001.

\*\*\*\*\*

Basically, I would vote for Woody Woodpecker if he was the Democratic candidate. As long as Bush is not president for another god-awful four years, I will be satisfied.

*("Comments" Continued on page 10)*

### CROSSING THE LINE?

*Is the JET Alumni Newsletter an appropriate format for a political survey? And where's the line delineating what constitutes a legitimately JET-relevant topic?*

*Two JET alums felt moved to raise just this question, and others may have felt similarly.*

*First is a response by Dave Dillon, a JETAA Portland chapter representative, printed with his permission, after the survey was posted to the JETAA Chapter Representative user group and chapter reps were requested to forward the survey to their respective members.*

*"This must be the worst idea ever hatched by a JETAA organization. It is apropos of nothing*

*("Crossing" Continued on page 11)*

**The "Politics" Issue**

I know, I know. We're not supposed to discuss politics in polite company.

So why the Bush/Kerry survey even though JETAA is not a political organization per se?

Well, high-minded ideals aside about facilitating communication and being active citizens in a participatory democracy, the real motivation more or less boils down to curiosity and what seemed like a fun project, especially in an election year (which should reassure people to some extent since we can't do it again for four years.) Plus we're only four months away from one of the more dramatic and impassioned elections in U.S. history, and we've all got politics on our mind.

How would JET alums react to a politically sensitive survey? How many would respond? What would they say? And who's out there in the JETAA-sphere whom we might not otherwise come into contact with?

This survey helped answer some of those questions. Plus it's a nice lead-in to some of the other wonderful articles in this issue about our own JET alums involved in the political arena in various ways.

This is what democracy looks like. And if it's not quite the way you like it, then you're welcome to write a letter (to the Newsletter or your rep in Congress) or perhaps even run for Newsletter Editor next time around.

*Steven Horowitz*

**CORRECTION**

In the Spring 2004 Issue, the JETAA NY Newsletter incorrectly referred to the Heartland JETAA chapter as the "JETAA Midwest" chapter. Additionally, Wyoming is not part of Heartland JETAA. The six states covered are South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. Heartland JETAA's new website is [www.heartlandjetaa.org](http://www.heartlandjetaa.org).

*(See a mistake in the Newsletter? Email [newsletter@jetaany.org](mailto:newsletter@jetaany.org))*



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Please check out e-mail from our Secretary and the web site [www.jetaany.org](http://www.jetaany.org) for updated announcements.

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**JETAA NEW YORK SOCIETY PAGE**by **Yoku Shitteiru**

It's been such a long time since we spoke last Winter, and now, *yappari*, it's already Spring/Summer, Yoku Shitteiru's favorite season!



First stop of Sprummer was the Upper West Side for some New York *hanami* (pictured left).

Meanwhile, I don't know if holding a JETAA officer position is the equivalent of *hana-yomei junbi* (a/k/a Spousal Prep Course 101), but former JETAA NY

Secretary Clara Kuhlman now answers to **Clara Solomon** as of the end of May, and former JETAA NY Vice-President **Bryan Sherman** tied the knot only days ago. No doubt they both timed their wedding dates to qualify them for mention in the JETAA Society Page. *Omedetou gozaimashita* y'all!

In other news, JETAA NY is happy to announce that Treasurer **Jo Sonido** was selected as one of the two JETAA Country Representatives for the U.S. along with **Michael Barrett** of the Portland chapter. Jo succeeds the wonderful and talented fellow New Yorker **Nicole Bongiorno**.

Keeping with a developing JETAA New York tradition, June saw the third annual summer happy hour at the **Bohemian Beer Garden** in Little Harajuku (aka Astoria). Social Coordinator **Matt Jungblut** got the party rolling early with a 1pm starting time, and by 3pm JET around 50 JET alums took over half of the tables. **Drew Barnes**, **Scott Hiniker**, and birthday girl **Rosie De-**

**fremery** served well on the unofficial welcoming committee. Unfortunately no surprise appearance from the mythical **John Sandoval**.

Meanwhile, our nation's capital just hosted an excellent **JETAA National Conference**, with two reps in attendance from nearly every chapter, including Hawaii. In addition to great organization and productive discussions, JETAA announced the winner of the logo design contest (look down and left) which was designed by NY's very own **Heather Dega**. Rumor has it the Newsletter has approached Heather with a six-figure offer to re-design the Newsletter layout.



Back on the home front, New York just finished getting the new JETs ready with Pre-Departure Orientation at the **Nippon Club**. Official All-Around Good Guy and Future TV Celebrity **Janak Bhimani** kept things lively as MC for the day, along with keynote speaker **Michael Auslin**, an assistant history teacher at Yale, and **Jane Hyun**, who led a

creative and well-received career planning discussion. Special thanks to the **JLGC** for the *cho-beri-oishii sanuki udon* demonstration. And *ganbatte* to all the new JETs! Hopefully the post-Orientation Happy Hour at **Faces & Names** taught you some things the Orientation might not have about surviving in Japan.

*Sore de ha*, that's all for this issue. Time to start collecting more stories for the next one.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LEGAL RESPONSE

To the Editor:

I read Brian Hersey's article on a legal career after JET ("*Law Careers After JET*," *Fall 2003 Issue*) with much interest. I found it very informative and entertaining. However, I fear that in his attempt at humor (and it was funny), Brian may have unnecessarily discouraged a potential law student from taking the law school "plunge." Law Review from Harvard and a Supreme Court clerkship are not requirements to work at a top tier firm. As a law school grad now working as a first year associate at one of the 100 largest law firms in America (called the "Am Law 100"; also referred to as "Big Law") (although, I have yet to be admitted to the Bar of New York... or any state for that matter) I can definitely confirm that I did not get to Harvard Law and I was not on law review.

When deciding which law school to attend, I was always aware of my desire to work at a firm that practices International Law. I had given strong consideration to attending the University of Hawaii, because, on top of the amazing weather, the law school had a special program in Asian Legal Studies. However, after much internal struggle I decided to stay in New York and attend Fordham Law School, a good school with a strong regional reputation. I knew that if I attended Fordham, I would have a considerably better chance at placing at a large New York firm. Had I chosen to attend Hawaii, I fear that my recruitment chances at an Am Law 100 firm would have been considerably reduced. However, following that same logic, my chances of placing at a Hawaiian firm would have been much greater. Am Law 100 firms tend to be in the

New York, Boston, DC, Chicago, LA, and San Francisco areas, and within that group New York more or less stands out as the "law capital of America."

I guess what I'm trying to say is, if you want to work in International Law, and you want to get transferred to a Tokyo office some day, Brian is 100% correct in recommending that you should try to become an attorney at a top-tier firm. Gain as much experience as you can, and, stay away from litigation. With the exception of very few US firms, litigation work is not done in Tokyo, and when it is done, its done by Japanese lawyers at the firms, not Americans (two firms that do litigate in Japan are White & Case and Morrison & Forrester.) Therefore, if you really want to be at a Tokyo office, you should set out to be a transactional lawyer (again, repeating exactly what Brian said.) Just to clear things up, transactional lawyers are also known as corporate lawyers. Transactional lawyers do not go to court (unless they did something bad.) Transactional lawyers help their clients with corporate matters such as listing on a public stock exchange, floating a bond, or filing documents with the Securities Exchange Commission.

Now, as far as what law school you should attend, the answer is a definite, "It depends." First off, it should be stressed that due to the still shaky state of the world economy, many very bright individuals were recently laid off, and as a result, law school and business school applications are being filled out at a phenomenal rate. It is tough to get into a law school today, especially a law school with a national reputation. However, if possible, it is always best to go to such a law school, be it Harvard, Yale, Columbia, NYU or Stanford (

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as well as several others.) However, if like the overwhelming majority of law school applicants, you do not get accepted by a "top-10 law school" (whatever that means) then your second best bet is to attend a strong regional school in one of the legal centers I mentioned above. In particular, it is important to attend a school in the region that you want to practice. If that region is not in the list above, have no fear, this is a big country and there are good lawfirms everywhere. For example, if you decide that you'd rather be in the mid-west, you might want to go to a strong regional school in Minnesota. Minneapolis is home to the nationally respected firm of Dorsey & Whitney, which has as a partner, former Vice President and former US Ambassador to Japan, Walter Mondale. As a result, the firm has a very strong Japan practice.



York City. I won't go into a discussion of which is better than which; do your own diligence, but be acutely aware, that although they all will give you a top notch education, they do not all open the same windows or doors of opportunity. Unfortunately, "big law"

can be a touch elitist at times. However, I can confidentially say that you won't have much of a problem placing out of NYU or Columbia, and your chances won't be that bad out of Fordham either. Furthermore, students that perform well at Brooklyn, Cardozo, New York Law and St. John's also often place at large New York firms. All

these New York City law schools have developed strong alumni bases. As a result, the alumni look out for "their own." In that way, if you are accepted by a "higher ranked" (I put that in quotes again, because ranking can be VERY arbitrary) school in another region that is not considered "National" but you intend on practicing in New York, you may be better off just staying in New York

Furthermore, even if you go to a large international firm without a Tokyo office (like me), all hope is not lost if you still have your heart set on that transfer. Lateral movements between firms are very common in "big law", and furthermore, after 3 or 4 years of practicing corporate law, you may decide that your interests have changed. Additionally, if you don't snag that first "big law" job straight out of law school, again, hope is not lost. Keep on looking at smaller firms that do transactional work and after a couple of years, if you're still interested and the opportunity presents itself, just move to a larger firm.

Before signing off, I would like to again thank Brian Hersey for his initial article on legal careers for JETs.

Respectfully,  
Tony Andriotis

If you're intent on staying in the New York area, the good news is that New York has no shortage of law schools. Due to the competitiveness of the New York legal market, I would recommend all the law schools in New

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## RUNNING IN PARADISE

### Nadine Nishioka Bids for Public Office in Hawaii



*Former JETAA Hawaii President Nadine Nishioka is running for State Legislature in Hawaii. As far as we know, this is the highest office ever sought by any JET alumni. The Newsletter caught up with Nadine to ask her about how her JET experience and upbringing in Hawaii led her to pursue a career in public service.*

#### **JETAANY Newsletter: How did you get involved in politics?**

**Nadine Nishioka:** Although my family always had an interest in politics, I personally never really had any interest in it other than casting my vote for whichever candidate I believed had my best interest in mind. And now, I will be making my second run for office.

Two years ago, the Republican Party contacted me to run for office because the seat would be vacated. I originally had no desire to seek political office but decided to make a run for the seat because I believed our district would otherwise be inadequately represented. I received over 40% of the votes and decided it was too close to not try again this time.

I have been an active volunteer in my community and am a neighborhood board member. I am also a board member on three prominent non-profit organizations dedicated to the people of this state. I have lived in my community for over 35 years and although I lived in Japan while on the JET Program and later as a private consultant, I remained a tax-paying citizen of Hawaii and my community.

However, the number one reason why I am running again is because Hawaii's legislators no longer have the interest of the people in mind. It has become an extremely partisan driven legislature and change is needed.

#### **JN: Is it difficult running as a Republican in a traditionally Democratic state?**

**NN:** Yes, we are traditionally a very Democratic state. However, most of the "Plantation Democrats" have conservative values and many citizens of Hawaii are quite disappointed with how their party no longer represents the majority views, values, and integrity of this state. There needs to be a two party system. Hawaii residents have spoken by electing the first Republican governor in 40 years. However, the Democrat majority in both the Senate and the House have been extremely partisan in cutting off the governor's executive power in many "new" pieces legislation introduced this past session. It has left many people angry, including myself.

I know Democrat and Republican have certain meanings on the Mainland. But as Tip O'Neill used to say, "All politics is local." In Hawaii, the dynamics of Democrat and Republican are very different. This by no means is an indication that we here in Hawaii are ignorant of issues nationwide. Certainly many Democrats and Republicans here in Hawaii share the view of their national counterparts. But speaking for myself, I am a moderate Republican who was brought up with Hawaii's democratic values, ethics and integrity instilled in me by my great grandparents, grandparents and parents.

#### **JN: Do you have a role model?**

**NN:** My role model is Ronald Reagan. During our GOP State convention two weeks ago, it was sadly announced that President Reagan had passed away. I had to give a speech right after the announcement of his passing and although it was difficult, I paid tribute to Presi-

dent Reagan in an impromptu speech talking about how he inspired me to become a Young Republican while attending college in Massachusetts. Though I came from a fairly Democrat-oriented family (my third cousin is Senior Senator Daniel Inouye), I was impressed with President Reagan's sincere appreciation for the country he lived in and how he treated people with respect equally regardless of race, religion, education or economic status.

#### **JN: What are your goals?**

**NN:** My political goal is an easy one. Stay committed to the constituents in my district and the people of this State. When a "politician" becomes too involved with him/herself, they become too self-absorbed in moving up the political ladder and making political connections to "take care" of them when they retire from their political life. I have no desire to be a "politician." We have too many of them as is. My goal and desire is to be a Statesperson. (I believe there is a significant difference between the two). I would like to break the current stereotype of what a legislator is and does; hence, my job will be to represent the best interests of my constituents. I am seeking a seat in the House of Representatives so that I can do just that, represent everyone in my district equally and with respect to their needs.

#### **JN: What are some of the issues facing your district?**

**NN:** "Ice" or Methamphetamine, is a major problem in our state. Although I live in a middle- to upper-income area of this state, it is very evident that the "ice epidemic" is moving into *all* neighborhoods, regardless of race, religion, or economic status. Many residents in my district are unaware that there is a problem in our own communities and action must and needs to be taken immediately.

Education is always a major issue of any election, and this year's election is no exception. Money is continuously wasted on things other than the children and their basic and specific needs (i.e., books, tables, chairs, etc.). "Megan's Law" and the Rape Shield are other highly significant issues prevalent in this election.

#### **JN: Has your JET experience been relevant?**

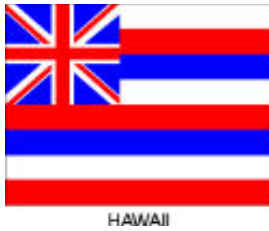
Because Hawaii has a strong Asian influence, my experience on the JET Program has enhanced my ability to understand and work with people of all cultures. As I have said time and time again, Hawaii JETs' are fortunate to live in a State where Japanese customs are practiced on a daily basis regardless of race or ethnicity. Additionally, like my experience planning and teaching classes on JET, running a campaign is extremely hard work and takes a lot of patience and dedication from everyone involved. Working together is the key to success, which was the goal while I was on the JET Program, and is the key to victory on November 2.

#### **JN: Has your work with the JET Alumni Association been helpful?**

**JN:** Yes, some JET alums have helped with the campaign, and occasionally I'll meet someone who says "Hey, I was on the JET Program" or "My son just started on the JET Program." But since JET and the Japan Society are non-political organizations, I want to make clear that I do not seek assistance from them.

Some JET alums have helped with canvassing and with "sign waving," which is a unique political tradition in Hawaii. Throughout the state, candidates and their supporters stand on busy intersections

*(Continued on page 7)*



(*"Hawaii"* Continued from page 6)

and streets waving their campaign signs. It sounds like a traffic hazard, but it is an accepted tradition (for the most part). Supporters wear t-shirts with the candidate's name, and the candidate wears a suit with a lei. I go out there rain or shine.

My involvement with JET, however, is only one part of my long-time involvement with community service. In addition to my work with JETAA and with the Japan Society, I've volunteered with the Boys & Girls Club for many years, and I serve on the Board of Directors for Hawaii Literacy, the Lions' Club, and the Community Center, which serves over 30,000 citizens. It's through this work that people in my community know me.

**JN: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

**NN:** I do not want, nor is it my intention, to offend anyone's views or opinions. I respect each individual's beliefs, and I thank JETAA Newsletter and its readers for the opportunity to share my reasons for entering the political arena and sharing my political aspirations and motivation here in Hawaii.

Aloha and Mahalo,

Nadine Nishioka  
Candidate, State House of Representatives, District 24 (R)

*Want to keep up on Nadine's progress? Check out [www.nadinenishioka.com](http://www.nadinenishioka.com) starting in July.*

(Continued from "Film Review" page 14)

film occurs when Miyuki and her father accidentally cross each other on opposing trains during rush hour. The father wants to reach out for forgiveness and reconciliation but cannot in the madness and congestion of modern Tokyo.

The conclusion won't be spoiled in this review, except to say that it is unconvincing and contrived. Not that the audience should care by that point. Nothing much happens in terms of plot and a series of episodes, such as a subplot involving gangsters and an immigrant family, is simply filler and serves no useful end. One imagines what could have been if Kon had explored the immigrant family's past – they have also left their home in search of something – and woven it into his plot in order to give it a dramatic thrust.

On the positive side, *Tokyo Godfathers* offers some visually appealing backdrops. Tokyo is both a menacing and comforting presence in the film. The city's ugly modernism, including railroad tracks, telephone wires and cemented river banks are contrasted with the white falling snow and Christmas-like neon lights of Shinjuku. Even the warm orange glow of Tokyo Tower takes on an inviting look. Overall, one wishes that Satoshi Kon had found more suitable subject matter and a stronger narrative for his visual sensibilities.

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In the Summer 2003 Issue, the Newsletter interviewed JET Alum and Brooklyn native Anthony Bianchi who had just been elected as a city council member in Inuyama City, Aichi Prefecture, making him the first ever North American to hold an elected position in Japan.

So how is he doing?

Many JET Alums wanted to know. So we asked him to write a letter to let us know what he's been up to.

May 23, 2004



## A Councilman Grows in Inuyama

An update from Brooklyn's Own Anthony Bianchi

mation and greater openness – *johokokai*. The reason for this is that I believe in the wisdom of the citizens, and that collectively the citizens know better than anyone else what is best for the city. However, no one can make informed decisions without ample information.

I made this the point of

犬山市議会議員

ピアンキ アンソニー



Dear JETAA NY Newsletter,

How have you been? It's hard to believe that I'm already in the second year of my term and that almost a year has passed since we meet last at Brooklyn Borough Hall. As you might imagine things have been hectic. I thought I'd write and give you a few random thoughts to let you know how things have been going.

I find that I must really make an effort to keep focused on the things I wanted to accomplish as a council member, while also being responsive to the needs of individual citizens and new challenges and issues that come along.

my first speech on the council floor. I suggested broadcasting the council meetings to allow the people greater access to the issues the council was dealing with and how those issues were being dealt with. There was some resistance to this, and an attempt to block my question – ostensibly on rule of order. Luckily, this is such a self-evident issue with which most agreed, or at least realized it would be difficult to not agree, and the council meetings are now on the internet for viewing on demand. (If you're having a hard time sleeping some night have a look.)

For example, one of the things I stressed in my campaign was freedom of infor-

(See "Bianchi" Continued on page 12)

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## THE WHITE-GLOVED GAIJIN

A JET Alum Recounts His Days Campaigning in Japan  
by Scott Hiniker

My wife and I flew back to Japan last fall to take part in her father's campaign for mayor. The town of Okutsu-cho in northern Okayama-ken is my wife's birthplace and also the birthplace of her father and grandfather. After the previous town mayor had been recalled because of poor performance, my father-in-law seized this opportunity to run for office. His campaign had been underway for months, yet it seemed that only I wouldn't be able to join because of work obligations. When my wife explained that just she could come, her father surprisingly said that it was more important to have me attend, because it is better for a candidate's image to be surrounded by male supporters rather than female ones. Although I did finally get the time I needed to take the trip to Japan, we decided that we could have some fun if she didn't tell her father that I would also be there. We wanted to surprise him instead.

It was a long journey back as usual. We made it to Okutsu the day before Election Day. After I walked in and completely surprised my mother-in-law, she wanted to help us surprise my father-in-law. She



called him at the campaign headquarters to tell him to come home because a visitor had arrived. He didn't suspect anything unusual about her phone call, because during the campaign many townsfolk would drop-by the house to discuss town business, the campaign, etc. When he opened the guestroom door to find us as his visitor, he was totally surprised and pleased at the same time. After a long night of catching-up and talking about the plan for tomorrow, we had to get some sleep to be ready for the big day.

There was a very large cast of supporters on Election Day. Our job that day was to motivate people in town to get out and vote for our man for mayor. To do this, we occupied three large vehicles with the lead car boasting a loud speaker strapped to its roof. Family sat in the lead car and my wife worked the loudspeaker. We all wore badges around our arms and the official white gloves of campaign time. When people heard our caravan outside their homes, many would come outside to show support. My father-in-law would then hop out of the car – sometimes as it was still moving – dash towards them, bow, exchange appreciation, and then dash back. This occurred for hours as we drove to every part of town. It seemed that I waved and hollered "yoroshiku" from the window to a thousand people. As you can imagine, my favorite moment was always when the townsfolk realized it was a "gaijin" in the back seat with the white gloves on! Fortunately, I think many of the townsfolk already knew my face, because our wedding had been held in town just four months earlier and since several members of my family came, you can imagine the commotion that followed.

Becoming mayor of town had been my father-in-law's dream. He worked his whole career in town hall where he led several initiatives

to raise the standard of life in Okutsu. For example, he supervised construction of the most beautiful Onsen resort in Okayama-ken, called Hana-Bijin. Also, in the wintertime when the snow falls heavily, nowadays, adventurers from the big cities travel to this small town to enjoy "Snowmobile Land" - the genesis of... you guessed it, my father-in-law! His ideas generated a lot of tourism revenue for which the people in town were grateful. After so many years of duty to the town, my father-in-law was encouraged to run for mayor.

Once the voting booths closed on Election Day, we waited for the official results at the campaign headquarters. People continued to come by to talk with the candidate during this time. It was the job of the family members to greet with warm tea and candy all who came to show their support. Many guests stayed for hours with the hope of being there when the result became official and the party got started I guessed. When the announcement came that he had won the election, nobody cued Kool & the Gang's "Celebrate"(in case you were wondering), but the mood was upbeat while supporters gathered for toasts, gave speeches, and posed for pictures. It was one of the most memorable days of my life and I was happy to have been included as one of the family. I kept the white gloves too!



**Newsletter Public Service Announcement**

**YOU HAD BETTER GET INVOLVED**

**WRITE FOR THE**  
**JETAA NEW YORK NEWSLETTER**

("Comments" Continued from page 1)

\*\*\*\*\*

Neither option is good. We have a choice between someone who wants to control our personal lives and someone who wants to control our economic lives (and, of course, the two cannot be separated.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Basically Bush frightens me, so while I know little about Kerry, the choice is more "not Bush."

\*\*\*\*\*

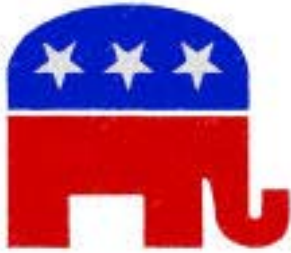
Bush is a man of convictions, regardless of the daily struggles to achieve them. Kerry is a man of no convictions, attempting to please everyone. A true leader is willing to take the difficulties with the rewards, and Bush is a true leader.

\*\*\*\*\*

I'd have to go with Kerry. Bush has disgraced himself, his own country, and is now slowly working on his allies.

\*\*\*\*\*

While Kerry may not be the optimum Democratic candidate, I fail to understand how any educated individual could fail to choose him over the disastrous alternative. How can we re-elect a President who has done nothing since he came to office except purposefully divide the country, and carelessly squander the abundant goodwill and sympathy the world had for us after 9/11? How can we elect a President who would consider amending our sacred Constitution to take away people's rights and who seeks to forcibly inject religion into our proud



secular tradition? How can we elect a President who has sacrificed American lives in combat so that his supporters can reap financial benefits? As a former Republican, I have left the party because I am sickened by the devil-may-care attitude of this administration.



\*\*\*\*\*

Honestly, I don't much care for Bush at times (I'm a registered Libertarian), but he's a far better choice than Kerry. Kerry's inconsistency to even answer simple questions about himself (was it ribbons or medals? does he own an SUV or doesn't he?) makes me deeply suspicious of him. In a word, I don't trust him. I don't agree with Bush all the time, but at least with him I know what I'm getting. Bush's consistency (both good & bad) is a stark contrast to Kerry's lack of ability to take a consistent stand on anything.

\*\*\*\*\*

Kerry, of course, because outside the USA, Bush is seen by most people as more of a threat to world security than Al Qaeda. He and his cohorts have thoroughly squandered the good will felt toward the United States after the tragic events of 9/11. The Japanese government may back Bush's policies, but the people here, in general, do not. It is, frankly, one of the most embarrassing times to be an American abroad. We are working hard here to get people to vote with absentee ballots. I ask all Americans in the USA to vote and vote wisely in November.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bush has proven he can make critical decisions in a timely manner. He has made clear his moral values and is predictable.

("Comments" Continued on page 11)



**AKEBONO SAYS:**

*I voted for Matsui.*

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## THE METHOD

*How was the JET Alumni Presidential Election Survey conducted?*

The survey was simple and straightforward: Bush or Kerry? Some JET alums decided to go outside the box, but then if you went on JET you never followed the regular crowd anyway.

The results are obviously pretty unscientific and purely anecdotal. And the survey was open to all JET alums, not just Americans.

We used several different electronic channels for getting the survey out to the worldwide JET alum community. We started with the New York chapter, then sent the survey question out to the Newsletter editors Yahoo group, and then to the JETAA Chapter Representative Yahoo group. After that it was pretty self-selecting. People who felt so moved sent us an email, and some offered short comments.

Was it an appropriate use of JETAA communication channels? Not everyone felt it was. (See elsewhere on this page.)

However, on another level it turned into a terrific experiment in how to communicate with the larger JET alumni community. Special thanks to all the chapter reps and other conduits who helped with the communication process.



*("Crossing" Continued from page 1)*

central to the JETAA mission or purpose, and at best will only foment discontent among members while likely driving many of them away in the face of perceived agenda-pushing that has no place in this type of organization.

The success of organizations like JETAA is based on disciplined adherence to relevant issues and a focus on the purpose and goals of the organization. Nobody participates in JET or JETAA for any reason that has the slightest connection to presidential or other elective politics. NOBODY. There are many nice organizations that do focus on politics. I suggest that these organizations are an appropriate avenue for this kind of survey. JETAA is not among them.

The only possible outcome of this effort is damage to JETAA, most notably through the embarrassment it will cause to the local consulates and CLAIR who fund the organization. "

*In response to a follow-up e-mail:*

"I don't dispute your right to do the survey, and I don't necessarily question motives (though I think doing such a survey will raise in many others' minds the question of motives). I mean no offense with my comments, but I can see the outcome producing no valuable benefit for JETAA while at the same time alienating (or worse) both participants and JETAA's Japanese government benefactors. I put my thoughts out there, so if you wish to publish them that's fine. On the other hand, if you'd rather print them out and burn them, that's fine too. Just sharing an opinion, but a strongly-held one."

*For the record, this was not the only comment questioning the appropriateness of the survey. New York JET alum Chris Doyle wrote in to say:*

"I still think that this is an issue that you should not delve into because it is a slippery slope. Why should it be of any consequence to JETAANY on how the people who choose to reply to this email vote? What goal will it accomplish? What shall be next....who is pro-choice or pro-life? It just seems to me to be an issue that is best left out of the JETAANY mission."

*The JETAA New York Newsletter welcomes additional comments which may be sent to newsletter@jetaany.org. No submissions will be used without the author's permission.*

## STATE OF THE STATE-BY-STATE BREAKDOWN

*Here's a breakdown of the geographic locations of all of the respondents. Read into it what you like, but perhaps the primary significance is simply the number of locations submitting responses.*

<b>California</b> Kerry 3	<b>Maryland</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 2	<b>Spain</b> Kerry - 1
<b>Canada</b> Kerry - 4 Nader - 1	<b>Massachusetts</b> Kerry 1	<b>Texas</b> Kerry - 1
<b>China</b> Kerry - 1	<b>Minnesota</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 2	<b>Thailand</b> Bush - 1
<b>Connecticut</b> Nader - 1	<b>Missouri</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 5	<b>Virginia</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 3
<b>Hawaii</b> Bush - 2	<b>New Jersey</b> Kerry - 3	<b>Washington</b> Kerry - 8
<b>Illinois</b> Neither - 1	<b>New York</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 24	<b>Washington DC</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 4
<b>Indiana</b> Bush - 1	<b>North Dakota</b> Kerry - 1	<b>Wisconsin</b> Kerry - 2
<b>Japan</b> Bush - 1 Kerry - 2	<b>South Carolina</b> Kerry - 1	<b>No Location Given</b> Kerry - 2
<b>Kansas</b> Kerry - 3		

*("Comments" Continued from page 10)*

Kerry on the other hand has made himself clear as simply opposing Bush, offering little of his own direction. Rather than worrying about what will be best for the USA, he is set on taking decisions to the UN, which the American public does not trust. He's also too wishy-washy - simply recall the confusion over his SUV - or was that his family's?

\*\*\*\*\*

Nader, because he doesn't receive millions of dollars from special interests therefore he doesn't owe any favors once he gets into office.

\*\*\*\*\*

I can't keep my comments about Bush limited to 5 sentences or less.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Thanks to the many other JET alums who shared their comments.*

**OFFICE POLITICS****A Not So Fond Walk Down Memory Lane***by Alexei Esikoff*

I'm bored. I showed up to work a few minutes earlier than usual so I could set up the game I invented, Krazy Karuta, for my first period *ichi-nen-sei*. It was cancelled, of course. The students have a big exam in three weeks. I was told, and we are falling behind.

I sit here, with my carefully-organized cards, in my little chair in the corner of the room. The woman next to me, who teaches gym and wears the same blue polyester track suit every single day, only sits down for lunch. The next desk across belongs to a Japanese teacher, whom everyone else seems to like but whom I never see because of the precarious tower of books that separates my desk from his.

It's just one period, I tell myself. I take out my Japanese for Busy People and learn that the word for lawyer is *bengoshi*. How useful.

First period ends and my JTE comes rushing back into the room. She's always frantically fluttering and I can't figure out why. It can't just be from the four classes worth of *ichi-nen-sei*. And how stressful can her cooking club be?

"Watanabe-sensei?" I ask tentatively, and she whips her head around. I see sweat beads gather on her forehead.

"Yes?" she asks sweetly.

(*"Bianchi" Continued from page 8*)

For some reason, many people say that they feel comfortable in coming to our office for consultation. Since there are twenty other council members who have served longer, this is a great honor and a point of pride for us. I say us, because my wife Keiko and my sister-in-law Hiromi, who works with us, are as much responsible for creating that environment as I am. Because of this we have had a chance to address other issues that are of direct concern to citizens, some of which include: the treatment of students with learning difficulties (LD), the situation of foreign students in the public school system, citizen patrols, methods of garbage collection, and the placement and allocation of street lights. Pursuing these issues along with my original ideas about freedom of information, the status of NPOs and citizen groups, education, and cultural exchange keep me more than busy.

On top of that there are the fuzzy areas, requests to attend and speak at events or write articles. I try to keep to things that are at least tangentially related to my job. I've made speeches at the AET midyear conference, Aichi Junior High School, the Gifu Ken Japan American Society, Aichi Good Will Guides (NPO) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan. I've written more articles and been interviewed in print and TV much more often than I deserve to be, but I feel if I manage these things well it will be good publicity for Inuyama City and help me to accomplish my goals. To be honest this can sometimes be fun. I've met Ambassador Baker, former Mayor Giuliani when he was in Japan, attended a reception aboard the Blue Ridge when it was in port, and attended the International Women's film festival. But, as I mentioned earlier, I try never to confuse these things with the real purpose of being a council member.

There is one good concrete thing that has come out of these social events. Aboard the Blue Ridge I met the manager of the Misonoza – the kabuki theater in Nagoya. He is interested in introducing kabuki to people from

"Is it that..." I start, trying to figure out how the most polite way to ask would be, "Is it that all *ichi-nen-sei* must study today?"

"What?...Oh, yes. It is very important for the big test."

"So I'm not going to their classes?"



This pains her physically. She smiles, but not with her eyes. This is why I always feel bad about interrupting her. "I'm very sorry. But it's very important that they study."

"Okay," I say and leave her to her perspiring.

At my desk I take my schedule and X out the two other *ichi-nen* classes I had later. I have one more left—a *san-nen-sei* sixth period. Unfortunately I have nothing interesting to prepare for them. This is because I loathe the teacher. Despite the fact that she has a real live English resource in her class, she insists on playing the tape that comes with the book. I once asked her about that.

"Fukuda-sensei, can I read the dialogue?"

(*"Office" Continued on page 13*)

other cultures. I was able to help him set up a program with the Prefecture that invites JET program participants to a free seminar about kabuki and a back stage tour and gives discount tickets to those who wish to see a performance. In the first session 20 AETs participated in the tour and seminar. In connection with this I meet Kankuro Nakamura, a famous kabuki actor. He and his troupe will be performing at Lincoln Center this July. I understand they are going to build a replica of a traditional kabuki theater in the Lincoln Center plaza. Anyway, if any NYJETAA members are interested I can get you more information.

The council meeting next month will be the first of my second year. My year of experience has made me aware of two more problems that need to be addressed. One is the balance between the bureaucracy and the council, and the second is the fiscal responsibility. I hope to begin to raise these issues at the next council session.

Well, that is what has been going on. By the way, I am helping a gentleman who is trying to bring a samurai artifacts exhibition to New York, so I may be in the city at the beginning of July. If so, I hope to see you and any of the NYJETAA members who may have some free time.

Take care,

Anthony

*Thanks Anthony!*

*To learn more about Anthony Bianchi, you can visit his official website at [www.bianchi-inuyama.com](http://www.bianchi-inuyama.com).*

(“Office” Continued from page 12)

“We have a tape for that.”

“But I can read it. We can read it together, if you like.”

She looked confused. “But Miss Alexei, the tape has enjoyable music.”

“I can sing,” I said, seriously.

I lost. She always plays the stupid tape and I learn against the board and sulk. Occasionally I see kids look at me and shrug, and I smile back like I can’t believe it either.

So I sit and read Japanese for Busy People. Lunch comes—it’s a curry day, hurray! There’s no school lunch I like better than gelatinous Japanese curry eaten with a spoon. Seriously. It always bears some resemblance to real curry, and best of all, there will never be a tiny-fish-with-eyes side dish.

Two little girls come and get me. One, who is going completely red-faced, reads phonetically from a paper clutched in her hand. “Miss Alexei...please...have lunch...with us.”

“Okay,” I smile, and she relaxes visibly.

The other girl picks up my tray and I follow them silently. In the classroom, the seat selected for me is next to the genkiest boy in *ichi-nen-sei*, so cool that even the teachers call him by his nickname, Johnny.

“Hi Johnny! How are you?”

“I am very good!” he proclaims, and the entire table laughs. Is everything funny in English?

I settle in, prepared with my list of safe questions for the group (ages; favorite sports and colors; yes, I can use chopsticks). The homeroom teacher marches into the room, accompanied by my fluttery JTE. As the homeroom teacher speaks sternly to her class, Watanabe-sensei whispers frantically in my ear, “Please eat in the teacher room. This class is in trouble.” She picks up my tray and hustles from the room.

In the hallway I ask, “What did they do?”

“They were disrespectful,” she loudly whispers.

“To who?”

She doesn’t answer. With flapping hands she sets my lunch back on my desk. The gym teacher smiles nervously at me. I take out my novel.

During the break period I go behind the school shed. No one ever sees me there except for the occasional lonely kid. I’ve read lots of books back here.

After break I open up Japanese for Busy People on my desk again, though I’m not paying attention at all. When the bell rings I gather up my flashcards and textbook for the *san-nen-sei* class.

Loathesome Fukuda-sensei rushes over, “Miss Alexei, my class needs to study today.”

“So you don’t want me to come?”

She shrinks a little. “They have a test in three weeks.”

“So what I am supposed to do?”

“Why don’t you take a rest?” she offers, and I’m left alone again.

I have no other classes scheduled. Today I have done absolutely nothing. I take out my *keitai* and start text messaging exactly that sentiment.

I got an answer back immediately from my friend David, teaching in a high school across town, who has written: “I’ve been productive today! I stared at the wall, ate an apple, and went to the bathroom twice!”

In the front of the room, I notice the *kyoto-sensei* staring at me. I shove my *keitai* into my bag. I re-open Japanese for Busy People.

The wall by my desk has six tape-removal marks in the shape of a rectangle. I wonder what poster used to be there. There isn’t much by way of decoration in this office.

I wish I could tell them that I’m going to have to talk to my *ben-goshi* if they don’t give me something to do now. Do they sue much in Japan?

It’s just after 2:00. I could be getting my grocery shopping done or emailing my mother. I march up to *kyoto-sensei*. In my absolute politest Japanese, I tell him I don’t feel well and I’d like to go home.

“I have to call your supervisor to ask,” he says.

Why? I want to ask. I’m an adult, for godssakes, I just told you I don’t feel well, I have nothing to do, can’t you just let me go home? Unfortunately my Japanese is limited.

What I really say is, “Okay, go ahead.”

I sit back down. He makes a call, grunts a few times, and beckons me back. “I didn’t speak to him,” he says.

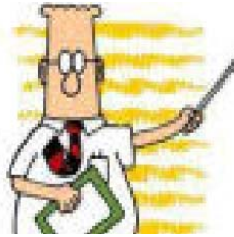
“Why?” I venture.

“He’s not in the office.”

“So I have to stay?”

He smiles. Then he says, “Why don’t you prepare for your classes?”

I need to revolt.



**Film Review**

**TOKYO GODFATHERS**

Reviewed by Lyle Sylvander

Since the release of *Akira* in 1988, Japanese anime has gained respectability in the United States by tackling more and more ambitious themes. The genre reached something of a pinnacle last year when Hiroyasu Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* won the Academy Award for Best Animated Film and was picked up for domestic distribution by Disney. Satoshi Kon's film *Tokyo Godfathers* was released on the heels of that success. Unlike Miyazaki's film, however, *Tokyo Godfathers* is a step backward and does little to advance the cause of anime as a serious art form. Satoshi Kon's film lacks the strength of character and command of narrative necessary to make its case.

The basic plot of *Tokyo Godfathers* offers a promising premise. Three homeless people discover an abandoned baby and seek to find its home. In the process, the audience learns much about the three characters and their own troubled pasts. If this plot sounds familiar, it is because it is based on the old John Ford film *Three Godfathers*, starring John Wayne. Kon has transplanted the story from the American Wild West to modern day Tokyo and has replaced Ford's overly sentimental style with a more reserved approach. While downplaying the melodramatic

elements of the story may have been an initially wise decision, Kon's film ultimately fails to engage the audience and leaves one feeling emotionally uninvolved.

This story is a character-driven one and, as such, needs compelling characters to succeed. But Kon has supplied three clichéd characters lacking any psychological or emotional depth. Middle-aged Gin, for instance, is down on his luck ever since he lost his wife and daughter after throwing a bicycle race years earlier. One cannot help but think of Marlon Brando's character in *On the Waterfront* yet the comparison falls short. It is difficult for an animated character to display the same level of pathos that Brando brought to the role of someone living with regret and sorrow. Similarly, Hana is a transvestite who is temporarily allowed to become the mother he has always wanted to be. What's tragic about Hana's story is that he feels like a woman trapped in a man's body. This would have been an emotional backdrop worth exploring but Kon neglects to do this. The character that comes closest to engaging the audience's sympathies is the teenage runaway Miyuki. The one touching scene in the

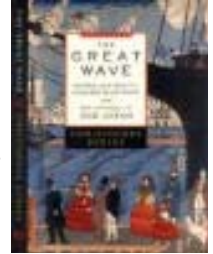


*Rosie Reviews*

Christopher Benfey's  
THE GREAT WAVE

Reviewed by Rosemary de Frémery

2004: Has this year witnessed increased American interest in traditional Japanese culture and values? At a first glance, it would appear so with the success of *The Last Samurai* and the Academy Award nomination of *Twilight Samurai* for Best Foreign Language Film. As most readers of this newsletter probably know, 2004 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of U.S.-Japan relations. It has been a long, complicated journey from the initial arrival of what author Ian Buruma calls "the universal Yankee nation" to our own more recent arrivals as JETs in Japan. While observing this anniversary, it's worth reflecting on the importance of U.S.-Japan engagement from the Meiji era to the present as well as the ways in which Americans and Japanese continue to build upon this existing relationship and draw inspiration from one another's cultures.



New Western commentary has emerged to provide varying assessments of where we are today in this regard. Mount Holyoke College professor Christopher Benfey's *The Great Wave* offers a fresh and insightful commentary on the continuing American fascination for Japan and vice versa. He focuses on what types of Americans and Japanese have, finding no suitable outlets for their personal sensibilities in the countries of their birth, discovered cultural and spiritual homes abroad.

Ian Buruma, whose insightful writings on Japan have graced the pages of *The New York Times* and *Salon*, has also recently produced a concise guide to the rise of Modern Japan with *Inventing Japan: 1853-1964*. Much of the details presented for our consideration in *Inventing Japan* will be familiar to even casual students of Japanese history. This account spans the period between Commodore Perry's dramatic 1853 arrival in Japan to the civil unrest of the 1960s, even escorting us into the new millennium with a short epilogue documenting the rise and continued dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party.

This roughly parallels the time period that was covered in the Japanese history courses I took in college and, as a result, helped me to recall names and dates I'd long forgotten. That being said, upon finishing *Inventing Japan* I realized that what I really wanted was an analysis of these events, not simply a linear recounting of them. Given the wealth of experience in cultural and political transactions that has been recorded up until this point, it is time to dedicate some attention to another tier of US-Japan relations. Assuming that more Americans are absorbing Japanese concepts and viewpoints at a deeper level than was possible during their initial encounters with the Pacific nation in the nineteenth century, we would benefit from a look beyond economic and political developments into more subjective and ambiguous realms where Americans and Japanese make contact with and influence one another.

For an example of the type of analysis to which I'm referring, here is an excerpt from a December 2003 op-ed piece Christopher Benfey contributed to the *New York Times* to accompany the release of "The Last Samurai":

The truth is, though, that Perry didn't really open Japan. He

(*"Rosie Reviews" Continued on page 16*)

## THE "POLITICS" ISSUE TOP 14!

It could happen. One of these days one of our very own from the JET Alumni community could become President of the United States. What would *that* be like, ka na...?

### THE TOP 14 THINGS THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF A JET ALUM WERE PRESIDENT

14. Fifty-minute self-introduction on first day in office.
13. Press conference with Japanese media to promote internationalization and clear up confusion over ability to use chopsticks.
12. Presidential toilet seat warmer.
11. Future school history books include section on famous "I Have a Pen!" speech.
10. Vending machines with hot corn soup installed throughout White House
9. Pre-Departure Orientation in the Rose Garden
8. Curry rice included in public school lunch menus across the U.S.
7. All Foreign Service language training outsourced to AEON.
6. Inauguration Karaoke!
5. All JETAA Chapter Reps appointed to ambassadorships.
4. President works half days, then goes on vacation. (Wait a second...)
3. Spin control involves slapping Vice President on the back of the head to evoke laughter from audience and divert controversy.
2. All policies explained very clearly, slowly and loudly.
1. Oval Office Happy Hour!



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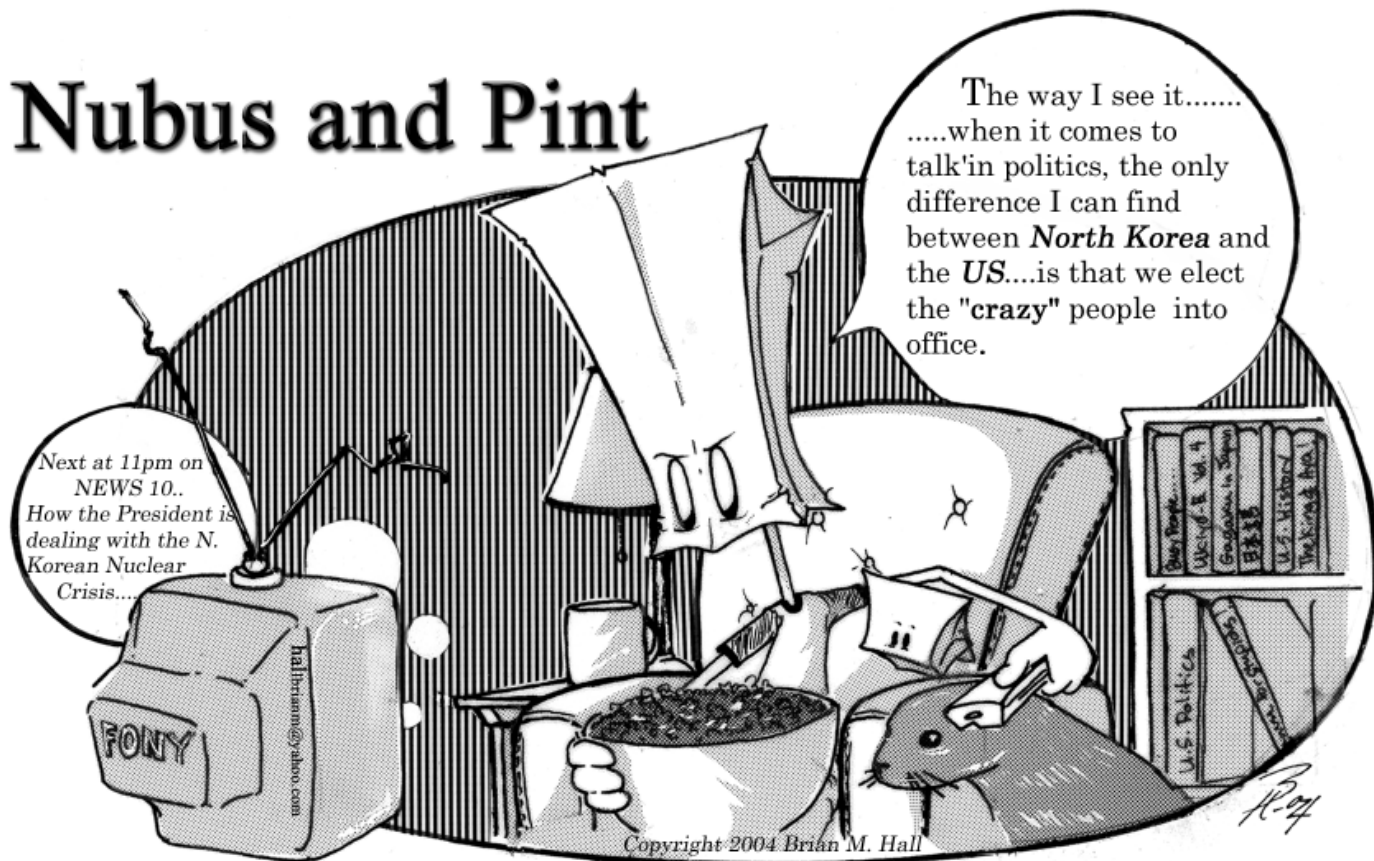
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# Nubus and Pint



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("Rosie Reviews" Continued from page 14)

did the easy part: showing off American firepower to the gaping samurai on shore, and forcing a trade agreement on the emperor. But there was a second, slower, more significant opening, which required actual understanding — of Buddhism, for example, and the traditional arts of judo and the tea ceremony ... This sort of opening is as much an internal process as an external one. People talk about the Japanese influence on America; you might call this the "particle theory" of cultural exchange. But what we see in the 150 years of Japanese-American interaction is something more complicated and harder to name. Maybe we need a "wave theory" of cultural exchange, to explain the constant oscillation between East and West.

JET alumni know well how encounters with Japanese culture can continue to impact their lives in ways both subtle and obvious for years after the official close of their tenures as ALTs or CIRs. What happens below the radar, as it were, is often more meaningful yet confoundingly difficult to accurately describe or to name, as Benfey says. Challenging though it may be to express in words the process of cultural grafting which occurs when an American spends a considerable amount of time living in a Japanese context — to the point at which on some level certain aspects of Japanese culture may even begin to feel inherently compatible or natural to a degree never anticipated — should be of particular interest to those who have experienced and continue to experience such a deeply personal phenomenon.

Compared to Benfey, Buruma shares few observations on these interactions in *Inventing Japan*. He follows a more traditional route instead,

tracking with facts Japan's metamorphosis from a feudal state into the world power it is today. Indeed, Buruma's editorializing is scant except for the deliberately ironic use of the word *sincere* in describing fanatical right-wing assassins and for the occasional mention of the regrettable instances in which genuine pro-democracy forces were neutralized by self-described nationalist elements within Japan. Buruma glosses over even this important aspect of Japanese politics more than one might like. Fortunately, more in-depth histories of the Japanese Left and other movements are available including a study of the Japanese women's movement, *Reflections on The Way to The Gallows*, which covers almost the same time period as *Inventing Japan*. That book may not appear in Buruma's bibliography, but those titles that are mentioned form a solid reading list for anyone desiring to more carefully examine the history of Japan and the United States.

One must be fair here: Benfey allows himself a generous 332 pages to wax poetic on the shifting tides of US-Japan relations while Buruma rations himself to a lean 177 pages, which inevitably leads to the bare-bones treatment the reader finds in *Inventing Japan*. For that reason I would consider *Inventing Japan* a fine introduction to modern Japanese history for people, including perhaps some 2004 JET Programme participants, who wish to familiarize themselves with the subject without having to wade through long-winded, overly dense tomes of facts and dates. For those inclined to foray into the deeper meaning of what has transpired between our two countries within the past 150 years, however, *The Great Wave* will more likely satisfy their intellectual curiosity even as it raises new and intriguing questions for them to ponder.