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Alumni Association,
New York Chapter

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THE "ETHICS" ISSUE



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WAS THAT...UM...WRONG?

JET Alums Share Some of Their Ethically Challenged Moments

In the ruins of Sunpu-jo, in the park within what remains of the city walls of the long-gone castle, not too far from Shizuoka-ken's *Ken-cho* prefectural government offices, but inside the park, is the place where at night, so-inclined men can meet for outdoor, consensual sex, and many, many a night by the castle walls, I gave and received nice, dreamy, interracial, sweet oral sex with fine, regular, normal, sometimes even quite attractive Japanese men.



See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil

I used to have my girlfriend buy two *nyuujyouken*, which are platform tickets, and meet me at my stop. I would buy a *nyuujyouken* when I boarded, for about 180 yen. The *shinkansen* trip was about 45 minutes. I would spend a great deal of time in the bathroom. If a conductor found me, I would have to pay the full price (5,000 yen), but that would rarely happen. When I met my girlfriend, I could exit the station for a mere 180 yen with the *nyuujyouken* she purchased. Nagoya to Kyoto in 45 minutes: 360 yen.

My cousin was visiting from America and wanted to experience Asian loving at a reasonable price. As appalling as this may sound, my cousin had made the trip all the way to Japan, and I couldn't disappoint him. I had never done anything like this. At the door, I told the bouncer that only my cousin would require services, but he said I

couldn't enter without paying. I also learned that the rates for Japanese and *gaijin* were different. The Japanese fee was for a shorter time and less expensive, with the option to extend the time, whereas the *gaijin* fee was more expensive for a longer time, with no option to extend the "session."

We paid about 10,000 yen each and gained entrance. I found myself in a booth with a lovely lady from Kobe in a Budweiser body suit. We just talked. I swear it. My cousin, on the other hand (and I emphasize the word hand) did more than talk.

I was on JET during the World Cup 2002 tournament. A friend of mine had just broken up with his girlfriend and therefore had an extra ticket for the quarterfinal game between Brazil and England. His plan was to scalp the extra ticket at the game but injured his foot the night before. He decided that he couldn't effectively run away from security if he was caught scalping the ticket and so decided to sell it to me for face value. The next morning,

("Ethics" continued on page 12)

The "ETHICS" Issue

Wilford Brimley told us that eating oatmeal is "the right thing to do."

But when you go live abroad, "doing the right thing" sometimes becomes less clear than it was back home. When all of your new colleagues throw an *enkai* for you, everyone gets plastered, and then one of the teachers wants you to get in his car to head to the *nijikai*, do you go in the name of group unity? Do you say no? Are you obligated to not only say no but also use your limited Japanese to stop the driver too?

And what about just the whole concept of being a JET and making good coin at the Japanese taxpayer's expense? Did anyone else feel guilty about that? I know I did, though I can't say I had any trouble sleeping (other than when the wailing *yaki-imo* trucks passed by.)

This issue attempts to look back and look forward at some of the ethical issues connected with being a JET and a JET alum. Did we pay the NHK TV man when he came to the door? Are we setting good examples now that we're older and wiser? Have we led any countries into unnecessary wars? In other words, have we used our "super" powers for good and not for evil?

Read on and enjoy a bit of self reflection. It's the right thing to do.

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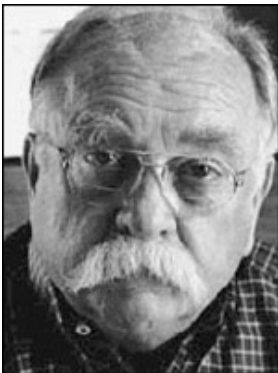
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Please check out e-mail from our Secretary and the web site www.jetaany.org for updated announcements.

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Wilford Brimley says:

"Get involved with JETAA. It's the right thing to do."



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Greetings from the President



Greetings fellow JETs!

2005 has been an outstanding year for our community. According to an unscientific study, JETAANY has organized or collaborated with other organizations in making **22 events** happen since the new officers took over in March. We are working hard to continue bringing you our usual signature events and rolling out new ones. For instance, this year we had our first-ever "Japan-o-mania" event in partnership with **Big Brother/ Big Sisters of New York** and **NYdeVolunteer**. It was a good chance for JET alum to collaborate with like-minded organizations and expose young American children to the wonders of Japanese culture (you can read more about it on pages 8 & 9.) Events like these would not be possible if our alum did not donate

their time and energy in translating their JET experience into something meaningful beyond their time spent in Japan. So as we usher in the new year of the dog, I encourage you to take advantage of all JETAANY has to offer and participate in our activities. Come out and see some of your old friends and make new ones too.

Yoi o-toshi wo!

Jennifer Olayon

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Hajimemashite to Dan Acton who recently joined the Japan Society working the box office. For all JET alums who want to get in free to JS events, the secret password can be found at the end of this column*.....

JETAA NEW YORK SOCIETY PAGE
by Yoku Shitteiru

of Yoku Shitteiru..... **Good company:** Did you know that the grandson of former US Ambassador to Japan and former US Senator Howard Baker is a current JET?..... *Walking the Bible*, the best-seller by JET alum **Bruce Feiler** (who also wrote *Learning to*

One such event might've been the October 26 **Zensations** event, featuring the gallery show **Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History**, where you'll see the JS rock out in a way you can't quite picture if you've ever been there during daylight hours. Keep your eyes open for the next event as these are quite fun.....

Bow), has been converted into a miniseries to be aired on PBS on January 4, 11 and 18.....**NYdeVolunteer** put together a socially responsible and fun fundraiser on Dec 8 at **Crestenella** on 5th Ave across from the Public Library. The socially responsible part was a talk by **Hiromi Mizota Wimalasiri, PhD** discussing and comparing the trends of giving and socially responsible investing in the US and Japan. The second half was just a fun networking party with good, friendly conversation and a raffle with excellent prizes for nearly everyone..... Most unexpected business card acquired: **Jewish Outreach Institute**...Meanwhile, keep your eyes glued to the *terebi* as NYdV head **Noriko Hino** will be NY1's "**New Yorker of the Week**" in an upcoming segment that was filmed on December 11..... Proposed future JE-

NY1's "**Travel with Val**" ran a segment in November on Inuyama and included an interview with JET alum, Brooklyn native and Inuyama City Council Member **Anthony Bianchi** was in town to help arrange a cultural exchange **Yoku Shitteiru** is bummed to announce that JET alum superstar **Lynette Martyn** has moved away from NYC to her home turf of Massachusetts. Lynette, in addition to her charming personality, organized JET alum participation in **New York Cares Day** and also organized many a **Nihongo Dake Dinner**. Whichever alumni chapter gets her should be quite the *ureshii* chapter..... On the photo contest front, while **Joan Sinclair** of San Francisco took first place in the JETAANC National Photo Contest and wins a free round trip ticket to Japan care of ANA and a one week rail pass compliments of Nippon Travel, Forest Hills' own **Stacy Smith** got an honorable mention for her photo "**Teahouse Gathering**" and wins an all-expense paid mention in **JETAA Society** courtesy



TAANY event: Japanese live pop music night with a double billing featuring two NY-based cross-cultural bands: **Gaijin-a-Go-Go** (see last issue) and Okinawa stylin' **Happyfunsmile** (see p11.) Perhaps the rowdiest JETAANY Development Meeting ever was held Saturday night, December 10 at karaoke hotspot **Japas 38**. After an efficient 30 minute meeting with, initially, about 20 JET alums from

(*"JETAA Society" continued on page 13*)

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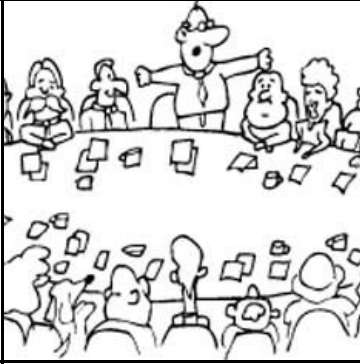
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JETAANY CAREER FORUM

On October 22, approximately 30 JET alums met up at the Nippon Club for the now annual JETAANY Career Forum to gain information and perspectives as well as network a bit in order to find that first job or figure out their next move. The Career Forum was sponsored

and organized by CLAIR, the Consulate General of Japan and JETAANY.

The Career Forum featured a career coach, a human resources consultant, a panel of JET alumni established in various professions, and representatives from several Japanese job placement agencies in New York.

Based on a follow-up survey, attendees found the Career Forum to be, for the most part, helpful as well as entertaining.

Career Coach Mico Zinty kicked off the event with an interactive talk about career development and how to use available resources effectively in your job search and in planning your career. Zinty tied in her own experiences with teaching English in China and Taiwan and figuring out her own career path which led to career coaching.

Laura Rehg (Gifu 2000-03) followed with an engaging talk about resumes and her own experiences reviewing resumes as an HR consultant for ima consulting. ima consulting is a firm that assists Japanese companies with various HR issues, including the hiring of staff.

Next was the JET Alumni Career Panel featuring established JET alums who spoke about their own careers and the paths they followed to get there. The panel included Glen Anderson (Miyazaki 1992-95), self-employed interpreter and translator who specializes in interpreting for financial institutions and court litigation; Yasmine Awais (1998-99), an art therapist who works as a counseling supervisor at The Door, a non-profit youth development agency; Rosemary de Fremery (Shizuoka 1998-01), Director of Information Technology at the American Jewish World Service; Catherine Fisco (Fukuoka 1993-95), an adjunct professor of Japanese language and history in the Department of Asian Studies at Seton Hall University and the Japanese program coordinator at Cranford High School in New Jersey; John Sandoval (Mie 1992-94), a Procter & Gamble assistant brand manager based in Puerto Rico working in the multicultural business development organization; and Yvonne Thurman (Kagoshima 1994-95), the Associate Director for Administration at the Center on Japanese Economy and Business of Columbia Business School. The panel was moderated by Patrick Dwyer (Mie 1993-95), a senior analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York who focuses on monetary policy.

After the Career Panel, Nick Cook (Tottori-ken, 1992-94) led a Q&A session with several NY-based Japanese staffing agencies, including Access, QUICK USA, Acces Consulting and MAX Consulting. Representatives discussed what areas they covered (e.g., financial, law, manufacturing, etc.) and whether to wear a suit when you go to the staffing agency's office (Interestingly, at least one said yes and one said no.)

The end of the Career Forum, of course, was not the end of the day for most as the JETAANY Welcome Back Reception followed on the second floor of the Nippon Club where everyone could set out to hone their networking skills.

CAREER FORUM SURVEY

JETAANY surveyed attendees on their reactions to the Career Forum. Here's some of what we learned:

**Most JET alums attended in order to meet other JET alums, and while the majority of attendees were looking to land their first post-JET job, a number of attendees were looking to change jobs.*

**A few alums said they attended because they thought it was a job "fair" and that there would be employment opportunities available.*

**Only one of the respondents also attended last year's Career Forum, hopefully a good sign that most of last year's attendees have found jobs.*

Here are some comments and suggestions from respondents:

"Having the opportunity to meet other alumni and to hear what they are involved in was very interesting."

"[A strength of the Career Forum was] getting to connect with other recent returnees."

"I thought the career coach presentation [by Mico Zinty] was good, and I thought it was a good presentation to open the seminar."

"Mico's speech wasn't tailored enough to JET and so was just really way too long and obvious."

"[The alumni panel] was the best part for me--seeing what my JET sempai out there have been doing!"

"The JET Sempai panel was the most useful part, and I was glad to get to hear what people have been doing."

"Let's have more JETs talk about how they found their first jobs off the program, and how they used the skills they learned in Japan to get the job, if applicable."

"All the presentations were interesting. However, I would suggest that you add more panelists, and make the individual presentations a bit shorter or have them be more interactive. Also, have a bit more Q & A time."

"Maybe next year we should limit the panel to 5 people including the moderator."

"Would be nice if the panelist were a little easier to track down afterwards."

"It was difficult to hear everyone [during the Q&A with the Japanese staffing agencies.] It would have been useful to have some visual aid with the names of the companies represented."

"Networking, useful advice from people who have all been in my shoes career-wise, sharp pointers for the 21st Century working/hiring world."

"Some opportunity for 1 on 1 career advice would be nice."

Well, it just so happens that Mico Zinty offers 1 on 1 career coaching and is offering a special resume review discount to 2005 returned JETs. More info at www.jetaany.org or email secretary@jetaany.org.

PLAYING THE GAIJIN CARD
By Stacy Smith

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is a refrain familiar to all, and better adapted by some than others. The Japanese version of this expression, "Sumeba miyako," translates into something closer to "Once you live in a place it grows on you" or "You can get used to living anywhere." I find it interesting that the

Japanese version doesn't really acknowledge the possibility of accommodating yourself to the culture; instead it has more of a tone of resigning yourself to the idiosyncrasies and differences of your unfamiliar surroundings. Maybe I'm reading too much into something that does not require such deep analysis, but I find it worth noting as I believe it is reflective of the larger Japanese attitude toward foreigners.

All of us who have spent time in Japan know that though it is a wonderful country, the attitude toward foreigners is not one of its especially commendable features. Beginning with the *kanji* for foreigner meaning "outside person" and the lovely title of "alien" received when one registers at a local government office, it is clear that there is a very healthy division between the Japanese and the non-Japanese. Whether this separation is necessary for Japanese society to run smoothly is a whole other discussion, but the inescapable fact is that in Japan no matter how long you live there, how well you speak the language, and how much effort you put into acclimating yourself, as long as your face is not Japanese you will forever be a *gaijin*.

I am not saying this as a criticism, just acknowledging it as the state of affairs in Japanese society. It is a large part of why, despite seriously considering it, I ultimately felt I couldn't make Japan my home. Although I love so many other things about it as a country (its food, onsen, and people to just name a few), in the end I just didn't think I could go through life as the "other." However, this having been said, there can be advantages to being considered an outsider. There are certainly times when it is in your interest to not be fully accepted, as you can be exempted from aspects of society that you wouldn't want to deal with in the first place. When a foreigner in Japan takes advantage of his/her outsider status to receive special treatment generally not granted to Japanese citizens, this is what is known as "playing the *gaijin* card." For better or worse, it is something that is an inevitable part of foreigners' lives in Japan, whether to a great extent or a small one, on a conscious level or subconsciously. Let's explore some ways in which the *gaijin* card can be played!

According to a survey on the Japan Reference & Eupedia Forum entitled "Is it right to take advantage of your *gaijin* card?" (referring not to the literal item but *gaijin* status), 52.63% of the respondents felt that it depends on the circumstances. The second largest group was at 26.32% with No, and the final group was at 21.05% with Yes. I was glad to find that I fall into the majority group, as I am not a fan of playing the card but have been known to do so in some cases when according to my judgment the situation demanded it. Predominantly, but not exclusively, playing the *gaijin* card involves pretending you don't speak the Japanese language when you do. In the comments that followed this survey, one of the topics that received particular attention was the Japanese train system. Either in protest at the expensive transportation prices or because of situations where one didn't have enough money for a ticket, many of the participants in the forum cited examples of playing the *gaijin* card in regard to this. I must admit that I have a travel related anecdote as well, but it is probably one of the most honest cases of playing the *gaijin* card. While visiting Tokyo, I was heading back to a friend's apartment and bought the subway ticket for 190 yen. Somewhere along the course of the ride, I misplaced my ticket so that I did not have it when I got off. As you have to stick the ticket in a final time when you leave, I was in trouble. I opted to use English to explain to the person in the booth where I boarded and that I had indeed bought the ticket but lost it. Maybe because he believed me, maybe because I was a *gaijin*, maybe because it wasn't a large sum of money, he let me go. Who knows if a Japanese person would have gotten the same treatment, but I feel like my *gaijin*-ness was a factor, albeit probably a small one.

I think the most famous example of when the *gaijin* card is played is when the ubiquitous NHK employee makes his visit to your house. As you all probably know, NHK is a public broadcaster and therefore charges a fee to everyone living in Japan, whether you watch this channel or not. The pesky NHK employee will come along periodically to collect this money, and is likely to knock on your door whether you have the revealing NHK sticker identifying you as a customer or not. This is a prime case of when one's *gaijin*-ness can be exploited. I personally encountered this situation once, and had been amply warned by Japanese friends that paying was unavoidable and that no matter how much you hide the NHK guy would be back to collect his dues. However, by pretending I didn't speak Japanese, this fateful meeting went much more smoothly than expected. He pointed to the NHK sticker hanging outside my door, and I shrugged my shoulders in confusion. He tried to show me the forms he was holding written in Japanese, and I indicated my inability to understand them. Eventually, his broken English could not stand up to my fast paced NY English and he left resignedly. Did I feel a bit guilty? Yes, especially since I did enjoy NHK programs every now and then. I don't know why

I did it, when I'm sure the fee would have been nominal. Maybe it was the rush of using my *gaijin* power for good (granted, my own), instead of having my *gaijin*-ness solely be the stigma that accompanied my daily life.

As for how playing the *gaijin* card translates into my life here in the States, I am currently working at a Japanese company so I do have chances to test the merits of this conduct outside of Japan. Another aspect of playing the *gaijin* card mentioned in the online forum was pretending you don't speak Japanese for the purpose of assessing someone's opinion of you. Basically, this means eavesdropping on Japanese without their knowledge, presumably while they talk about you (e.g., in order to know what a potential date/ employer thinks of you). The extent of my card playing these days falls into that category, like when I am in the elevator with people from my floor (which is composed of several Japanese companies) and casually listen to their conversations, its participants oblivious to the fact that I understand Japanese. Not that they are talking about me per se, but I am sometimes able to pick up nuggets of their conversations that are particularly juicy! However, I don't think this type of behavior technically can be described as playing the *gaijin* card, since I am not particularly taking advantage of anything or anyone.

Fundamentally, playing the *gaijin* card really is a bit of a slippery slope, because you can essentially always find some way to justify this practice. Additionally, each time you abuse this power, you are giving all the foreigners in Japan a bad name and setting back their penetration into Japanese society a little bit further. This is the official line, but to be honest I think it is rare to find a *gaijin* who has never played this card. Depending on the situation, whether this is wrong or right is where the moral quandary begins. Some might argue that until foreigners are treated equally to Japanese, some degree of special treatment is fair, or even deserved. Others might say that no matter what, a "*gaijin*" is just that, an outside person, and that under all circumstances it is best to stick to the famous adage about Rome and blend in as best as possible. I expect that most *gaijin* fall somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, and would be curious to know how often each of us has played the *gaijin* card while in Japan, whether intentionally or not.



Nicolas Lennon (Toyama-ken, 2000-01) was recently selected one of the winners of the 2005 JETAA Essay Contest sponsored by Kintetsu International for his essay on ethics and leadership. Nick has a Ph.D. in

Educational Psychology and works in the field of Leadership Development at the University of Texas at Austin. He facilitates leadership and ethics workshops and advises university student leaders who develop and implement educational, social, recreational and cultural programs. His work with both US and international students, as well as his experiences living and working abroad, have allowed him the opportunity to observe certain cultural differences regarding leadership styles and ethical principles. These experiences inspired him to propose the Japan-USA Leadership and Ethics Exchange Program.

Nick is very excited about the possibility of implementing a program in the near future similar to the one described in this essay. He is currently seeking funding for an exchange program focused on the cultural aspects of leadership and ethics and has been working to make contacts both in the US and Japan. Nick welcomes any input or assistance with the implementation of his program and can be reached by email at: n.lennon@union.utexas.edu

What are the similarities and differences between how people in Japan and people in the US define and practice leadership? What does it mean to be an ethical leader in Japan? What does it mean to be an ethical leader in the US? Can individuals from these two diverse cultures develop mutual understanding and grow as leaders and ethical citizens through a grassroots exchange program focused on the cross-cultural aspects of ethical leadership? I believe that the answer to this last question is a resounding "yes" and have been inspired to draw on my years of leadership development experience to propose the Japan-USA Leadership and Ethics Exchange Program (LEEP).

When people in the US think of leaders they often think of famous public speakers and those who stand out from the crowd. The individual is commonly the focus of a leader's motivational strategies in the US. In Japan it seems that two of the most respected leadership characteristics are promoting cohesion and collaboration. In addition, leaders in Japan often focus on role modeling and are very adept at dealing with ambiguity. These are broad generalizations, but it is generally accepted that leaders in each country have certain shared cultural leadership patterns. By creating and implementing a program in which these cultural patterns are openly discussed and integrated with one another, participants can develop mutual understanding and move towards a more flexible style of leadership. The LEEP program will focus on bringing the strengths of Japanese leadership to the US and the strengths of US leadership to Japan.

When I facilitate leadership workshops in the US, I find that a variety of people list Adolf Hitler as a strong leader because of his ability to captivate an audience, to inspire a shared vision and to move people to action. However, great leaders must have outstanding ethical decision making skills and any discussion of leadership without a corresponding discussion of ethics is seriously lacking. Should we follow orders from a boss when doing so might cause us to act against one of our values? Is it ethical to omit or slightly exaggerate some personal information in order to get a job that we want as long as we do not lie? Growing up in the US, and having the opportunity to live in Japan, I have come across instances of both sound and unsound ethical decision-making in each culture. There are some fairly consistent cultural differences in terms of ethics, as well as some significant areas of overlap, and one of the best ways to step out of our cultural contexts is to have an open and honest dialogue about how to lead a good life with people from different backgrounds.

This is not just a discussion for those in high-level positions. There is an

Kintetsu Essay Contest Winner: Japan-USA Leadership and Ethics Exchange Program (LEEP)

immediate need for people at all levels of society to discuss these issues and to focus on how they can be better ethical leaders. If we look closely enough in our daily lives we will find family, friends, students, community members and local government officials who exhibit exemplary ethical leadership skills as well as those who could benefit from a different cultural perspective. A grassroots leadership and ethics program has the potential to spread from individuals to communities to organizations to the national and even international level for the betterment of society as a whole.

I have briefly discussed the importance of this program, but now I would like to address its practicality. The participation of individual JET alumni, as well as JETAA as a whole, will be essential in order to set the program in motion and identify potential exchange partners. For the purposes of this essay I would like to focus on young professionals (i.e. 22-35 year olds), but this program could be implemented at almost any level of society.

Clearly defined goals drive an exchange program and there are many learning objectives to consider; too many to list here. However, I would like to list some of the most important learning objectives. Participants in this exchange program should:

- Learn some popular Japanese and US theories about ethical decision-making;
- Learn which leadership skills are most valued and effective in each culture;
- Understand themselves, their own culture and the other country's culture better;
- Cultivate a global perspective;
- Realize that to be a leader they do not need to be in a formal leadership position;
- Take the time to actively reflect on their experiences;
- Apply their learning to serve the common good.

Too often, theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge are not well integrated in an educational exchange program. However, there are many benefits to linking theory with opportunities for experiential education, including the reinforcement of both forms of learning. Here are some ways in which this link can be made in the LEEP program:

- Reach out to a local charitable organization (e.g. Habitat for Humanity in the US) to find a service project in which participants can work towards a common goal and see each other's leadership styles in action;
- Bring in speakers from various areas (e.g. schools, government, non-profit organizations, corporations) that can share personal stories of leadership and ethics from different cultural perspectives;
- Show films followed by discussion sessions;
- Organize dinners with local students, staff and/or community members;
- Attend a leadership conference together;
- Shadow an exemplary staff member;
- Propose a project to be implemented upon the participants return home.

The LEEP program could provide participants with a global perspective on ethical leadership and inspire the development of the numerous and diverse skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. It would bring together a wide variety of Japanese and US participants and help them develop mutual understanding and appreciation. I truly hope to implement this program and help participants discover which skills are most valued and most effectively used by their counterparts so that they can develop and spread their new cross-cultural understanding throughout each culture.

JAPAN-O-MANIA

JETAANY Brings Japan to Big Brothers/Big Sisters of NY

November 5th marked JETAA's first official cooperation with **Big Brothers/Big Sisters of New York**. A group of dedicated **NY de Volunteer** and **JETAA volunteers** introduced Japanese culture to 60 kids, parents and Bigs (aka Big Brother/Big Sister volunteers).

JETAA planned, set-up and staffed booths for *onigiri*, *origami*, *katakana*, *kimono* and chopstick challenge! Kids were also treated to a live demonstration from **Seido Karate** and Japanese snacks generously donated by JAS Mart. Calpis was a bigger hit than expected, and of course the Pocky flew off the table... A complete success, the kids were ready for us to do it again and again and again...we had a number of requests to make this not only an annual but a bi-annual event! More volunteers are always welcome – email vicepresident@jetaany.org

Special kudos to Nikki for food shopping, Kim for her chopstick challenge, Joe for sharing his experiences, Steve for charming JAS Mart, Zara as the most helpful FOJ ever, NY de Volunteer for everything, and the Consulate for their help and amazing prizes.

-Kat Barnas



Seido Karate demonstration



The Chopstick Challenge!



Makin' origami!



Kat Barnas and friend enjoy some Calpis.



Learning to write his name in *katakana*.



"O-tsukare sama deshita!"



Big Brother/Big Sister Poker Championship?

TALES FROM THE REGISTRATION TABLE

Kids got stamp sheets to encourage them not only to go to each booth but also to learn some Japanese facts along the way. My favorite guest of the day was a young guy, I think his name was Mike, who was convinced that Thailand was an one of the islands of Japan. (Watch out Hokkaido, you are not as famous as you think :-). Towards the end of the day a mother and I were talking about languages. I showed her how to count to ten in *romaji* and *kanji* and she loved it. Things got more amusing when her son (probably about 4 years old) asked me for my number, my phone number, so that he could call me... it was the most original pick-up line I have heard in a while.... Joking aside, it was one of the best Saturdays I have had. Not only did it bring back great memories but it was a chance to create new ones while making new friends.

-Kat Barnas



Trying on the yukata.



"Time to make the mochi."



Two men comfortable in their yukatas.



Kakkou ii deshou!

See these pictures in **COLOR!!**
Go to www.jetaany.org and click "Newsletter"

HELLO S.U.M.O., GOOD-BYE TRADITION

by Justin Tedaldi



You know what it's like when you see a band that's shed all its original members but carries on under the old name like it's still supposed to be the same thing? That's the feeling I got on Oct. 22 at the first-ever S.U.M.O. Battle of the Giants championship at Madison Square Garden.

An acronym for Sumo Ultimate Masters Organization, Long Island-based Big Boy Productions' creation tries something new in that it aims to bring all-rules-intact sumo to sport-crazy Americans while glitzy things up to hook the WWE crowd. Since this was the first sumo exhibition held at the Garden since 1992, both audiences showed, with over 8,000 in attendance.

Things kicked off with a video display and stage gymnastics to the beat of taiko drummers. It meant to serve as a theatrical re-enactment of the origins of sumo, yet I couldn't help noticing that the young lady swinging in a basket overhead looked like a drag queen (she was supposed to represent a goddess).

The production values for the actual matches were similarly uneven. While former *yokozuna* Musashimaru was on hand to provide commentary for the event's forthcoming TV broadcast, the referee they picked, although Japanese, looked like he just stepped out of a welterweight fight at the MGM Grand. Zebra stripes all the way, with only the shiny whistle missing from the ensemble. It was hard to tell if the solemn look on his face was out of seriousness or just plain shame.



Norway's Hans Borg

The ring itself? Picture the big blue fifty-dollar gym mat you faked doing push-ups on in high school. The strobe lights and smoke that accompanied each wrestler's entrance were also as far removed from the world's oldest sport as could be. But it was entertaining (if a bit repetitive, since there were 24 combatants), and that's what mattered most to the crowd.

It strolled the wrestlers. The first part of the tourney was round-robin matches

on each of their four teams, the names straight out of an episode of *Thundercats*. Though the weight of the international (mostly European, with three American) wrestlers ranged from 200 to 450 pounds, the lighter guys seemed much more adept at winning, using their speed to throw the big guys off balance. All of them were considered "pro" sumo wrestlers in their homelands, with the Japanese ones serving in an apprentice class opposed to the majors.

Every squad of athletes has its share of hams, and Hans Borg of Norway filled that niche nicely. Whether it was blowing kisses to the audience or shooting that "I can't hear you" look after a victorious match, the "Psycho Sumo"—so dubbed by Big Boy's publicity team since he works at an insane asylum back home—pleased the crowd with his anything-but-traditional behavior. He lasted as far as the quarterfinals.

The championship saw Japan's 411-pound Mitsuhiko Fukao against 343-pound Petar Stoyanov of Bulgaria. Yes, Bulgaria. In what was clearly a clash between good and evil (Stoyanov was called by the crowd on a several cases of unsportsmanlike conduct), the victor was the more traditional of the two, thanks to Stoyanov stepping out of bounds just before slamming Fukao to the mat.

After sumo-sized checks of \$10,000 and \$5,000 were handed to the warriors, patrons were advised to keep their eyes peeled for the next stop on S.U.M.O.'s North American tour. No date has been announced yet, but given the popularity of the event — the 10-second bouts registered with fans accustomed to time-outs and penalty breaks in their favorite sports — it seems likely that S.U.M.O. may return next year and possibly legitimize sumo wrestling as an actual Olympic event by 2012. Just hopefully not in this incarnation.

For more information on S.U.M.O., log on to: www.worldsumochallenge.com

(“*Harakiri*” continued from page 14)

the face of power and condemns the hierarchical power structure of feudal Japan. By exposing the hypocrisy of the Iyi clan elders (the plot details won't be divulged), Tsugumo attacks the very foundation of the *bushido* code and exposes the entire societal structure as an empty shell. In this way, Kobayashi has made an “anti-samurai” film perhaps best exemplified by the suit of armor at the center of the Iyi court. The film begins with an isolated shot of the imposing suit surrounded by darkness and white mist. At the end of the film, Tsugumo tears the suit apart and reveals the emptiness beneath during the climactic battle. Similarly, Kobayashi shoots most of the scenes with a formalistic and ordered placement of people and objects. In times of distress, his camera becomes angular and discordant, with jarring close-ups of eyes and faces, particularly during Chijiwa's act of *seppuku*. Aided by Nakadai's intense performance and Yoshio Miyajima's stark black and white photography, Kobayashi creates a mood of pervasive tension as Tsugumo and his enemies engage in psychological warfare — the Iyi elders know that he has something other than *seppuku* in mind and that appearances aren't what they seem. As in the best of tragedy, there is a sense of inevitable fatality about the proceedings. The corrupt and evil ways of the clan lead to its own nihilistic undoing. The film ends with a final shot of the restored empty body

of armor, indicating that despite what has transpired, shogunate Japan will continue to be ruled by the blind vestiges of totalitarian power.

Criterion should be commended, as always, for the quality of the restored print and digital transfer. The supplemental interview with Nakadai is especially informative on the making of the film and his approach to the role of Tsugumo. As a member of Tokyo's *Shingeki* (New Theatre), Nakadai's performance embodies the individualism and resistance to conformity of postwar Japan. Hashimoto's interview details the writing of the screenplay and places the concept of *seppuku* within the thematic context of the film. Both artists detail the creative process during production and their working relationships with the uncompromising Kobayashi. Kobayashi's interview is a disappointment, however, as the director comes across as rambling and eccentric. But, that should not diminish one's opinion of this great filmmaker. After all, directors are judged on the merits of their creative work rather than their social skills. By this criterion, *Harakiri* reveals Masaki Kobayashi to be a great master of cinema.

HAPPYFUNSMILE

A little irony. a lot of tradition

by Alexei Erikoff



I feel closest to Japan when at **Kenka** on St. Marks Place. There's far better Japanese food to be had in the city, but nothing beats Kenka in terms of cheap rowdy fun. Their colorful menu includes various animal, uh, body parts on the menu. Once my brother and I gamely ordered turkey testicles. We were served bull penis instead (and no, it wasn't sliced or anything, merely unadulterated penis stretched on a white plate covered with mysterious yellow sauce). As for the taste, let's just say my brother, who was the kind of kid to make scary food experiments on his lunch tray in middle school, could only manage two bites.

But I digress. On Thursday, November 10, I went to Kenka with your newsletter's editor extraordinaire, Steven, to see a group called **Happyfunsmile**. All I knew about them was that they performed Okinawan pop songs. Whatever that was.

Kenka was even more crowded than usual: since there's no stage to speak of, seating was removed from the middle of the restaurant. The band set up as we devoured curry rice and *nama beeru*. So far, things looked familiar; there was a keyboard, guitar, bass, and saxophone. On the floor, a guy in a white headband laid out instruments that looked like smaller versions of *taiko* drums.

At least eight people gathered on the "stage." The only female was a singer, clad in a *yukata*. A male singer, sporting a full head of spiky hair and wearing *tabi* on his feet, joined her. Some of the other instrumentalists were decked out tropical-style in Hawaiian shirts and Mardi Gras beads. The most conspicuous performer strapped to his chest a wooden contraption with a tub-sized drum and high hat, which he beat on either side.

And the music was joyful! Those with movable instruments danced in the confined aisle, inviting people to join in. Their movements, to my unknowing eye, resembled those performed by groups at an *obon* dance. Most of the songs were upbeat, with simple shout-worthy choruses. Brian Nishii and Miho Tsuji, the lead singers, exchanged lyrics conversationally. When they occasionally slowed it down, Miho performed *enka* numbers. Her voice perfectly captured the sweeping emotion *enka* requires. Songs and sets were both short, perfect for my attention span. Surprisingly, not every song sounded "Japanese." The Okinawan ones owed more to the Pacific

islands than Tokyo. Others, recreating a sound and rhythm like a klezmer band, were nearly Eastern European.

Steven was smiling. I was too. The music, the sense of fun, was totally infectious. "This is the closest I've felt to Japan since I've come home," I said, meaning it.

Later, I spoke with Wynn Yamami, the founder of the Happyfunsmile and the performer of the chest-drum. Besides Okinawan pop and *enka*, they do *chindon*, something I was unfamiliar with.

"*Chindon* is onomopoeia for the sound of the instrument: the 'chin' of the kane and the 'don' of the taiko drum," Wynn said. *Chindon* is a dying musical form in Japan, mostly because it's never been recognized as a legitimate one. At the turn of the last century, stores, theaters, and arcades hired musicians to stand outside their places of business, trying to lure people in through flamboyant costumes, catchy tunes, and short skits mocking *kabuki*. As Japan grew technologically advanced so quickly, *chindonya* fell out of style. (Think about it: how many *chindonya* did you come across in your JET tenure?)

Today, it's hard to find a group with members under sixty. Happyfunsmile is one of the bands attempting to revive the art. They aren't the only ones interested; there's an annual *chindonya* festival in Toyama, which

Wynn attended this year.

Overall, watching Happyfunsmile was one of my best Japan experiences outside of the country. Even in a multicultural city like New York, it's not a sound often heard. Combined with the cheerful enthusiasm of a Kenka crowd, it makes a terrific night out.

Visit www.happyfunsmile.com for a schedule of upcoming performance dates. And if they play at Kenka again, then go, eat your curry rice and bull penis, and find yourself transported back to Japan.



("Ethics" continued from page 1)

I had to tell my school that I only had time to teach the first period class, that I had unexpectedly gotten a ticket to the Quarter Final game and would have to catch a train to Shizuoka. Needless to say this didn't go over very well with my fellow English teachers or the Kocho-sensei, all of whom gave me the silent treatment. Upon my next visit to that school, one of the classes had prepared a series of essays saying how disappointed and upset they were at my decision. That class's English teacher was no doubt behind the assignment.

The worst moral misstep I ever had happened in Japan. I had a bit much to drink at my local watering hole and the bartender who I knew from my jaunts out offered to drive me home. He drove me home and asked if he could come in for a drink. He came in and we proceeded to have a drink and smoke some marijuana that a friend had given me. Then much to my surprise (though I suppose I shouldn't have been very surprised considering the circumstances) he leaned in for a kiss. I wasn't really interested and I knew that he was engaged, but I decided to follow through since my major was Japanese culture and I figured sex was a part of the culture... it was all in the name of education.

My father came to visit me and he brought me a JR Pass voucher. Yes, the letter of the law is that you're supposed to have a tourist visa to exchange it for the JR Pass, but I discovered back when I was a college student on a student visa that as long as you have people there visiting you, all you have to do is find a sympathetic person at a JR office who is willing to change them both. So I traveled around with my dad on my own pass with my name on it. It was a one week pass that expired the day that he left to go back to the US. I was supposed to fly out of Tokyo the following day to visit a friend in Singapore and I would really rather've had the cash to spend in Singapore than give it to JR.

Backing up a bit... when I first arrived in Japan for JET, I invested in a scanner and a really good (at that time) ink-jet printer. I had scanned in a lot of photos to bring with me for jikoshokai and such, and I had a digital camera. I wanted to be able to print out my pictures 8 x 10 size whenever I wanted for a lesson.

A JR unlimited-use pass, for those who have never seen one, is printed on stiff, almost chipboard paper. It's about the size of a passport and folds like a passport. The outside has a picture of Mt. Fuji on the front with the JR logo, and the back has a list of rules of use (This pass can only be used by the person whose name appears on the inside, etc.) The JR employee writes, by hand the name and the passport number of the person who is using the pass, then stamps the start date and expiration date with a stamp that's basically like the ones that the librarian uses to stamp the due date of your book. There are 7 day and 14 day unlimited-travel passes that can be used on any JR line in the country including JR busses and ferries and the Shinkansen.

I stared at the pass for a long time trying to figure out if I could do it. All I needed to do was change the last two numbers of the expiration date on the pass and I could use it to go to Narita and to come back again. I scanned in the inside face of the pass and opened it up with PhotoShop (which I should mention was a pirated version that I got from a college boyfriend who had been a computer science major). I made a

little square on a blank section of the pass that didn't have anything written on it, just the "JR" logo background and hit "copy", then I clicked on the expiration date of the pass and hit "paste". I repeated a few times until I had it covered. Then I picked a font, color and size that most closely matched the stamp and typed in a new date. Voila! I printed it out, cut around it, put a light dose of glue on the edges and pasted it into the original pass. Surely somebody who worked at JR in Tokyo and exchanged these passes on a regular basis would know that it was fake, but my hunch was that the JR shain with barely a high school diploma working in my soto inaka machi wouldn't be able to tell the difference. After all, they just glance at it and your foreign face as you breeze through the turnstile and then you sit jiyuu seki anyway. I had no backup plan if I got caught. No elaborate excuse. Not a smart decision in retrospect.

But it worked. The first time I was terrified, but the guy barely glanced at it just as I had expected. My printer and scanner paid for themselves with that first trip to Tokyo and back. Each time got easier, and I got braver. I changed start dates and expiration dates to fit my travel dates, and started hooking my friends up. All they had to do was have a pass, it didn't even have to be theirs. I could copy and paste over the name and passport number and they could write in their own. When we were sent anywhere at the office's expense, I would pocket the travel money and go on my free ticket. I hardly did any travel overseas during JET, but I did see many little nooks and crannies of Japan that most of my fellow JETs didn't because it's cheaper to travel to Thailand than it is to go to Hokkaido.

Word got around about how lax the JR guys were. A friend of mine used a pass of his that had expired months ago and didn't even try to change the date. He just walked on and off the train, no questions asked. I was a bit humbled when I heard this, but not so much that I was willing to try it myself.

Regrets? None. JR is not hurting for cash. I don't feel bad about taking (er...stealing) a few thousand dollars of travel from them. Their rates are ridiculous anyway. I guess this means I lack scruples, but mostly I'm just pleased with myself that I was able to pull it off for so long. If anything, I owe Adobe Photoshop a cut, or at least a free trip on the Shinkansen.

I was driving back from dropping a friend off when I saw a bright flash. About a week later, I received a post card from the police department with a picture of me driving my car, information about how fast I was driving (too fast) and instructions to come to the police station. I had never even heard of photo enforcement. It just so happened my three-year tenure on JET was coming to a close, and so I skipped out of the country. Another car related incident: My shya-ken ran out in May, but I kept driving my car until late July.

I was hitchhiking with my friend, we were in Kyushu, right by the bridge to Honshu, in this little park overlooking the water and, more importantly, the expressway. We could see it, but we had no idea how to get ourselves onto the expressway so we could hitchhike back home. In the park we saw a young couple. I strategized in my head and then suggested that we innocently ask the young couple if they know how to get to the expressway. Of course they won't know, but they won't want to tell us "no" and they'll give us a ride to wherever it

("Ethics" continued on page 13)



"I figured sex was a part of the culture... it was all in the name of education."

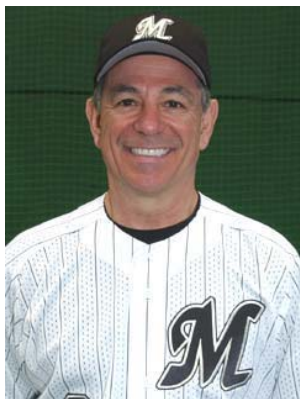
("JETA Society" continued from page 4)



NYC, San Diego, Tokyo and even the **North Pole** packed into a small karaoke room, everyone spread out into *three* rooms for *tabehodai* and *nomihodai* and *natsukashii* renditions of *Take Me Home Country Road* and **Utada Hikaru**

songs. Best karaoke video of the night: **Ebony and Ivory**. See, there's a white dog and a black dog playing together and then the owners... well, maybe you should just go to Japas 38 and see it for yourself..... Major props to JETAANY Secretary **Brian Hersey**, sender of the weekly JETAANY e-mail, for a nice thank you from an appreciative member, who wrote, "This e-newsletter was very well organized and visually easy to read, not to mention engaging. These days, with most organizations sending out newsletters, it's almost become a chore to try to read the whole content. But this time I made it to the bottom with no problem! :-)" (Additional compliments are welcome at secretary@jetaany.org.)

There is nothing to report about all-around good guy **Janak Bhimani** this issue.... And lastly, congratulations to all you longtime suffering **Chiba Lotte Marine Fans** (and I know you're out there) for unbelievably winning the Japan Series. Apparently it had something to do with **Bobby Valentine's** special management style..... *How ethical would it be if there really was a secret JET alum password for JS events?



By Brian Hall

("Ethics" continued from page 12)

is we need to go. Not only did they naively fall into my trap, and not only did it turn out to be a first date for them, and not only did they drive us a half hour to a tollbooth plaza and give us their whole Mapple book, but they came back ten minutes after dropping us off because they realized they'd taken us to the wrong tollbooth plaza. So of course they drove us another half hour to a different tollbooth plaza. I felt bad, but I was still proud that my strategy worked. And in another situation a year later, when I knew I had a long walk ahead of me back to a friend's place from a convenience store, I struck again. I just went up to someone coming out of the store, put on my best troubled face, and asked them if they knew how to get to *nani-nani* address. They sucked their teeth for a moment, cocked their head... and then - surprise, surprise - offered to drive me. *****

I was driving back from the city to my *apato* in the suburb, and found myself in the slow lane (the left lane), and, having lost patience, abruptly changed lanes into the fast lane (the right lane). The driver of a large, white, and relatively old Cadillac (an odd sight in Japan),

who probably had to step on his brake when changed lanes, was furious. He started flashing his lights and coming within inches of my bumper as we traveled about 60 miles per hour. Eventually, he switched

over to the left lane (the slow lane) where there were no cars now, and came even with me. He swerved and beeped his horn in this manifestation of Japanese road rage. I had a strange urge to get away, and sped up to about 90 or 100, and even passed someone using the shoulder. The angry man stayed right on my tail. Finally, we came to my exit, an off ramp. I pretended that I was going to go straight on the main highway, and then at the last second,

just before hitting cones in the middle between the ramp and the road, waded to my nemesis, who was on my left, and tugged the wheel to the right.... I thought I had lost him, but he shockingly switched into the right lane and then to the ramp, crushing the cones to get to the exit road. The ramp turned into a road with one lane in each direction, and the man passed me on my right, in the oncoming lane, and forced me to stop in the middle of the road by cutting me off. He got out of his car and started walking towards me, shaking his fists. He looked to be about 65. I immediately backed up, turned around, and went the other way, finding my way back to the main road.



Movie Review

MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA

by Justin Tedaldi



Note: Justin was originally supposed to review this film the weekend of December 9. However, despite the JETAANY Newsletter's pull in the entertainment industry, all the movie theatres in NYC were sold out. Nonetheless, our fearless reviewer contacted a friend who did see the movie and, while not a JET alum himself, is qualified to comment in this esteemed publication by virtue of having lived in Japan in the past. Justin contacted this friend and was able to obtain some comments and perspectives on the film. Special props to Alexei Esikoff who, called at the last minute on Sunday, attempted to catch a matinee of the film for the greater good of the Newsletter, but was also turned away at the ticket window as all shows for the weekend were sold out (perhaps by Arthur Golden's relatives?)

In any event, enjoy the comments and then go see the movie yourself if you are so inclined.

After years of being stuck in Hollywood limbo, Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* finally makes it to the big screen. But is this a case of better late than never? Unfortunately, my theater's shows were all sold out at press time, but my good buddy Jesse managed to see the film at a special **sneak preview for Japan Society members** on Dec. 8. Here's what he had to say:

"This movie is a successful adaptation of the book. Although Japanese dialogue is only spoken at the very beginning, it isn't too jarring to hear the mostly international cast speak in English with Japanese accents, with the occasional "mitte mitte" thrown in. It might have been better for the audience if this was translated, though, since if they don't know Japanese they might feel as if they are missing out on something.

"The performances are also good, although I didn't feel that the mostly Chinese cast playing the geishas were convincingly Japanese enough in behavior. Gong Li and Michelle Yeoh are the standouts, along with the Japanese girl who plays Sayuri as a child. Ken Watanabe wasn't as convincing or effective as the leading man here compared to his role in *The Last Samurai*. I wonder what American audiences will think of this movie if they've already seen the former.

"Although the film spends too much time on attention to detail and lengthy explanations of things Japanese that may not have even been in the book, when taken as a whole it still works. Those who read the book will enjoy the beauty of what's on screen. Director Rob Marshall had a particular vision of Japan as well as a place in time when making the film, and it shows."

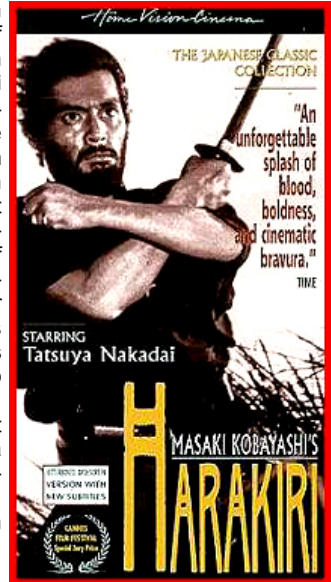


DVD REVIEW

Masaki Kobayashi's HARAKIRI

by Lyle Sylvander

The Criterion Collection continues its reissue of classic Japanese films with the release of **Masayuki Kobayashi's *Harakiri***, winner of the Special Jury Prize at the 1963 Cannes Film Festival. *Harakiri* was an enormous international hit and is universally acknowledged as a masterwork of Japan's Golden Age of cinema. Yet its director never achieved the iconic status of fellow contemporaries Akira Kurosawa, Yasujiro Ozu and Kenji Mizoguchi. Criterion seeks to correct this imbalance by offering a host of supplemental material on an additional DVD. Included are interviews with film scholar Donald Ritchie, star Tatsuya Nakadai, screenwriter Shinobu Hashimoto and Kobayashi himself (filmed in 1993, three years before his death). As is the case with most great filmmakers, Kobayashi expressed a unique vision with thematic consistency. While Kobayashi never equaled the vast output of some of his more famous colleagues (particularly Kurosawa), he nevertheless produced a masterwork in *Harakiri* that stands among the best of Japanese cinema.



The film takes place in 1630, during the early reign of the Tokugawa shogunate. Many clans and fiefdoms were destroyed by the Tokugawa consolidation of power and masterless samurai (*ronin*) wandered the countryside looking for employment. One such *ronin*, Motome Chijiiwa (Akira Ishihama) arrives at the court of the Iyi clan and requests that he be permitted to perform *harakiri* or *seppuku* (ritual suicide). Chijiiwa has lost his livelihood and is hoping that the clan, which is protected by its powerful Tokugawa ally, hire him on as a retainer instead. The clan is contemptuous of such tactics, which are quite common among destitute ronin, and they decide to preside over his death rather than provide assistance. In an ultimate act of humiliation, Chijiiwa is forced to disembowel himself with his bamboo sword, as he has sold his real samurai sword. This story is told in flashback and the film's plot focuses on Chijiiwa's father-in-law, Hanshiro Tsugumo (Tatsuya Nakadai), who arrives at the Iyi court with a similar request to commit *harakiri*. Eventually, Tsugumo shames the Iyi clan elders before their retainers and avenges his son-in-law's death.

As Ritchie explains, *Harakiri* continues the critique of authoritarian power in Kobayashi's previous trilogy *The Human Condition*. The feudalist structure of Tokugawa Japan provides the same moral conflict that the modern military did in the earlier film. Kobayashi rejects individual submission in

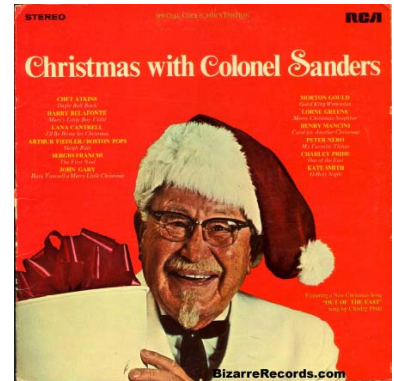
(*"Harakiri"* continued on page 10)

THE "ETHICS" ISSUE TOP 10!

We're all back, safe and sound in the good ol' US of A, done forever with our JET experience. And yet, some things still linger. Things we did, or perhaps still do, that we're not particularly proud of, that still gnaw at us, and that are ...

THE TOP 10 THINGS STILL TUGGING AT A JET ALUM'S CONSCIENCE

10. Fit of drunken spending that led to 800 yen re-purchase of M.C. Hammer's entire oeuvre on CD at the local *Tsutaya*.
9. Manga-to-Newspaper Reading Ratio while in Japan: 11,625 to 1.
8. On New Year's, hung out with old host family from high school just for the *otoshidama*.
7. Still use "Your English is good!" as pickup line — even with other Americans.
6. Oft-repeated claims that you dug Morning Musume "for their music."
5. Pursued gift-war victory a bit too aggressively with *obasan* next door.
4. Charged your replacement JET 15,000 yen for *boro-boro mama-chari*.
3. Overly fond memories of the Carpenters.
2. Recurring urge to ditch family Christmas and eat Kentucky Fried Chicken in a love hotel.
1. Could have read and repeated a bit more enthusiastically at times.



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