

# JETAA.NY

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

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WINTER 2004

## THE "STATE OF JETAA" ISSUE

What Could JETAA Be? What Will It Be?

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WHAT CAN  
**YOU**  
DO FOR JETAA?

by Steven Horowitz (Aichi-ken, 1992-94)

You can start by just reading this Newsletter and thinking about it a little bit.

In a lot of ways, the JET alum network is still a largely untapped resource. Unlike most universities, JET's only been around 15 or so years, and our alumni network is just beginning to reach some sort of critical mass.

While JETAA may seem to many folks to be a group that organizes happy hours for single people new to New York, there's actually a lot of thought going into the future of JETAA as you read this. The happy hours are an important entry point for people to connect with JETAA and meet some good people, but there's a need for other types of activities to give purpose to our existence and to make the JET alum network relevant to more of us.

A lot of JET alums out there (maybe even you) think about getting involved or would get involved if they felt there was something or other they could connect with that they just don't see right now or that maybe doesn't yet exist.

Our challenge is to come up with those purposes and activities that make the JET alum network more relevant as it grows larger and matures. We need torches to pass so that when we're old and gray, being a JET alum

still has meaning to us.

There are ideas already floating around the New York Metro Area that are beginning to take shape. A scholarship fund. Community outreach with NY de Volunteer. Obtaining not-for-profit status. Professional networking such as the Nichibe Network and JETAA Law. And

**We need torches to pass so  
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has meaning to us.**

there are other ideas and models working in other chapters, as demonstrated by some of the articles in the pages of this issue.

JETAA Hawaii helps run Japan Wizards, a high school competition testing knowledge of Japan, and also is actively involved in the Ehime Maru Foundation. The Northern California Chapter has set up a scholarship it awards every year to encourage Japanese studies. JETAA Ireland's Book Club helped to organize an event commemorating Lafacdio Hearn. One of Australia's JETAA chapters organizes a photography exhibit in conjunction with a Japanese Consulate event every year. And JETAA Midwest, one of the most geographically stretched chapters, acquired a *mochi* maker to help create a traditional and common experience as well as add flavor to their events. Some of these examples are detailed in articles in this issue.

(See "JETAA" continued on page 13)

OUTGOING SECRETARY

Although I am stepping down from the JETAA NY executive board, I am not leaving JETAA NY (in fact, I may now have more time to actually participate in some of our events!). Thanks to everyone that I've spoken with/emailed/met during my year and a half in this position. It has been a lot of fun. I'd also like to thank Shannan, Jo and Rosie for being excellent partners in moving this organization forward. I know that they, along with the new secretary Ryan, will continue to promote the growth and maturation of JETAA NY. Best of luck to you all, and I'll see you at the next happy hour!

Best Wishes,  
Clara Kuhlman

The "STATE OF JETAA" Issue

JETAA New York is involved in more activities than ever before as its membership continues to increase to nearly 700.

What does this mean for you? Why should you care? What exactly does JETAA do anyway?

This issue attempts to address some of those questions and hopefully get you excited about the JET Alumni network by showing you what's going on here in New York and in JETAA chapters around the world. The recent JETAA International Conference highlighted both what we have to look forward to as well as the challenges we face.

So whether you like keeping up your Japanese, meeting new people, volunteering, building an organization, or just maintaining some form of connection with the "Japan" in you, take a look at what's going on and think about what we can do to strengthen ourselves as a group.

Thanks to everyone who contributed in one way or another to this issue. It's one more example of the strength of our network.

Enjoy and stay active. And most importantly, always wear clean underwear.

Steven



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Welcome back to another edition of the JETAA Society Page. I don't know if it's because the Newsletter took so long to get off its *oshiro* and publish or because a whole new year has begun since the last issue and there's just been *takusan* stuff going on, but the Editors have granted me a full page to update you on the "inside" state of JETAA. You guys have been *isogashi-sugiru yo*.

## JETAA NEW YORK SOCIETY PAGE

by Yoku Shitteiru

For those who missed it, the International Conference Happy Hour at the Pine Tree Lodge was *très international* and *muito sensacional*. Social Coordinator **Matt Jungblutt** made a good choice with the now familiar standby, and the 40 plus JET alums "internationalized" the joint inside and out before some of the more nimble footed left for a salsa dancing club that never materialized. (*Consuelo* for the future: **Copacabana** is a bit pricey but has a 20 piece live band and is always open when you need it.) Cool shirt of the night award goes to the Japanese company-league baseball jersey donned by **Ben Lang**.

But before Yoku Shitteiru forgets, there was a full-on **Karaoke Bonenkai** back in December, which saw former JETAANY Secretary **Alex McLaren** channel Robert Plant for a rendition of "The Immigrant Song" before heading off to DC to join the Foreign Service. (Hey, it worked against Noriega.)



December also saw the first ever **Negajo Potluck**, hosted by JETAA VP **Rosie DeFremerly**. The event, highlighted at the International Conference, brought about 15 JETs and FOJ's, despite snow and slushy conditions, to Rosie's apartment in **Astoria** (aka "Little Harajuku") to nosh on yummy dishes ranging from **Christy Jones's** *oishii* cornbread casserole to the *wagashi* that her Japan Society cohorts **Yuushi** and **Eiichi** kindly contributed. In addition to the savories, everyone helped each other create brightly colored New Year's greeting cards for their friends in Japan.

Then in January, faster than you can say *akemashite omedetou gozaimashita kotoshi mo yoroshiku onegaishimasu*, a **Nihongo Dake Shinenkai** of approximately 79,638 people crowded into the entire top floor of **Naniwa** for a three hour long party to celebrate the arrival of 2004. The *sake* flowed like the Hudson River, according to unconfirmed reports, and the party went late into the night with rumors flying of a *sanjikai*.

And yet it turns out that wasn't quite enough for all of you. Because the late January **happy hour** drew another 75 cold but happy folks to the *tabehodai-nomihodai* extravaganza at **Izakaya Riki**. Members of **NY de Volunteer** (on the prowl with video cameras to interview people for their promotional spot soon to be aired on the Manhattan News Network), **Nichibei Toastmasters**, **CLAIR NY** and the **Consulate** were among those seen enjoying the *yosenabe* and *shabu-shabu*. Some partygoers moved on to *nijikais* and, rumor has it, even a *sanjikai* after that.

(Note: If Yoku Shitteiru has confused any of the details of the Naniwa and Izakaya Riki events, the they were obviously successful.)

On a more buttoned-down note which has caused Yoku Shitteiru to more carefully consider US libel and slander statutes, the first ever **JETAA Law** gathering took place in a midtown bar in mid-February. Organized by Newsletter editor **Steven Horowitz**, about 15 lawyers, might-be-lawyers, and just-happy-to-be-around-lawyer folks (both JETs and FOJ's) filed appearances. No signal yet when the next gathering will be or what it will be for, but email Steven at newsletter@jetaany.org to get in the loop and/or offer input.

The semi-social/semi-networking theme activities continued in February with the first ever **Nichibei Networking Night** at Union Square hotspot **Bar 13** orga-

nized by **JETAA NY** and involving **NY de Volunteer**, **Nichibei Toastmasters**, and reps from NY-area career consulting firms. The event drew over 150 people who were treated to some heavy duty speeches to kick off the evening. But the real highlight was JETAA NY Database Beatnique **Marc Carroll** spinning tunes that let everyone get their *gu-ruubu* on.

February also saw the return of the JETAANY **Pot Luck** with **Lynette Martyn** hosting an *Ajia no Ryori*-themed gathering for 15 people at her apartment on the Upper East Side. (Yoku Shitteiru, for the record, can personally vouch for Lynette's culinary abilities.) JET alums and Friends of JET brought their Asian cuisine (including *shu mai*, Thai curry chicken soup and Japanese steamed vegetables in *sake* & soy sauce) for everyone to share, and after the meal was over some people remained to watch and (not) be scared by the original Japanese version of "The Ring."

(Yoku Shitteiru promised not to reveal which attendees were shakin' in their *kutsus*, but *uwasa* has it that **VP Rosie** hasn't used her VCR since that night.)

But wait. Can you say 3 potlucks in 3 months? Well in March **Tanya Paluso** hosted a **Dumplings-Only Iron Chef Cook-Off** (also dubbed the *Gyoza-Dake Dinner*) in her Lower Manhattan apartment. Various types of *gyoza* abounded alongside pierogis and even Southern chicken and dumplings as roughly 20 people arrived and the food fest lasted from lunchtime well into the dinner hour.

Also in March, JETAANY pres **Shannan Spisak**, vp **Rosie de Fremerly** and all around good guy JET alum **Janak Bhimani** appeared on the television show *Asian America* to discuss their experiences on the JET Program. Host **Linda Peng** quizzed the trio about everything from the Japanese education system to preconceptions of Japanese by Americans and vice versa. All three looked fabulous in their **Armani** and **Vera Wang** ensembles. (OK, I made that last part up.)

This winter JETAA's **Philly Chapter** also had its annual ski trip followed by the traditional cheesesteak s'mores around the campfire.

Lastly, special *omedetou gozaimashita*s to Newsletter cartoonist **Brian Hall** who entered into marital bliss in December in Tokyo, and also to outgoing JETAA NY Secretary **Clara Kuhlman** on her wedding coming up in May. (Yoku Shitteiru will try to get exclusive inside scoopage on the Kuhlman wedding, including napkin colors and appetizers served.)

Until the next issue, keep on getting out and having fun. As always (and without any assistance from John Ashcroft), Yoku Shitteiru will get the scoop.

**JETAA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
FACT SHEET**

New York recently hosted the JETAA International (JETAA I) Conference which was attended by Country Representatives from around the world as well as Chapter Representatives from the U.S. and other countries. The Newsletter was there as well, and what we saw were a lot of JET alums working hard to make JETAA a better organization for everyone. Here's a rundown of the event. (Special thanks to Clara Kuhlman.)

**Date:** February 26-29, 2004

**Number of Representatives Attending:** 51 Delegates

**Countries Represented:** Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Scotland, United Kingdom, United States, Russia (observer) & Jamaica (observer).

**But wait, there's more:** Representatives from CLAIR Tokyo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Consulate General & the Japan Local Government Center also attended.

**Conference Theme:** Communications & Leadership

All of the meetings and presentations during the conference were centered around improving leadership and communications in JETAA I on a global level. While some time was spent discussing individual chapter activities and ideas, the focus was on strengthening JETAA as an international organization.

**Some of the questions we addressed were:**  
\*Can JETAA become self-sufficient & how?



\*How can JETAA better serve its members from an international perspective?

\*What will be the future leadership/structure of JETAA I?

\*How can we improve information & idea sharing across chapters and borders?

\*Can/should we create a global JETAA database?

\*What kind of information should JETAA I include on its website (www.jetalumni.org)?

\*When/how often should JETAA I hold conferences, & what should their purpose be?

**JETAA I Executive Board Elections:**

The new executive board of JETAA International is:

- Chair:** Brenda McDonald (Canada)
- Vice Chair:** Christina Sagara (Brazil)
- Treasurer:** Jean-Francois Mannina (US, New Orleans)
- Secretary:** Alison Bond (UK)

**Fun Facts:**

- \*The U.S. is the only country with two Country Reps.
- \*The JETAA Midwest Chapter covers Kansas, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri and Nebraska.

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## CHINA & JAPAN: LEARNING FROM THE STUDENTS

*Nate Hall on the scene in China*

I have found that an often neglected, though insightful, back door into any country's collective consciousness is through their public school system. I like to think of that old adage, "kids say the darndest things;" often they repeat exactly what is said at home. A high school student, though often doing his best to establish his individuality, will see the world through the filter of his family. Having taught English in both Chinese and Japanese high schools, I have found that I can use the classroom as a barometer not just for the current national mood, but also for an indication in which direction the country may be headed because young people are more likely than adults to wear their hearts on their sleeve.

It is no secret that the Japanese and the Chinese are at odds over a number of historical incidents. The most tender issue may be that the majority of Chinese feel that the Japanese have not made sufficient reparations and apologies for aggression during World War II—in particular the notorious episode of the Rape of Nanjing. The Japanese have repeatedly omitted this from their history textbooks so that Japanese students are growing up without being aware of one of the most brutal, tragic, and significant parts of their history.

class some students were ogling over a picture of some friends of mine, and seemed rather smitten until I told them that the couple in the picture were Japanese. At that point, about two-thirds of the students turned up their noses, not just uninterested, but even visibly disgusted. I asked them what was wrong, and my suspicions were confirmed. "We don't like Japanese!" they enthusiastically told me.



I asked them if they knew any Japanese people, and as could be expected of high school students in the rural Chinese interior, they did not. I asked them why they did not like Japanese people and they named the usual causes. I asked about Chinese history, since about once every hundred years or so there seems to be a civil war where hundreds of thousands die in a huge rebellion, or in a suppression of a rebellion, or in a change of ruling dynasty. They seemed less concerned about this, as it was "Chinese killing Chinese" which made it acceptable for them. I asked whether they were bothered about other foreign governments' involvement in China. I mentioned the French, the Russians, the

I often use photographs in my lessons with Chinese students. In a recent

("China" Continued on page 16)

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# THERE'S MORE THAN HULA IN HAWAII

JETAA Hawaii by *Nadine Nishioka*



JETAA Hawaii has an exciting year planned ahead. As the year progresses, we will be involved with numerous Japanese events throughout our communities. We are in the process of establishing a network to build a solid reputation volunteering with community organizations, projects, school visits, and charity events.

Each year, JETAA Hawaii plays an instrumental role in the Japan America Society of Hawaii's (JASH) Japan Wizards Competition. Formerly known as the Japan Bowl, Japan Wizards brings together students from public and private high schools throughout our State to compete in their knowledge of Japanese customs, culture, language, economy, sports and leisure, literature, and history. JETAA Hawaii members assist in the research, write questions, judge, and moderate the competition. It is a very successful event. The winners of the competition, which include a total of four schools, three members per team, from two public and two private high schools, win an all expense trip to Japan for one week. While in Japan, the Hawaii students visit schools and share each other's cultural differences and similarities. It is truly an "internationalization" experience. Hence, the students are essentially engaging in the mission of the JET Program, which is why JETAA Hawaii participates in this and other events with JASH...we are preparing the high school students in Hawaii for the JET Program.

We also assist and volunteer JASH with their "Japan In A Suitcase" program. We literally visit elementary schools throughout our State with a suitcase filled with items a Japanese elementary school student uses in his or her daily life. We show a visual presentation of an elementary school in Japan and its students going through their daily activities; including lunchtime and *souji*; which the students in Hawaii always gasp at, they cannot believe the students have to wipe and clean their school...especially the bathrooms. The students then break down into small groups of about five students, and are then given an item from our suitcase. They then, as a group, do a "show and tell" for the rest of their classmates as to what the item they are introducing is possibly used for. It is a very successful program that is not only educational, but a lot of fun for everyone involved.

JETAA Hawaii and JASH continue to work together on various projects, including the Ehime Maru Fund Organizing Committee. We are both honored and proud to be a part of this. We are also very honored that Honolulu was selected as the sister State of Ehime Prefecture earlier this year. Our constant thoughts and prayers go out to the family, friends, and the entire country of Japan for the tragic events relating to the Ehime Maru.

Another event JETAA Hawaii will be having is our second annual "JET Seasons", which is a display of JET participants' collections such as photos, drawings, letters from students, memorabilia, etc., at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii (JCCH). Our first "JET Seasons"

ran for one month in the JCCH gallery, June 3 – June 7, 2004, and was very successful. We had media coverage at our Grand Opening, which was attended by dignitaries such as the Consul General of Hawaii, Consul General Masatoshi Muto, members of our State Legislator, community leaders, and various Presidents and Board members of Japanese organizations throughout our community and State. It was extremely successful thanks in part to great media and news service coverage, in addition to basic "word of mouth". Its success was measured by an increase in the number of applicants to the 2004 JET Program.

We are also heavily involved with many community organizations and their respective events/programs. Even if it is not Japanese related, we try to participate so that we can get our name, JETAA Hawaii, in their event program in addition to hanging our banner at their event. We volunteer for a variety of things that range from cooking meals for fundraisers to helping out at "Kiddie Korners". Our primary goal is to make JET a household name in Hawaii. Yes, there are many Japanese related organizations here in Hawaii and the Japanese culture is practiced daily in our State regardless of race or nationality. Many of these Japanese

related events and programs are held in various communities at any given time. However, because there are many of these organizations, it is difficult to be a participant at times, especially when larger organizations are already participating. My Officers and I go out into the communities to promote the JET Program and our Alumni Association. Then we, as a team, volunteer to make sure we establish a good rapport with said organizations to build a solid reputation of trust and dependability.

I must emphasize that even if there are only a couple of JETAA participants at an event, the goal is to get your name out there in the community; even if you are the only person representing your Alumni Association at the event/program.

JETAA Hawaii has worked hard to build a strong foundation in our communities. But we continue to strive for greater success and recognition. We often struggle with membership and participation, as all chapters do, but if each member does his or her part to increase the general public's knowledge and understanding of JET in a way that is easiest for him or her to convey, success will come; slowly but surely.

Take care and Aloha,

Nadine Nishioka, President  
JETAA Hawaii  
[www.jetaahawaii.com](http://www.jetaahawaii.com)



As JET alums, we've often exchanged stories of both culture shock and reverse culture shock. But what's it like for our Japanese friends who live in New York for several years and then return to Japan?

## INVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

### Life Back in Japan

by Mina Shimada

The other thing that's struck me is the *keitai* (cell phone) industry in Japan. I already knew that the *keitai* market was pretty big in

Former recruiter and Newsletter fan, Mina Shimada, who recently moved back to Tokyo, shares some of her perspectives.

When I was asked, how do I feel being back in Japan after spending three and a half years in the States, I was not sure how to answer to be honest with you..... Of course, it's always nice to be back, but at the same time, I also miss the life in the States.

Well, let's see. What do I miss the most? Real time American TV shows including sports programs, big high-speed laundry and dryer machines, a huge cup of coffee (have you noticed that Starbucks in Japan doesn't even have *Vente* size? Grande is the biggest one here.)

Speaking of the coffee/food shops, as you know, Japanese people working in the service industry are usually polite with nice greetings saying "*irasshai mase* (welcome to our store)" and "*arigato gozaimashita* (thank you very much)", oftentimes while bowing. I think it's very nice to hear nice such greetings, but I also have noticed that there is another part of myself that prefers, "speed" more than "nice greetings." Especially, in the morning..... I guess I lived in NY too long.....



Japan, but it still exceeded my expectations.

The first few times I rode the subway and train it felt a little bit strange to see not just young people but also people from our parents' generation just looking at their own cell phones and doing something. I assumed that they were sending e-mails or maybe playing games, neh? Well a lot of them are doing that, but that's not the only thing they do. Now lots of people use their phones to try to get information they need. For example, what time is the last train to go to this area and how long it will take? And some read books, buy/reserve things and pay their bills through their own cell phones.

In the street I often see young people just standing and looking at their cell phones, and I couldn't believe what I was seeing the first time I saw it. Yes! They are watching TV on the screen of their phones.

Japan is always coming up with new technology and gadgets, and I just wonder how far it can go.

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## THE RENAISSANCE JET

### Erstwhile JETAA NY President Revisits Yankee Locker Rooms and Meetings with Japanese Royalty

Brian Hersey chats with George Rose



**Most JETs** go to Japan more for the adventure of it rather than with any specific career goals in mind. Upon returning home, JET Alumni teach high school, sing opera, fight fires, program computers and juggle. They go to business school, veterinary school, and a few ill-advised ones even go to law school (see Winter 2003 issue). Many find ways to capitalize on the Japan experience. They work for Japanese companies, or become professors of comparative literature. For most of us, our Japan experience is not central to our career. Sure it provides good interview conversation. Sometimes we get asked to handle a Japanese client or read some hiragana on a document. But the payoff is most often in the experience itself rather than in a specific career advantage.

However, the JET adventure paid off in a big way for George Rose, an ALT in Fukushima from 1989 to 1991, when he put business school on hold in 1998 to take a dream job for a former baseball player and lifelong Yankees fan. George worked for the Yankees in the '98 and '99 seasons as **Hideki Irabu's** translator. For those two seasons he shadowed "Hideki" wherever he went, hanging out in the locker room, translating at team meetings, at press conferences and at social events with the other players. George had the privilege of watching the greatest Yankee teams of the last 40 years win back-to-back World Series from the dugout.

Today he still wears one of his two personalized, engraved World Series rings (yes, everyone in the organization gets one). In the past few years he has done some translation for Mets as well, working briefly with **Shinjo** and with the Mets' new shortstop, **Kazuo Matsui**. He was offered a job working with **Hideki Matsui** in 2001 but turned it down to pursue his real estate business in Hamilton, New Jersey.

George has been an active member of the JETAA, serving as president from 1993 to 1994 and helping to launch some of the activities that continue today. In the early 90's, JETAA was an even looser organization than it is today. At first it was just a mailing list and meeting up for drinks or activities. Then came voting and officers, a job fair and the first softball tournament. As president, George began the process of incorporating JETAA as a non-profit.

**Brian Hersey: How did you manage to get the job as Irabu's translator?**

**George Rose:** During the interview with Bob Watson (GM at the time), Brian Cashman (assistant GM at the time, now GM) and Rick Cerone (PR Director) I was asked the question "Why you? Why would we choose you over someone else?" My answer was: 1) I speak the language well. 2) I went through in Japan what Irabu will be going through in the U.S. I know how hard it is to assimilate into a new culture, and I will be able to empathize and share my experience with him, hopefully, making his transition easier. And 3) If he wants to learn English I will be able to teach him since I have 2 years experience as an English teacher in Japan, in a Japanese high school. They loved the answers and I got the job.

**BH: What are the qualifications for a translator for a professional baseball team?**

**GR:** Besides the language ability, you should be single and willing to travel. You will work 6 1/2 days a week for 8 to 9 months (during the season you average about 2 off days per month). It's like being in the restaurant business because you work both weekends and nights. Once the glamour wears off, it can be a bit of a drawback because of the long hours and relatively low pay. The World Series rings do compensate, however.

**BH: How did you learn Japanese well enough to translate?**  
**GR:** I studied in Japan and then worked in a Japanese company in NYC for 5 years. It was like going back to Japan everyday.

**BH: When you played high school ball were you a pitcher?**  
**GR:** No, I was a second baseman and an outfielder.

**BH: Can you share an anecdote or two to give us a taste of what it was like to shadow Irabu for two years?**

**GR:** Where to begin? One of the best was when Irabu won pitcher of the month in May 1998 and everyone thought his new translator must be having a tremendous positive effect on him. One of the worst was when "The Boss" called him a "fat, pussy toad" in spring training of 1999 and everyone thought I must not be getting the message right. I did almost end up being fired because Irabu was overweight and out of shape. Nothing to do with my translating ability to be sure, but I did earn some stripes under fire.

**One of the worst [times] was when "The Boss" called [Irabu] a "fat, pussy, toad" in spring training and everyone thought I must not be getting the message right.**

**BH: Did you build up any relationships with Irabu or the teammates that survive? Or was it mostly just a job?**

**GR:** I still talk to Irabu every other month, and I have a lot of good friends that work in the organization. Most of the players that were there in 1998 and 1999 are now gone (only 4 are left).

**BH: You were involved with JETAA back in the early nineties. In fact you were president. What memories stand out the most from those days?**

**GR:** Kintetsu beating the pants off of us every year in the softball tournament really stands out. Seriously, the job seminars we used to host for returning JETs at Columbia University were really great. We began inviting Japanese recruiters and I think we really helped a lot of people network and get started in the process of finding work after the returned. Meeting the emperor and empress was one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had.

**BH: Remarkably, even Irabu and Matsui are not the most famous Japanese that you have met. In 1994 you had the opportunity to meet with the Emperor and Empress of Japan. Can you tell us about that? Are they cool?**

**GR:** We had a special reception with them at the Japan Society. Secret service agents were all over the place and there were some anti-emperor Korean protesters across the street. The whole scene was very surreal. The Emperor and Empress were very gracious and spent about 1 hour with us. We had welcoming speeches and showed them a slide show of our activities (enkais, softball tournament, etc.) in the U.S. Afterward we had a receiving line and everyone (about 25 JETs in all) got to say hello individually. I stood next to Cyrus Vance on the line (a former Secretary of State, I believe). I actually chatted with the Emperor (in Japanese!!!!) about baseball. Both he and his wife spoke English well and spoke with some JETs in English. It was incredible to meet them and we were all blown away by the intensity of it all.



## BOOKS, FLICKS & CHOPSTICKS

JETAA Southeast Chapter  
by Jean-Francois Manina

*Books, Flicks, and Chopsticks* is a major event for the US Mid-South Chapter of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program Alumni Association (JETAA). This successful program was developed to introduce elementary school aged children to Japan, and it has been presented in the classroom, at public libraries, and at the Japan-Louisiana Autumn Festival.

Our JETAA members and children alike love *Books, Flicks and Chopsticks*. The hour-long presentation begins with introductions by happy-clad JETAA members. To get started, we pose questions to the kids about Japan: Where is Japan? What do you know about Japan? Give an example of Japanese food.

We then teach some basic terms like "konnichiwa," "sayonara," and "Watashi wa \_\_\_\_ desu." They practice their new greetings, complete with bowing.

After the language portion, we show a 10-minute Ministry of Foreign Affairs video entitled, "Elementary School Life in Japan." The video illustrates a typical day of a Japanese elementary school student. We ask the

children to pay attention to the similarities and differences between their lives and those of the Japanese students. Many are surprised that the students clean their schools, and some even think it's a good idea.



Everyone loves to be read a story, and we've found that *kamishibai* stories in particular thrill the kids. *Kamishibai* stories are depicted on picture cards that are displayed in a small stage-like framed box. The text is written on the back of the picture cards for the readers. US Mid-South JETAA members often dress up as characters in the story to give the reading more of a theatrical feel. We have collected *kamishibai* cards for a number of Japanese stories, including *Momotaro*, *The Bamboo Princess*, and *How the Years Were Named*.

To round out the program, we bring traditional Japanese toys (in part to show American kids that there's more to Japanese games than PlayStation). We show the kids how to use the various toys (such as *kendama*, *hanetsuki*, and *daruma otoshi*) and then allow the audience members to try for themselves. We also demonstrate how to use chopsticks.

As we bid our *sayonaras*, we distribute small prizes such as magnets, bookmarks, and stickers to all the attendees.

*Books, Flicks and Chopsticks* is a great introduction to Japan for young Americans. And US Mid-South JETAA members love the program because it allows us to relive our cross-cultural teaching experiences.

## KATAKANA NAME WRITING

JETAA Ottawa

by Marissa Meaker-Williamson (Yamaguchi, 1999-2001)

ア a	イ i	ウ u	エ e	オ o
カ ka	キ ki	ク ku	ケ ke	コ ko
サ sa	シ shi	ス su	セ se	ソ so
タ ta	チ chi	ツ tsu	テ te	ト to
ナ na	ニ ni	ヌ nu	ネ ne	ノ no
ハ ha	ヒ hi	フ fu	ヘ he	ホ ho
マ ma	ミ mi	ム mu	メ me	モ mo
ヤ ya		ユ yu		ヨ yo
ラ ra	リ ri	ル ru	レ re	ロ ro
ワ wa				ヲ (wo)
ン n				

Everyone loves festivals. Through our own experiences of our youth and as JET Alumni, I'm sure we can all agree. Some of my best festival memories were during a Japanese matsuri, watching half-naked men of all ages carry mikoshi (small shrines) to a village temple,

and dancing in my town's Obon Matsuri. I was able to learn a lot about Japanese culture at festivals and interact with Japanese people in a fun environment.

One of the biggest festivals in Ottawa is the Tulip Festival. The Tulip Festival has strong Canadian cultural roots (each May the Netherlands sends us tulips as thanks for being a safe haven for the Royal Family during the Second World War), but it also has an international pavilion section. JETAA Ottawa spends a day in the Japan Pavilion promoting Japanese culture and teaching people how to write their names in katakana. It's a very simple way to promote internationalization at the local level, and it's easy and fun!

For the event, we set up a large poster behind us with examples of English words and their Japanese equivalent. On the tables in front of us, we have the Katakana syllabry photocopied on regular sized paper, and ink, shuji brushes and paper. When someone asks to learn how to write their name in Japanese, we first pronounce their name in English/French, circle the letters on the syllabry that corresponded as closely as possible with their name, show them the strokes, and then let them try to write their name with the shuji brush. For small children, we quickly learnt that giving them a felt pen is much better than a shuji brush! They can then take home their katakana name and the syllabry with them as a souvenir. Many people leave with smiles and looks of accomplishment.

The event is a huge success every time. Of course there is a lot of discussion among alumni on the pronunciation of names, and we see a lot of badly written katakana and wrong stroke order, but the entire day is great! After being taught so much about Japan as JETs, it is nice to teach others and share our experiences as Alumni. We even get departing JETs to help us so they can practice their Japanese writing skills. We also have a photo display of alumni's favorite photos from Japan, and we dress up in our yukata and happi coats to get into the festival spirit. It really feels like a bit of Japan is brought over to Canada.

**JETAA IRELAND**

The Newsletter continues its visits to JETAA chapters around the world, stopping in with the JETAA Bookclub in Dublin, Ireland.

Reading groups with an interest in Japan are alive and well in Ireland, as well as in the U.S. 2004 marks the centenary of the death of Lafcadio Hearn, known more commonly as Koizumi Yakumo in Japan. Although his work is widely known and available in Japan, in Ireland he remained relatively unknown.

To correct this wrong, a number of readings have been held recently here in Dublin. Each session was well attended by former JET Programme participants, Japanese students studying in Ireland, Japanese residents in Ireland, people with an interest in Japanese culture and members of the Ireland Japan Association.

The following main texts were used, and each member of the reading group was supplied with texts well in advance of each session, so that we could then discuss our views.

*A History of Japan, 1600 - 1941: Internal and External* by L.M. Cullen (Cambridge), pp. 204 - 238, 255, 265 - 267, 282.

*Bushido: the Soul of Japan* by Inazo Nitobe. Introduction and



**CELEBRATES  
LAFCADIO HEARN**



chapters XV and XVI

*Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* by Lafcadio Hearn. 'My first day in the orient' and 'The Japanese Smile'.

*Kokoro* by Lafcadio Hearn.

*At a railway station Japanese miscellany* by Lafcadio Hearn.

'Of a promise Broken'. *Kwaidan* by Lafcadio Hearn.

*The Anatomy of Dependence* by Lafcadio Hearn.

*Japan: An attempt at Interpretation. 'The ancient cult'.*

Meeting on a monthly basis worked well for us. It gave everyone enough time to read, digest and ponder the texts, while also giving us time to do other things.

As a group, we got to know each other and enjoyed the social interactions that followed the lively and informed debates!!

Ireland will further mark the centenary later in the year, with a lecture about Hearn in the National Writers' Museum. In our rich literary history, it's only now that we recognise Hearn's contribution to western awareness of life in Japan at the turn of the nineteenth century.

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## SHAKE YER' MOCHI-MAKER

JETAA MIDWEST by Willaim Nealy (Oita-ken)



Surely many of you can remember taking part in a *mochi* making party at some point in during your time in Japan. It was usually outside, maybe in the spring or fall, at a moon viewing festival or maybe *hanami* party. Pounding the rice with big mallets, trying to keep the rhythm, it felt like you were really doing something "Japanese", and the reward was going to a chewy, delicious treat, shared with your friends and coworkers, celebrating a wonderful time, a new season, a new year, being in Japan, on an adventure.

Well, we here in the Heartland JETAA, based in Kansas City, decided that yeah, it would be nice to evoke the nostalgia of those days, but man, all that pulling and pounding--what a drag, forget that

mess! So, looking through the website of our local Japanese products distributor (Kami National Distributors, [www.kaminational.com](http://www.kaminational.com)), we made a huge discovery. There's such a thing as an automatic *mochi* maker! Cool! So knowing that I would have to eventually try to justify the purchase to CLAIR, I went ahead and made an executive decision to buy the "Heartland JETAA Mochi Maker." The possibilities would be endless. We'd use it at our official dinners, Japan festivals, meetings, school visits...

When you pour fresh *mochi* from the *mochi* maker, it's a beautiful, hot, golden, molten mass. It smells good, too. Using the maker, it's really pretty easy to prepare. In fact, I was basically successful my first time making it. It's a rice steamer, with a motor that kneads the rice as it gets hot, and takes only about an hour to make once you start the cooker. The tricky and fun part is actually



making the balls. Fortunately, I had plenty of help from my Japanese coworkers at the consulate the first time I made it. It's a trip to see how much pride some people take in their *mochi* ball making skills.

We've used the *mochi* maker at many of our events, and it's a way to get people involved in making something together. Before our *Bonenkai* Annual JETAA Dinner, held at the official residence of the Consul General, we got everyone together to make their own *mochi*, and the Consul General sort of took over the operation, giving instruction on the finer points of proper ball formation. You have to use corn starch to keep the *mochi* from getting too sticky to handle, and by the time we were finished, people had gotten it all over themselves. Our JET Coordinator, Tracie Whiting, suggested putting chocolate in the *mochi*, so we bought Russell Stover's chocolate balls (a Kansas City chocolate company) and "Heartland Mochi" was born. It's actually really good; tastes a lot like s'mores.

I made a bunch of chocolate *mochi* balls for us when we went to see "The Last Samurai" for our JETAA movie outing. We were so cool being the only ones in the theater eating Japanese *mochi*. We've also had the opportunity to take it with us on school visits, letting kids have a go at making it and trying a traditional Japanese custom.

As of right now, we're still not sure whether or not this purchase will actually end up being covered in our Grant-In-Aid, so it might end up being my *mochi* maker, but it has been a lot of fun. It might not be the most typical use of CLAIR funding, but we think it does contribute to JETAA's mission of promoting understanding of the Japanese culture in our community and bringing together the JET community.

# VIRTUAL JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL

JETAA Western Australia/Northern Territories

by Alexei Esikoff, Fukushima, 2001-2002

We all have old photos of the school(s) where we spent most of our waking life in Japan. Uniformed kids are smiling and making the peace sign. It probably makes you nostalgic, but doesn't quite capture the feeling of the worn wooden floors and overhead fluorescents.

school girls, describe the cultural importance of each activity. In the middle of each of the six rooms is a smiling girl holding a sign outlined in red. Clicking it takes you to the next room on the tour. Everything is how you remember it, but the best part is how involved

JETAA's Western Australia and Northern Territories chapter wowed the other attendees at the JETAA International conference held



the students are in the project. Judging by their grins, they're all obviously quite thrilled to be there.

But don't run out and start assembling your photos in an attempt to recreate your own school. By Paul's own admission, the training

needed to create a website this impressive is three to four years. He did it with the help of Orbitree, a company specializing in creating 360 degree virtual reality tours.

needed to create a website this impressive is three to four years. He did it with the help of Orbitree, a company specializing in creating 360 degree virtual reality tours.

It's truly cool in this school. Many photos were spliced together to create whole, seamless rooms of afterschool clubs at work. Click the mouse and drag your way across kids doing judo or arranging flowers; even the ceiling and floor are represented. (It takes a few tries to get the hang of the navigation; you will spin around wildly at first.) Voiceovers, delivered by high

The skill and care that went into this project makes you appreciate it all the more.

[www.want.jetalumni.org/vrtour.htm](http://www.want.jetalumni.org/vrtour.htm) is very *kakkou ii*.

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(Continued from page 1)

While the ideas and innovations of other chapters may or may not grab your interest, just reading about them and being aware may plant seeds that grow in the future.

It just seems to me we've got a unique and diverse network and we might as well use it. It's kind of like Napster in that it has a lot of power if everyone contributes even in very small ways. I'm actually trying to tap into the strength of our network with this article. And even if some tiny percentage of you decide to get involved, come up with a good idea, or even come up with a bad idea that sparks or evolves into a good idea at a later date, then JETAA becomes a more potent entity.



JETAA NY's officers recently came up with an innovative effort at getting the most out of our network and stimulating some organic growth. They organized a "focus group" consisting of about 30 or so core active JET alums to get together in the Den of Cin (below Two Boots Pizza), test out some ideas, brainstorm a bit, and plan some activities. Just the act of getting everyone together was an effective way of strengthening JETAA NY's base of committed alums, and hopefully the gathering will lead to growth in the future.

Please do not take JETAA for granted. By way of context, most JETAA chapters have trouble getting even 20 people to any event. And now JETAA is facing increasing pressures, financial and other, that are forcing it to re-evaluate and think harder about its existence. (That's was a major theme at the International Conference held in New York at the end of February.)

While CLAIR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have provided some financial assistance along the way, our JETAA chapter really needs to be prepared to either evolve into a self-sustaining organization in the

future, or in some way justify its costs to the Japanese government. That's not to say we're not doing that as an inexpensive source of good public relations for the Japan. But it would be *amai* to not anticipate a more self-sustaining and self-reliant approach going forward. It's also worth bearing in mind that Japan's economy has not been booming like it did in the past, and that budgets are simply tighter in both the private and public sectors.

As you consider JETAA, it also might be helpful to think about the dual roles that JETAA assumes.

One role is as a social support network that we use for our own benefit - to help returnees get acclimated, to find friends, jobs, apartments, and maintain a connection with Japan.

The other role is as an arm for the Japanese government. From their perspective (and ours, too, to a large extent), our value is as a link between Japan and the U.S. and even the Japanese community in the U.S. This includes volun-

teer work, cultural events, the idea of a scholarship, etc.

The two goals are potentially symbiotic, since the greater the benefit you receive from the JET alum network, the more likely you are to be involved and contribute in other ways. What we need is help moving both of these roles forward.

Let's figure out what JETAA can do for us, and what we can do for JETAA, because the two go hand in hand.

To get more involved, to share thoughts and ideas or to ask questions, you can contact any of the folks listed on page 2, check out the [www.jetaany.org](http://www.jetaany.org) website, or just show up at an event and start chatting.

As they might say in Japan, "You had better get involved."

# **YOU HAD BETTER GET INVOLVED**

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

**Film Review**

**Japanese Story**

Reviewed by Alexei Esikoff, Fukushima 2001-02



Director Sue Brooks and writer Alison Tilson have given formidable actress Toni Collette a chance to carry a movie in Australia's *Japanese Story*, something she does remarkably. Anyone who has seen *Muriel's Wedding* knows Collette can hold a film together, but then she had a quirky supporting cast and musical numbers to help her along. In *Japanese Story*, she is set adrift in the unforgiving Australian outback with only a heavily-accented businessman, played by Gotaro Tsunashima, for companionship.

Collette is Sandy Edwards, a geologist who accompanies Hiromitsu Tachibana, sent by a Kyoto-based mining company, to survey the Outback. He mistakes her for a prickly chauffeur, she finds him to be arrogant and aloof. That they're eventually going to be stranded and, after some cross-cultural bickering, become lovers as well is predestined, but afterwards the film veers into unexpected territory (which want revealed), where range. She is not an acting ugly. At the she's mannish and viewer. Only in the the audience to feel



the film veers into unexpected territory (which want revealed), where range. She is not an acting ugly. At the she's mannish and viewer. Only in the the audience to feel

*Japanese Story* subtly Western dichotomy. female butterfly is He's not docile, but the Western Sandy dominates. Brooks and Tilson have fun reversing the gender roles. In their first sexual encounter, it is the woman who looms over the man as he lies submissively in bed waiting. After undressing, she slips on his pants, literally, before the act of seduction.

A third character worth mentioning is the Australian Outback itself. Brooks favors wide shots that emphasize how barren and cruel it is. Sandy, as a local, respects and fears the Outback; ultimately Hiromitsu does not.

The pace begins to lag in the second half. It's intrinsic to the plot line that this happens, but a realistic plot doesn't necessarily make for engrossing theater. As Sandy's emotions are pushed to their limit, Brooks seems determined to milk the situation for all its worth. There are one too many shots of Collette crying. Tilson pours on the pregnant pauses and terse-but-meaningful dialogue. It gets to be a little trying, not to mention redundant.

Still, it's hard to blame Collette for this, who is acting her socks off. Her un-actressy performance is the reason to see the movie. The first half has some beautiful sweeping shots and opens up interesting gender and culture discussion, but ultimately it is her show. Present in almost every frame of the film, she carries it on her capable shoulders.



**Rosie Reviews**

**Natsuo Kirino's "OUT"**

Reviewed by Rosemary de Frémery

If you read the *New York Times*, you might have noticed a review of Natsuo Kirino's *Out* some months back. Hugely popular in Japan, it garnered Japan's top mystery writers' award and was adapted for the screen. It is also her first novel to be translated into English, with a second prize-winner (*Soft Cheeks*) due for publication in the near future.



*Out* follows the lives of four downtrodden middle-class women employed at a bento factory in the Tokyo suburbs, each with their own stresses and frustrations. Kuniko has rung up serious debt yet continues to spend freely on designer outfits. Yoshie is stuck tending to her impossible mother-in-law while a daughter of her own steals money from the house and deposits a son there, vanishing from the town. Masako, the leader among them, lives with a son who loathes her. Yayoi's abusive husband gambles their money away and chases after bar hostesses.

One night, after a particularly ugly encounter with her husband, the seemingly demure Yayoi snaps and murders him with her bare hands. Overcome with what she has done, Yayoi buckles and turns to Masako for assistance in disposing of the body. Masako in turn undergoes a grim transformation, calmly handling matters for her coworker – she nearly seems like Linda Fiorentino's character from *The Last Seduction* or perhaps Harvey Keitel's role as the cleaner in *Pulp Fiction* with her disturbingly practical attention to detail in situations that have most other characters forcibly holding down the contents of their stomachs. Soon the reader begins to wonder: what is worse? Strangling a man in a fit of anger, or sawing the limbs from his corpse one at a time so that he can be placed into separate garbage bags to be picked up by the Sanitation Department at random locations throughout the city?

As events proceed and Masako contemplates contracting out her disposal services on a regular basis alongside her reluctant but complicit friends, we begin to see the hints of an earlier lifestyle to which she may be returning. On the periphery is Satake, a yakuza club owner out for revenge after being framed for the murder of Yayoi's husband. As the women's once tight-knit group begins to crumble he circles closer, realizing that he and Masako might have unfinished business from years past. A deadly game of cat-and-mouse ensues, with only one of them surviving a hideous cut-throat struggle.

*Out* demonstrates just how close respectable society can be to the so-called underworld, drawing detailed insider's portraits of everyday people who've been pushed to the edge by the impossible circumstances in their lives. Highly gripping and well-researched, its appeal is not limited to fans of the genre. Anyone who enjoys skilled writing will appreciate Ms. Kirino's formidable talent and, upon finishing *Out*, wait impatiently for her next English-language release. For those of you interested in learning more about the author herself, her bilingual web site can be accessed at [p://www.kirino-natsuo.com/](http://www.kirino-natsuo.com/) <http://www.kirino-natsuo.com/>

THE "STATE OF JETAA" ISSUE TOP 15!

In this issue you've read about some of the excellent events and activities of other JETAA Chapters.  
But what about the ones you didn't hear about?

THE TOP 15 LEAST SUCCESSFUL JET ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ACTIVITES

15. CBGB's Rakugo Night
14. Three-Day Old Sushi Eating Contest
13. Holland Tunnel Happy Hour
12. Enka Marathon Getaway Weekend
11. JETAA Ex-Cons Onsen Trip
10. Host a Hostess Exchange
9. Temp-to-Perm Career Forum
8. Nihongo Dake Doing-the-Chapter-President's-Taxes Night
7. Matsui Autograph Signing Event (special thanks to Wilbur Matsui, Shizuoka 1997-99, for filling in)
6. "Sittin' Seiza" Matsuri
5. JETAA Recent Returnee Smackdown
4. Nattou Art Festival
3. Kabuki Karaoke Night
2. Japan Society Lecture: Modern Interpretation of Lyrics and Choreography of SMAP
1. JETAA Newsletter 10,000 Envelope Licking Ceremony



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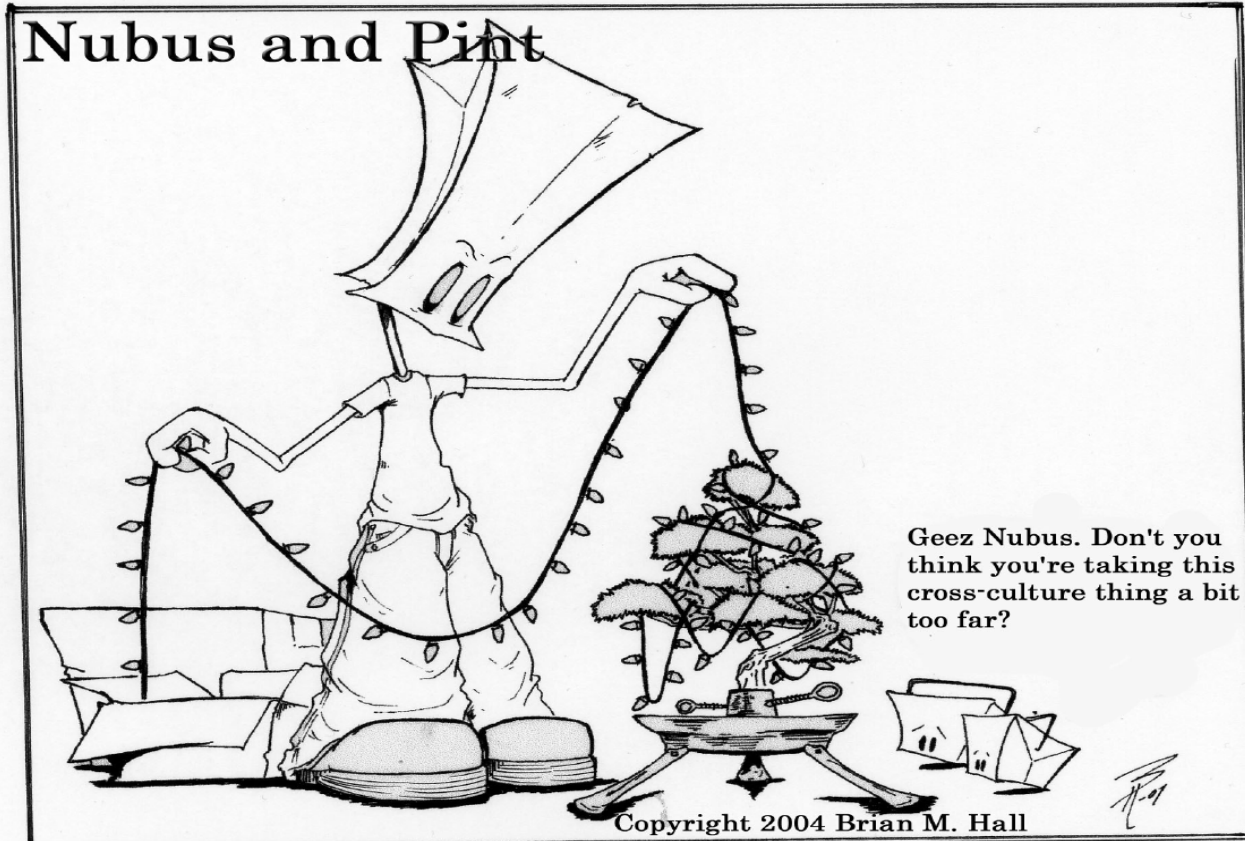
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("China" Continued from page 5)

Americans, and the British, and they did not approve of the meddling and the imperialism, but they did not hold any grudge over those episodes.

Some of the students are just as mindful of the history though less harsh in their judgment of the past—like an inscription I once saw on a World War II memorial in Paris "*je pardonne, mais je n'oublie pas*" ("I forgive but I don't forget.") I assigned a pen-pal project wherein my students had to write letters to some foreigners, and I gave them a number of choices. A number of them cheerfully decided to write to Japanese students, and they are still corresponding and sending print club photos to each other. They are interested in Japanese comic books, video games, technology and language.

The bridge goes both ways. When I taught in Japan, I often asked my students about where in the world they wanted to go. The most common answers were America and Australia, but more than twenty percent said they wished to go to China so that they could see a panda bear, see the large standing Buddha at Leshan in Sichuan (there was a picture of it in their social studies textbook) and visit the Great Wall.

Sometimes I would ask Japanese students and teachers about the pol-

lution on the beaches. I lived on the coast of the Sea of Japan. They usually blamed Korea and China for the garbage. They said it floated from the Asian mainland. I asked about the similar pollution problem on the Japanese Inland Sea, which faces Japan in every direction.

This was a sensitive issue in which I did not press hard for an answer, and I did not get one.

Another problem for which the Japanese like to blame China is that of the spring dust storms. Every spring the sky grows hazy and a fine layer of yellow dust collects on top of cars, and on the windows of buildings. I was told that it was Chinese dust, and so it is, but the manner in which they remove responsibility from their own shoulders and use China as a scapegoat is rather telling. The attitude is that if it is dirty, it came from outside.

Because subtlety and reserve are Confucian virtues—East Asian people usually do not yell out their opposition when they are confronted with something they do not like—it is small wonder that their schools reflect, encourage, and pass on those virtues. But while the students are devel-

oping, they may betray the feelings of their parents and teachers, not out of spite for their country and role models, but rather by impassionedly embracing them.

