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THE "INTERPRETATIONS" ISSUE

What's Inside?!

- 2 Letter from the Editor
- 3 JETAA Society Page
- 4 Adventures in Interpreting
- 5 Translating Into a Career
- 6 Band Review: "Gaijin-a-Go-Go"
- 7 S.U.M.O. in the Big Apple
- 7 Sumo Book Review
- 11 Best Ramen in the World
- 13 Nubus & Pint
By Brian Hall
- 14 Film Review: "Tony Takitani"
- 15 Top 10 List

INTERPRETING FOR ICHIRO

*An interview with JET Alum Kirsten Henning
of the Seattle Mariners*



by Stacy Smith

I recently had the chance to speak with Kirsten Henning, JET from 1999-2002 in Hyogo Prefecture. Following JET she took a position as a Guest Services Officer at the Park Hyatt in Tokyo (location for the film "Lost in Translation"), where she had the opportunity to take care of many of the rich and famous passing through Japan. With such an amazing experience under her belt, one would wonder how Kirsten could possibly top it. However, upon her return to the States a



*year ago, she managed to do just that! She currently works as the Japanese media coordinator for the Seattle Mariners, and among her primary duties is interpreting for both outfielder **Ichiro Suzuki** and pitcher **Shigetoshi Hasegawa**. Kirsten took time out of her busy baseball schedule to share some of her stories and insights about interpreting across both language and culture.*

How did you land this incredible position and what exactly does it entail?

I returned to the States last year and came back to my hometown of Seattle, and a friend asked me if I had considered working with the Mariners. It had crossed my mind but I had never really thought of pursuing it, and that gave me the impetus I needed. I started talking around to

different people, and one thing led to another! As media coordinator, I deal with all the Japanese press and make sure that their access to the players and coverage goes smoothly, whether via interpreting or making sure that they get to talk to the people they need. I work only during home games; I do not travel with the team. As I am not a full-time employee my job is seasonal, so I have already started to look for a new job for the fall!

Describe a day in the life of your job.

On a normal day (if there is such a thing) the first thing I try to do when I get up is to read the day's English and Japanese articles about the Mariners. If there is something of particular interest or concern in the Japanese media, I let everyone in my department know. After that, I spend time in and out of the clubhouse scheduling interviews for media with players and answering press pass requests. 3-4 hours before the game starts, media begin to arrive and then I am down on the field talking with the Japanese media to make sure they are set with any interviews they have, etc. Each day varies tremendously though. Sometimes I have TV crews or new print reporters I need to help out. A few weeks ago, I spent two entire days with a TV crew from Kobe who were

("Ichiro" continued on page 12)

The "INTERPRETATIONS" Issue

It's finally happened. The job market is improving and Japan is finally "in" again. This is especially good for those in our JET alum community who can speak fluent Japanese as the Japanese economy picks up speed and the opportunities increase.

In this issue are profiles of some of those JET alums who are well positioned to take advantage of the Japan boom along with some stories from the past of our collective attempts to translate cross-culturally.

Also in this issue is a feature on a creative cultural interpretation that calls itself Gaijin-a-Go-Go (see page 6) and rocks out in clubs around New York as the fusion between East and West continues to twist itself inside out and all around.

As JETs in Japan, we sat on the ridge between the two cultures, drank in all the flavors, and tried to explain it to others. Now, especially for those of us in New York, that culture increasingly comes to us and we may find ourselves engaging in more and more cross-cultural translation on our home turf.

Of course, that's just my interpretation of the situation.

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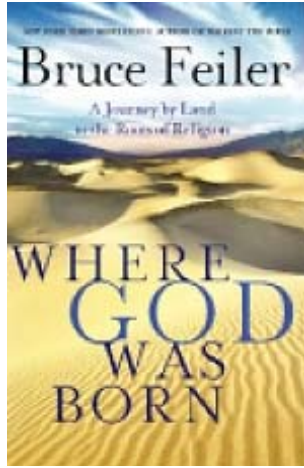
JETAA NEW YORK SOCIETY PAGE

by Yoku Shitteiru

Well, it's finally cooled down after a nasty, nasty summer. But not nasty enough to prevent the JET alum softball team from placing 3rd in the **Annual JETAA Softball Tournament** at **Randall's Island**, organized by the always enthusiastic **Scott Hiniker**. (In 2nd place was the **Sindell Law Office**, and in first was a travel agency that stopped advertising in the Newsletter last year but whose name sounds sort of like "God bless you.") This tournament was also notable for the number of JET alums playing on teams representing other organizations, a true testament to the increasing presence of JET alums in the NY Japanese community. In the championship round competing for 3rd place, JET AA NY beat JETAA NY President **Jenn Olayon's** team, the infamous Center on Japanese Economy and Business, with an impressive 11-10 victory!



And, as is the nostalgic tradition, a bunch of JET alums showed up July 22 at the **Ambassador's Residence** on the Upper East Side to bid farewell to the newest pack of **future JET alums**. Despite the serious security check at the door, MC for the evening **Janak Bhimani** kept things lively with comments that I either can't remember or aren't appropriate to repeat. Or both. There was also a nice speech by the Dr. George Packard, head of the United States-Japan Foundation who participated in what he called the forerunner to JET Program, a/k/a the US Military. And, a surprisingly high percentage of JET alums-to-be had already been in Japan. **Food highlight:** Multicultural offering of pizza, curry rice and sushi.



For those who missed it (and I think that was all of you since **Yoku Shitteiru** was the only JET alum representin'), **Bruce Feiler** (Tochigiken, 1989-90) talked at the Lincoln Plaza Barnes & Noble on September 14 about his new book **Where God Was Born**. This is his third book in a best-selling series where he travels around the Middle East and reflects on the Bible from a religious moderate's perspective, and while he wowed the crowd with his unique insights and skillfully answered questions from some of the more, um, "intense" types in the

The summer was also not nasty enough to keep everyone from enjoying the annual trek out to **Astoria** (a/k/a **Little Harajuku**) for the **Bohemian Beer Garden Happy Hour**. Thanks to whoever organized that one for a whole lot of fun.

percentage of JET alums-to-be had already been in Japan. **Food highlight:** Multicultural offering of pizza, curry rice and sushi.

(*"JETAA Society" continued on page 10*)



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Artificial Interpretation

During my time as an ALT in Sugito, Saitama, I was often asked to interpret and translate ridiculously hard texts simply because there was no one else around to do it, and sometimes my interpretation of whole sections of formal speeches amounted to "Umm....I didn't

quite catch that...it was something to do with welcome and the members of some organisation hope you have a good time and umm...I'll tell you the rest later." Imagine my panic one day when called over by the mayor to have an in-depth conversation with a dairy farmer about his cattle. The mayor, who had a good sense of humour, appeared to be asking a question about 'sexual excitement' so I asked the farmer if cows feel sexual excitement. The farmer's stunned reaction then raucous laughter alerted the mayor that something had gone wrong and he demanded to know what I had interpreted. As it turned out, the word for 'sexual excitement' and 'artificial insemination' were one and the same and I had managed to turn an innocuous query about cattle breeding into a dirty joke. The mayor never had quite the same level of confidence in my interpreting ability after that, and the following year, he hired a professional personal interpreter. **Jenny Byatt, Australia (Saitama, 1996-1998)**

Urgent Satisfaction I work as a technical editor and translator for a Japanese patent company...from sunny Perth, Australia. I did do one year in this job in Japan, and perhaps the funniest thing we ever had was a letter from a French company, written by a French woman who was asking us for "urgent satisfaction" And I thought the French liked to take these things

THIS ONE TIME, I WAS INTERPRETING, AND . . .

Fellow JET Alums Share Their Stories

slow... :-) **Cristy Burne, Perth Australia**

Ichiro & "Unko Atama"
After living in Japan, off and on, for 6 years, I finally moved back to Seattle in early 2001. This was just in time to educate the management of The Seattle Mariner's Team Store about the

Ichiro madness that was about to occur at their store and stadium while, at the same, ask for a job. It ended up being prophetic advice and they rewarded me by promoting me to "liaison" between The Teamstore and The Mariner's Clubhouse. Basically, my job was to assist the players in buying merchandise so they didn't have to go into the store/public.

This brings me to the "unique" translating experience that I'd like to share with you. Mike Cameron, centerfielder for The Mariner's at the time, was writing me a check while talking with another player named Mike "Mac" McLemore. Mike was in his locker, Mac was on a couch about 10 feet away and Ichiro was in his locker, which was right next to Mike's. While I was focused on making sure Mike wrote the correct dollar amount on the check, the word "Shithead" came out in the conversation between Mike and Mac.

Ichiro then tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Tobysensei, watto izu shittoheado? Unko atama desuka?" I turned, tried not to laugh, for Ichiro was truly trying to learn English, and did my best to explain in Japanese that he was correct in the literal translation, but should be very careful about when or

("Stories" continued on page 9)

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TRANSLATING INTO A CAREER

PROFILES IN INTERPRETATION

It's inevitable that a number of JET alums would work in interpretation and translation. Here are some profiles of a few JET alums who have turned it into a living in a variety of ways.

Glen Anderson, New York (Miyazaki Prefecture 1992 – 1995)
Freelance Interpreter, Translator & Related Professional Services

What do I do? For eight years, I have worked as an interpreter and translator in the automotive, litigation, finance and pharmaceutical fields. I specialize in interpreting at depositions, trials and investor meetings. In January 2005, I formed my own company and began offering additional services such as helping investors develop relationships with Japanese companies, supporting securities brokers with their investor relations roadshows, helping Japanese companies put together presentations and managing large-scale translation projects for law firms.

How did I get into it? I decided I wanted to be an interpreter once I began studying Japanese. I didn't know any interpreters. But just as spontaneously as I had decided to start studying Japanese, I set my mind on eventually becoming an interpreter. Now that I have achieved that goal, I am looking forward to the next step, providing various consultation services to clients I have developed over the years and eventually outsourcing the translation and interpretation work to trusted colleagues.

What's my job like? I never anticipated the immense pressure of interpretation. Almost every day I walk into a new situation dealing with a new subject matter—and everyone in the room knows more about it than me. Last week was petrochemicals and hard disks; this week is data warehousing, pharmaceuticals and telecommunications. Many meeting participants also speak both languages. I am there for the few who do not. Mistakes rarely go unnoticed. So I need to perform my best every day, and often, a lot is at stake. If I were a job applicant, every day would be a job interview. If I were a trial lawyer, every day would be a day in court. It is emotionally and physically draining. On days off, it takes a lot to muster up the energy to do other things. What if someone says something I don't understand? That one dreadful thought causes me to lose sleep and drives me to prepare hours for each assignment. I try to stay positive by convincing myself that the subject matter is interesting and that learning it now will benefit me in the future beyond tomorrow's assignment.

That said, the people I meet are tremendously talented and experts in their respective fields. I learn lots of obscure but fascinating things. Now, I often enjoy the adrenaline more than I dread the anxiety. Surprisingly, interpreting taps creative energies. Sometimes I feel like I'm playing a game where you take a phrase and rearrange its letters to come up with a different word or phrase, only instead of being bound by using the same letters, you're bound by keeping the same meaning.

Any advice for other JET alums? When someone tells me they're interested in becoming a translator or an interpreter, I ask them why. As a translator, you spend your entire day typing in front of a computer. As an interpreter, you spend your entire day wondering if it's all right to take a rest room break. Besides, you can always change careers to a translator or interpreter. There's no barrier to entry. The reverse is not true, though. After working as an interpreter, it's hard to find a company that will hire you to do something else. So I think it's safer to keep your regular job. Save

the switch to translation for a time when you have no other choice. By then, you will have accumulated years of experience that will make a strong resume as a translator or interpreter.

Cristy Burne, Perth, Australia
Biotechnology Patent Translating & Editing

What do I do? Survive as a freelance writer thanks to regular income from patent translations and editing. Translating is really my cash cow, not my passion. It funds my other writing projects (bless Japan) :-)

How did I get into it? A job with a Japanese biotechnology patent company was advertised through the JETAA network. They wanted someone from Singapore or Malaysia with a PhD in biotechnology and knowledge of American culture. I was from Australia, had a BSc and vague memories of Disneyland. It was enough. My Japanese began with *ni-kyuu* and no translating or patent experience.

The nitty gritty: I now work 20 hours a week for the above Japanese company, working from home in Australia. I edit bad English translations of Japanese patent applications, and translate shorter patent documents (up to 10 pages) in to English.

Why patents? After a brief stint translating scientific papers I now prefer patent translations. I know the science and the format, and can produce them more accurately and efficiently. Thumbs up? This threatened to crush me as a full time endeavour, but as a part time cash cow it not only pays my credit card but also helps to keep both sides of the brain in balance. Four stars :-)

Stuart Albert (CIR, Ibaraki-ken, 1997-2000)
Software and Video Game Translation

What do I do? Freelance Japanese to English translation. I'm the head of my sole proprietorship, Akujunkan Creative Media. I tend to focus in three areas of Japanese to English translation: computer software and hardware, video games, and medical and pharmaceutical documents. My recent work includes ongoing contracts with Nintendo of America, translation of several Playstation Portable titles, and a variety of medical and pharmaceutical clinical studies.

How do I like it? This is my dream job, because I can set my own schedule and work from home--no commutes and no bosses, because I get to play lots of games, and because I'm using exactly what I studied (Japanese and English Lit). However, that freedom is counterbalanced with long hours (even weekends) and deadlines, not to mention the constant need to make new clients. This job affords me the opportunity to travel frequently without worrying about missing work--wherever I have a laptop and an Internet connection, I'm in business.

How did I get into it? I was given a large amount of translation work

("Interpreters" continued on page 8)



Band Review

GAIJIN a GO-GO

Reviewed by Lyle Sylvander



Last month, I was lucky enough to have stumbled across a band called Gaijin a Go-Go. The Brooklyn-based group is the brainchild of Petra Hanson, a fashion designer who fused her interests in Japanese pop culture with her affinity for swinging 60s pop music. The

result is a uniquely entertaining musical concept that manages to straddle both cultures while having fun in the process. With such tongue-in-cheek song titles as Wasabi Man (Moog Power) and Foreign Barbaria, Petra and company let us know that they are out to have a good time.

European pop music (especially British and French) spawned a number of Japanese bands in the 1960s and Gaijin a Go-Go plays on this tradition. Even though only one of Gaijin's members is Japanese (guitarist Yuji Horibe, a.k.a. "Kinki Pajamamoto"), they have all adopted Japanese personas. Bass guitarist Sanford Santacroce is "Saiko Mikan", keyboardist Catherine Craney is "Mikasa S. Sukasa", drummer John Young is "Tatami Matt" and lead singer Petra is "Kiku Kimonalisa". This adds an extra



element of cultural confusion as they are not merely Westerners impersonating Japanese but Westerners who are impersonating Japanese who are impersonating Westerners. Or, by adding a dash of Austin Powers-ish time travel to the mix, 21st Century American

musicians performing as 1960s musicians performing as 1960s European musicians. This retro-fusion musical concept works well with the lyrics, which poke fun at culture shock and cultural faux pas. For instance, in Foreign Barbarian, they sing "When no means yes and yes means no/when the light says stop ... gaijin go/Whoops forgot to duck 'cause the ceilings are low!" The lyrics are best



when they erupt into such playful cultural collision.

Originally intended to be merely "silly, with style", Gaijin a Go-Go has grown beyond Petra's initial ambition. After a year-long stint teaching and modeling in Tokyo, Petra returned to the US and created the band as a hobby. She sent a few demo tapes to friends and the tapes somehow ended up on the desks of some Sony executives. Sony signed Gaijin after seeing them perform in Williamsburg and released the CD Happy-55-Lucky, which is a great introduction to their work.

Purchasing information, as well as future performance dates, can be found on the band's official website www.gaijin55.com.

S.U.M.O. IN THE BIG APPLE (or, the Pro-Wrestlization of a Japanese Tradition)

by Justin Tedaldi & Stacy Smith



Sumo: ancient traditional sporting event or an excuse to watch diaper-clad fat guys slap each other silly?

No matter what side of the fence you're on, Big Boy Productions, a New York-based sports and entertainment production company that is developing and promoting sumo matches and events in the U.S., aims to shrink that great cultural divide with the "S.U.M.O. Battle of the Giants" tournament at Madison Square Garden on Saturday, October 22, hoping to give sumo something it has yet to achieve: a worldwide audience.

This exclusive engagement of the world's biggest warriors at the world's biggest arena comes just two weeks after "Caravan to the Grand Sumo" in Las Vegas, a three-day tournament showcasing the best of the

Japan Sumo Association, the supreme governing body of the sport. This special occasion has caught the attention of the Northern California chapter of JETAA, which is currently offering travel packages for attending the event. All proceeds will benefit the 2006 JETAANC Scholarship fund, so fans of traditional sumo are invited to visit their homepage for full details. (www.jetaanc.org)

But what makes that tourney different from this one? As the first sumo match held at the Garden since 1992, President and CEO of Big Boy Noah Goldman sees this as a cause for celebration, as this match—the first in an upcoming series of American-held Sumo Ultimate Masters Organization (or S.U.M.O. for short) exhibition tournaments—helps bring his organization one step closer to its ultimate goal: shaping sumo into a global sport and, by extension, a bona fide Olympic event for 2012.

As JETs know, sumo in Japan is a big deal, where their kings of the ring are celebrated as national heroes, appearing in movies, ad campaigns, and—in only the most venerable cases—landing a record deal. Sumo matches themselves are grand affairs, with tickets selling for hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Big Boy's aim is to capture this homegrown appeal and package it for a global audience.

Like anything considered "uniquely Japanese," a few changes were made in order to appeal to both traditionalist fans of the sport along with a younger crowd demanding the histrionics of American pro wrestling. This is achieved by opening the ring up to warriors from around the world—today there are currently sumo wrestlers and organizations in over 80 countries—reflecting the international aims of the presenters.

Big Boy launched their own organization here under the name "Sumo Ultimate Masters Organization," which is currently inking sumo champs from around the world for its U.S.-based stable. As of late August, the current roster represented Poland, Hungary, Germany, the Ukraine, the U.S., Russia, and is also likely to include Mongolia and Japan as well, 24 participants in all.

To help avoid any perception of the event as a second-string "sumo-lite" operation, S.U.M.O. obtained official sanctioning from the International Sumo Federation, the worldwide governing body for sumo based in Japan. The organization gave Big Boy their blessing to help kick open the doors of arenas around the world for 21st century sumo action.

What makes S.U.M.O. different from sumo? For one, S.U.M.O. borrows from other Japanese arts and culture to add spice to every match, with an army of *taiko* drummers warming up the crowd to a pulsating beat aimed at whipping spectators into a frenzy. However, Goldman advises that all matches are held using traditional Japanese sumo rules. "We will respect all the traditions that have made sumo such a popular and revered sport in Japan for centuries," said Goldman, "Only, the fans will see Sumo wrestlers from countries around the world other than just Japan, and they will also be introduced to a fresh approach."

However, according to Goldman, while centuries-old traditions of Sumo will be followed and respected, the activities surrounding the matches will be different. There will be no dead-time between matches...when the wrestlers enter the *doyo* (ring) before each match, they

("S.U.M.O." continued on page 9)



JET Alum reporter Stacy Smith poses with her good buddy Musashimaru at a S.U.M.O. media event in July in New York City.

SUMO BOOK REVIEW

Heidi Smith, Co-Chair of the JETAA Northern California Bookclub, suggests these books for anyone who wants to learn a little more about sumo.

Book Reviews: Beyond the Obvious

To get you in the mood for Sumo, we researched the perfect book to pick up - a laugh-out-loud to the point of tears guide to a sport which confuses most westerners. **Joy of Sumo: A Fan's Guide**, by David Benjamin and Greg Holfeld. All former JETs should be able to enjoy the passion and humor, but it is a must read for someone about to embark on a first sumo encounter. It makes Sumo fun to watch, yet will still answer most of your questions, including: *Why are they so fa-at? What are the winning moves? Why does the referee yell? Why don't they squash him?* A great bus read if you don't mind laughing in public.

If this book is not your style, or you're looking for a different style of sumo glorification, here are a few more ideas:

Sumo, by Makoto Kubota, Photographer. A gorgeously sensual photographic view of sumo, though a bit lacking in words. This one might leave you wanting to read another book for more information.

The Big Book of Sumo: History, Practice, Ritual, Fight by Mina Hall. An easy-to-understand intro to the history and traditions of the sport, with excellent pictures.

Dynamic Sumo (Bushido – The Way of the Warrior) by Clyde Newton. A down-to-earth, introductory to intermediate level description of sumo techniques.

Sumo Mouse by David Wisniewski (for kids ages 4-8). Superman with an Asian twist. Sumo Mouse battles nefarious villains from a mouse-napping cat mafia in Tokyo. Complete with musical theme song!

Let's Draw Manga: All About Fighting by Makoto Nakajima, Big Mouth Factory. Techniques on how to draw sumo characters and scenes.

Other related topics: Sumo & Woodblock prints; Robot Sumo (Battle of Bots)

("Interpreters" continued from page 5)

on a wide variety of subjects as a CIR in Ibaraki, and it turned out that I was actually good at it. I returned to the USA after JET and worked briefly as Senior Bilingual Technical Writer at Nintendo of America, then left to form my own freelance business. Though I made efforts to become a translator, a lot of this just seemed to coalesce around me—I got lucky by getting to know a few key people who introduced me to other people, and then the work started coming in. I'm happy with the work I'm doing now, but it's taken 13 years of studying Japanese and 5 of living in Japan to get me here. But that's not to say I'm completely satisfied—I am working to expand in more creative directions, such as novels, films, and more game translations. Who knows? That may take another 13 years—but it will happen one *kanji* at a time.

Stuart Albert
CIR, Ibaraki 1997-2000
stuart@akujunkan.com

Stacy Smith, New York (Kumamoto-ken, 2000-03)
Staff Writer for Nikkei Business Publications

What do I do? Write articles about American business in English and then translate my writing into Japanese for a Japanese audience.

How do I feel about it? I just started 3 months ago but I am really enjoying it so far. It's excellent practice for my Japanese writing skills! Besides the journalism aspect of my job, I am often asked to translate documents for our head office in Tokyo. I am also going to an automotive conference sponsored by my company in October as an interpreter, so I'm really looking forward to that!

How did I get into it? I applied through the employment agency Bremar. (They seemed to have quite a few media jobs available for people looking for jobs in this field).

Any advice for other JET alums? Be persistent and don't give up when it comes to job searching! I was looking for a year and a half after I came home from Japan before I stumbled upon my current position. Also, don't be willing to compromise too much (if you have the luxury to do this). I wanted a job where I could use Japanese and work in media, but many of the positions I interviewed for were largely secretarial or had some other huge flaw. The journey was long and frustrating at times, but in retrospect I'm glad I waited for something that fit what I was looking for!

Josh Borden, New York (Ibaraki-ken, 1995-97)
Owner of Import/Export Company

What do I do? Once a JET, I now have a medium sized import/export company in the metals industry, dealing mostly with US and Chinese companies.

The work of my company is roughly split into two functions-- first, the nitty gritty of importing and exporting, such as contacting customs brokers, taking orders, arranging deliveries, etc. The second aspect of our business is helping bridge the communication gap. My Chinese is passable on good days, but I also have four native Chinese speaking staff in our New York office, who translate and interpret back and forth

all day long, some of which are quite complex questions or difficult answers to interpret into the other language due to cultural differences.

For example (using Japanese), if a American client asks a Japanese supplier, "will your company have difficulty producing this product on time and according to our complete specifications" and a Japanese guy



responds, "daijoubu da to omoimasu ga... chotto..." what is the best way to translate? This type of answer is not acceptable to most American companies, but it's hard to dig for a specific answer which would satisfy the American customer without offending the Japanese company by probing too deeply and coming off rude, and damaging your relationship with the Japanese supplier. We encounter these kinds of cross cultural communication problems daily.

Personally, I often travel, and accompany Chinese people on US trips, and take US business execs to visit plants in China. I often interpret for both parties during such trips. In addition to the language barriers, cultural differences can also throw a wrench in a budding business relationship, so I have to quickly explain the other's behavior lightly, and provide cultural context to keep the trip from souring.

language barriers, cultural differences can also throw a wrench in a budding business relationship, so I have to quickly explain the other's behavior lightly, and provide cultural context to keep the trip from souring.

Josh Borden
Ibaraki, '95-'97
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Dina Paglia (CIR & ALT, Saga-ken)
Multicultural Market Research

What do I do? I work for a multicultural market research firm. I am responsible for new business development for the multicultural division of a market research firm. My responsibilities include prospecting, educating colleagues on foreign language and culture, client relationship management, developing multicultural research business, and providing input on multicultural projects.

How did I get into this? Networking. I previously spent 8 years working for a translation agency as project manager, director, and finally VP of business development. My job involved recruiting, coordinating and managing teams of linguists, Japanese/Spanish editing and proofreading. I found that job through an ad in the paper.

How do you feel about your current and previous job? Current job – industry is fun, interesting, lots of career advancement opportunities; work is interesting. Previous job – working with diverse projects, colleagues, vendors; disliked the lack of career advancement opportunities and that the industry is completely unregulated.

Any advice for other JET alums? The translation industry is a great place for returning JETS to start out if you have foreign language skills. You will be exposed to a variety of languages, cultures and diverse people. Excellent time management, multitasking, communications and organizational skills are key.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this article! If you have questions, you can contact the JET alums profiled either via newsletter@jetaany.org or directly where contact information is provided.

("Stories" continued from page 4)

where he uses this term. Then, the word "Dumbass" came out in the conversation, and Ichiro again asked me "Baka oshiri desuka?" Yet again, I explained to him that his literal translation was fantastic, but that he should be very careful when to use this word, for I was seriously visualizing a fight breaking out on the field where Ichiro smiles at somebody twice his size and says, "Harro Shitto-heado!" After saying what I thought was enough for Ichiro to get my point, I turned back to Mike, who had big saucers for eyes, and he said, "Toby, you speak sushi?!? Hey Mac! Mac! Toby speaks sushi!"

When I was walking back down the "tunnel" (area between clubhouse and team store), it hit me what I had just "taught" Ichiro, and I stopped in my tracks and put my face in my hands. After a few "Oh My God's", I finally realized that I did my best in explaining the meanings and that whatever happens...happens. It was just a really surreal experience.

Anyway, I do not work for The M's anymore, but I did become close friends with Ichiro's brother and father. Not as close now as when I was working there, but when Kaz (Ichiro's bro') comes to town, we usually hook up for dinner or something. 2001 was an amazing year to work for The M's and my job was the dog's bollocks. I worked from 10am -7pm on game days which meant I opened the store and then had my dog and beer by the time Ichiro was coming up to the plate. Winning 116 games that year and being able to experience the clubhouse harmony on a daily basis, I am really glad I decided to move on after that season. That job didn't pay well and there weren't any "benefits". However, the memories.....sweet memories.....will last a lifetime! **Toby "Baka Oshiri" Weymiller, Seattle (Hokkaido 1997-2000)**



My first translation story involves a German. In 1992 or so a German artist visited Yaku-Cho, Kagoshima. A mentor of his back in Germany had written a speech that I think he was going to in connection with an exhibit at a local museum.

He had an English version and wanted me to proofread and help edit it. One sentence seemed long and I thought we could say it in a simpler way, making it more understandable. Nope. He actually told me that in such cases he wanted to use the longer, more complex sentence.

My second story happened a year after coming home. In 1994 I was helping with the America-Japan Week celebration in Minneapolis. The Greater Minneapolis Convention and Visitors Association organized it and one of the staffers was of Asian ancestry but spoke no Japanese. (She grew up in Iowa, I think a Korean adoptee.) People would see her, assume she was Japanese, and speak accordingly. At one point I was talking with some Japanese and she came up and asked me a question, naturally in English. Turning to her, and still thinking in Japanese, I replied in Japanese. But if my Mom had come up to me at that point I would've answered HER in Japanese, too. **Mike Harper (CIR Kagoshima-ken, 1990-93)**

World Cup a Feel? During the 2002 World Cup, Kobe City posted a gaggle of bilingual English/Japanese signs around the stations to inform international visitors how to take the train to the stadium from Sannomiya, the city's hub. Amazingly, the English bit advised patrons (in big black letters) to "GET IT ON FROM SANNOMIYA STATION." I'm not sure why they didn't let us CIRs have a look at these before they were slapped up all over town, but Marvin Gaye definitely would have approved. **Justin Tedaldi, New York**

Living in North Carolina after JET, I was asked to interpret (on a pro bono basis) for a bizarre redneck family reunion. Apparently, this elderly North Carolina good ol' boy was a fireman on the US base in Okinawa in the early 1960s. While there he married a Japanese woman, brought her back to North Carolina and had two children with her, despite the fact that he speaks no Japanese and she speaks no English. She finally got tired of life in North Carolina and moved back

to Okinawa by herself. Except that she was pregnant with a baby boy whom she gave birth to and raised in Okinawa. The old guy decided he wanted to get his whole family together one last time. So he flew the ex-wife in along with her son and his wife and baby. Oh yeah, and the ex-wife's sister came too. So I walked into this family reunion where a bunch of people, now all grown up with their own kids, are related and haven't met each other before or haven't spoken in years, and they can't communicate with each other. One of the first things I had to do was explain to the Okinawa son, then 27 years old, that the father wanted to give him a decent sum of money. However, he was embarrassed or something and didn't want to accept it, so I had to keep going back and forth. And the North Carolina daughter would explain a whole bunch of stuff to me which I would then translate in a very nutshell version to the Okinawa son, who then grew very suspicious as to why my version was so much shorter than his American sister's.

But one of the most touching experiences of my life came when one of the older brothers had me explain a childhood memory to the Okinawa son. It was a memory of him as a baby that no one else would have been able to relate to him, of how as a baby he saw a candle flame and wanted to touch it. And how his father, rather than hold him back, let him touch it so he would learn about danger from his own experience. The Okinawa son grew very pensive and quiet, and as I translated it really hit me that these people who seemed so different and disconnected really did share a connection. **Steven Horowitz, New York (Aichi-ken, 1992-94)**

("S.U.M.O." continued from page 7)

will be wearing colorful robes and will be introduced with great fanfare.

The S.U.M.O. wrestlers will also take a page from the WWE playbook by giving each wrestler its own unique character complete with back story for fans to root for and identify with. The concept is not to trot out an endless parade of stereotypes, but to add a bit of culture and a dash of international flavor to the proceedings that will assist in making S.U.M.O. a recognizable brand at home and abroad. As Goldman noted, "We will present sumo matches within an entertainment surrounding, including music, dramatic lighting, and special effects. The matches will be refereed by accredited international officials. We hope to attract family audiences since there will be something for everyone."

So while S.U.M.O. operates under the same principles as traditional Sumo wrestling, does Goldman feel that S.U.M.O. is more American than Japanese as a sport?

"Actually, the way we are presenting Sumo, it's Japanese, American and universal," he said. "All the traditions of Japanese Sumo will remain intact; the overall presentation of the events surrounding the matches is universally entertaining. The live and recorded music will be Asian, the athletes are multi-ethnic, the rules are purely Japanese and the entertainment values are 21st century American."

Tickets for the World Sumo Challenge at Madison Square Garden on Saturday, October 22 are on sale now, ranging in price from \$15 to \$100. Those wishing to purchase tickets for groups of ten or more can receive a 10% discount by calling Big Boy's toll-free ticket number at 1-800-321-1300.



Folks from JETAA, CLAIR and the consulate volunteered at the Japan booth at the 92nd St. YMHA's International Festival on September 18, 2005.

(“JETAA Society” continued from page 3)

audience, the real highlight was seeing him and his wife with their beautiful **5-month old twin daughters**. (Can someone please remind CLAIR to send an extra JET application to the Feiler address in a few years?)

Overheard at the **Japan Society** screening of the movie “**Tony Takitani**”: In the eerie scene when **Rie Miyazawa's** character walks into an entire room full of high-end clothes meant for her, a woman with a thick New York accent interrupted the moment to sigh, “Every girl's dream...”

Meanwhile, New Orleans native, former JETAA NY alum and all-around swell gal **Nicole Hebert** not only weathered Hurricane Katrina (with her relatives in Mississippi), but her family's home, on higher ground in a suburb, was very fortunate to survive as well.

Who is Lyle Sylvander? That may be the correct question on an upcoming episode of **Jeopardy** after the Newsletter movie and music reviewer's recent trip to **Los Angeles** where he made it past the test round and now awaits a call back to compete on prime time. Here's hoping that Lyle will have a chance to say, “I'll take the Japanese Education System for \$500, Alex.”

And if you're looking for something to do or a way to relive some of your JET experiences, **Yoku Shitteiru** recommends volunteering at The International Center on 23rd St between 5th & 6th Aves. They really need more volunteers and JET alums are a perfect match. Contact **Mary Beth Holman**, volunteer coordinator mholman@intlcenter.org 212-255-9555 x217 or go to www.intlcenter.org for more info.

Finally, props to everyone who volunteered their time at the **11th Annual 92nd St Y International Festival** on Sunday, September 18th. JET alums **Kim Duffy, Erin Gill, Elizabeth Gorden, Steve Ross** and JETAA officers **Tony McCormac, Kat Barnas and Jenn Olayon**, together with JLGC and CLAIR reps **Iida-san, Lisa, Miko, Etsuka and Aharen-san** helped out the curious kiddies with activities including *origami* and Japanese quiz games.

That's all for this issue. Have fun and see you in the Fall/Winter (or whenever this thing comes out again.)

(“Ramen” continued from page 11)

going to get to try it.

Finally they let us in and we got seated at the bar. A waitress came to take our order (as if we're going to order some other kind of ramen?) so we ordered the *shidome* ramen. It was pretty darn tasty, though I couldn't figure out what was in it, and I had a lot of trouble eating it because I had just gotten an elbow to my ing ultimate before, and a new method through the



But the ramen the story. As up, a tv crew morning show “Zoom In!” is broadcast this So the tv with all the starts oooh-ing and ahh-ing and talking with the chef.

front tooth play- frisbee the day was improvising of eating ramen side of my mouth.

was only part of we're finishing from the big in Japan called getting ready to whole thing live. woman comes in lights on her and

I could see a tv monitor in the front where we could see everything going on. Then the tv woman stops talking and I realized they were going to a clip. On the tv monitor we see what apparently took place a few days ago, how the chef cooks up the ramen, and then people tasting it a few days earlier. And then I see JETAA NY Vice-Pres Kat Barnas in a close-up shot commenting on the ramen and realized that she must have been at the ramen event that had happened the week before. (I'm still not sure why they had two of these.)

Then they cut to a commercial break and a guy comes in and gets everyone to practice yelling out “Zoom In!” on his command. The live broadcast starts back up, the tv woman talks a bit, and then at the signal everyone in the restaurant yells “Zoomu liin!”

And it just so happens that's how I like my ramen – tasty with lots of noise and confusion.

Oh wait. Did I mention the G.I. issues the next day? Probably better to not zoom in on that.



The Best Ramen in Japan Comes to NYC

3 JET Alums Try the "Shidome Ramen" at Mechankotei in Manhattan

Shidome Ramen was born in 2003 when NTV Network sponsored a nationwide competition to find a ramen chef with the most original and best tasting soup. (Kind of like "American Idol," but for ramen.) After an intense audition process, Konosuke Takewaka was chosen as the winner; a new taste sensation in Japan was revealed. Since opening in August, 2003, the average wait time for Shidome Ramen is 90 minutes or more.

In early July, the Japanese restaurant Mechankotei (on 55th St in Manhattan) hosted a unique two-day tasting opportunity which involved tv taping the first day and a live broadcast the second day for "Zoom In!", Japan's version for the "Today Show."

Several JET alums participated in the event. Below are three perspectives on the tasty yet surreal experience.

Katrina Barnas

After spending a beautiful Saturday morning out in the sunshine, I expected sunshine once again as I stepped out of my apartment on my way to tasting "the best ramen"... Instead, the skies had just opened up, in a way, reminiscent of rainy seasons past, and great preparation for a warm bowl of ramen.

I knew very little of the event, other than that I was going to try free ramen (enough of a reason for me) And, since I was at Saturday's tasting this was not just any ramen, but lamb ramen. Not being a fan of fish in general (I know, I know, shocking and wasteful for an enjoyer of Japanese food), I definitely enjoyed the new taste sensation. Feeling like food connoisseurs, my friend and I tried to express the flavorful egg, different lamb texture, and surprising garlic twist to the soup, as our comments were immediately translated into Japanese and preserved on film.

The random ramen tasting was made even more peculiar by the stranger to my left at the tasting. Within minutes of coming in, he had offered to cut my hair, claiming to be a hair stylist. He also told someone else that he was a famous writer, and tried to duck under his coat. A strange local added extra flavoring to the New York style ramen by the best ramen chef in Japan on a rainy and clear Saturday afternoon.

Stacy Smith

On July 14th, I had the chance to participate in the filming of a show on the Nippon TV morning lineup called Zoom-In. My friend and I went to the midtown noodle restaurant Mechanko-tei where the live shoot was taking place, happy to find that the subject was a new type of ramen that had been developed specifically for a NY audience. The

ramen chef, Konosuke Takewaka, proprietor of an incredibly popular ramen shop near NTV headquarters in Tokyo, developed the ingredients of this special soup after much deliberation. The items that made the cut had special relevance to the locale: Lamb instead of the usual pork due to the large amount of Greek establishments in Manhattan, *edamame* because they have become a favorite of health-conscious New Yorkers, as well as the standard corn, seaweed, and egg found in a typical bowl of ramen.



JET Alum Stacy Smith with master ramen chef Konosuke Takewaka and other ramen lovers.

Basically our role was to eat the new ramen at a table with two out-of-towners and generally look happy doing it, while the announcer in front of us gave off periodic high-pitched "oishiiii---"s as she slurped. There was also a side dish of *mentaiko* and pork pita (presumably the Greek influence again), but the ramen was so filling we barely had room for it. At the end of the segment, everyone in the restaurant had to extend their index fingers to the camera and simultaneously scream, "Zoom in!" My friend was actually visiting from Japan, and she lamented the fact that she couldn't call her mom to tell her to watch us.

As for the ramen itself, though I do applaud the chef for his creativity, it was nothing out of this world. However, I must admit that I am biased as I lived for three years in Kumamoto, which is famous for its amazing pork-broth ramen! I am also not much of a lamb fan, though my friend enjoyed its flavoring and pronounced it a viable alternative to pork. The best part of the event was meeting Mr. Takewaka after the shoot and getting to take a picture with him. I look forward to getting a taste of his famous Shidome ramen the next time I am in Tokyo!

Steven Horowitz

I was sitting at work and I got a JETAA NY weekly email about what was supposed to be the Best Ramen in Japan. And it was going to be served at Mechankotei, right in midtown Manhattan. I loves me some ramen, so I wanted to try this "best ramen in Japan."

The situation at the restaurant was kind of confusing when my girlfriend and I got there. We had to wait outside for reasons we didn't fully understand. Fellow JET alum Janak Bhimani was running around working with some TV crew and kept saying he couldn't talk because he'd get in trouble. I saw a few of our JLGC friends were there. But frankly, I was pretty hungry and therefore a bit cranky. We did learn while waiting that this ramen cook had won a national competition for the Best Ramen in Japan. And we were

("Ramen" continued on page 10)

(Ichiro continued from page 1)

producing a show about the overall ballpark experience in Seattle. During the game, I am in the press box keeping score and of course watching the game. For post-game, I am down in the clubhouse making sure that the Japanese media has access to the players and the information they need.

What kind of translating and interpreting work do you do?

There are several different situations. I interpret when Japanese writers or TV crews are interviewing players (unless of course it is Ichiro or Shiggy). This year we have had several interviews with the Mariners event staff so I interpreted then as well. Sometimes American writers will want to speak with Ichiro. The bullpen catcher for the Mariners is the primary interpreter for this, but sometimes he is not available so I step in. [Note: According to Kirsten, bullpen catcher Allen Turner, whose mother is Japanese, is the only Japanese speaker on the Mariners' roster.] For

lengthy interviews, we try to share the load. The other time I interpret is when the opposing team has a Japanese player but no interpreter, like pitcher Keiichi Yabu of the Oakland A's. I think one of my best memories is interpreting live on TV for Hideo Nomo when he was pitching for the Devil Rays in May. (He threw a no-hitter during my first month as a student in Kyoto in 1996, so for me it was quite an honor to work with him. Also makes me realize how you never know where your life will take you. I had no idea sitting there that day in Kyoto that I would one day interpret for that pioneering pitcher.)

As someone who gets pretty close to Ichiro, how would you describe him?

He is someone who is really serious about his work, a world-class athlete. It has been very inspiring to me personally to be able to work with someone as professional as Ichiro on an everyday basis. Also, with the recent steroid controversy, it is great to see someone like Ichiro who takes pride in his work and has put so much effort into it. That has put a bit of a positive face on baseball for me despite of all the negative press lately. Ichiro is on a level above many of the other players out there.

Is Ichiro different from your initial perception of him?

Before I started this job, I think I probably viewed both Ichiro and Shiggy as top athletes and celebrities, like most people do in Japan. Now that I work with them everyday I see a different side of them in relation to their careers. Both of them take their performance on the field very seriously. Shiggy is definitely the more gregarious of the two.

Do you speak in Japanese with Ichiro or does he try to practice his English?

Both Ichiro and Shiggy speak English, though I have never spoken English with Ichiro. With Shiggy it's a mix of both; he actually has written a book called *My Way to Speak English* on how to speak English based on his experiences.

Can you give us a funny anecdote about something that happened on the job?

Well, it's actually not something that happened to me, but it's a story

that I like and most people in Seattle know well. The players are required to do school visits, and during Ichiro's very first visit, one little boy grabbed Ichiro as soon as he saw him and wouldn't let go! He just kept hugging Ichiro, and of course the media loved it. When they asked him afterwards why he did it, he responded that when he saw Ichiro he just couldn't help it. After going on my own school visit with Ichiro, I saw for myself what a magnet he is for children, both boys and girls. Once group of third grade girls and boys told me that they like Ichiro because he is a great hitter, and because he has a nice smile. Of course this made me laugh.

The Japanese press tends to focus more on details, such as where the ball was hit and more complicated statistics, but the American press tends to focus more on the bigger picture, like how a player is feeling or the overall analysis for an entire season.

How does the Japanese press differ from the American press?

The Japanese press tends to focus more on details, such as where the ball was hit and more complicated statistics, but the American press tends to focus more on the bigger picture, like how a player is feeling or the overall analysis for an entire season. There is also a difference between the average Japanese baseball fan and the average American baseball fan. Most people in Japan who follow baseball are really serious, and know tons of statistics. On the other hand, here in the States I think there are all kinds of fans. Of course there are diehard fans, but the average person going to the ballpark won't necessarily know all of the teams' stats or be that passionate about their home team.

What are the worst and best parts of your job?

I'd have to say that the worst part is when the team is not doing well. This is definitely not the best season for the Mariners, and that obviously has an effect on morale, more so for certain players than others. As for the best part, it has been nice to be recognized for my language skills and to use them to connect people and enable them to understand each other. When I was living in Japan, I think I often forgot the value of language and took it for granted that most of my friends spoke both English and Japanese. With this job, many of the American media I have helped have often expressed their appreciation and praised my language skills. This has reminded me how important it is to not just speak Japanese, but understand culturally what is going on, and be able to explain this to others.

You mentioned that you are currently job searching, but are you going to pursue interpreting?

I am not sure which direction I want to go in, but I don't think I want to do full-time interpreting. The PR aspect of my job interests me more, so I am looking to pursue that. Initially I felt like I had to incorporate Japanese into whatever job I chose, but now I am okay with maybe putting it on the side for a while. I now know that no matter what I end up doing, my language capability and my experiences in Japan will always be a fundamental part of me.

Last and most important question, do you think Ichiro would be willing to meet a group of adoring JETA.A fans from NY? Can you give us the locker room tour?

No, no, no! I would love to help, but Ichiro is way too busy.

Thank you Kirsten, and best of luck in your next adventure!



Nubus and Pint



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JETAA Movie Review

TONY TAKITANI

Reviewed by Harper Alexander



Nowhere's not crowded in Tokyo.

In the spring there, all the junior high school students and high school students are on their school trips and through the streets and subway cars and giggle over coffees and hang their bags just so in the crook of their elbows or off their shoulders. Everyone takes photographs and you all coo, sigh, shriek, and shock at the same things.

In the summer there, backstreets in Shibuya and Akasaka are overloaded and given over entirely to pedestrians, the crowds metastasize, easily fill this new space as well. You buy shoes and italian ices and t-shirts. Tanned construction workers tie thin white towels around their heads and necks to soak up the sweat.

In the winter there, the shoulder-to-shoulder crush of hordes and hats and fur-lined jackets moves down the sidewalks together and you can see your breath and the breath of everyone around you. All of that breath is wispy and white and wafting upwards, and it feels like you're all one massive swaying body, one giant animal respiring – aspiring – together.

But director Jun Ichikawa's film "Tony Takitani" seems to take place in a perpetual Tokyo autumn. The city is serene, still, calm, cool, empty, beautiful. So are the two main characters; so is the film itself. Based on a couple of short stories by Haruki Murakami, the film feels like a piece of writing. It has the tenuous pacing and unresolved ending that short fiction can get away with and film usually does not attempt. In nearly every scene, the camera comes out from behind something on the left – table, column, plant – moves to the right and goes behind something else – wall, chair, body – like eyes moving across a page.

There is a voiceover from the outset that gives the audience some background on the man before them. Tony Takitani, played by Issey Ogata, is not particularly photogenic or energetic, but the sense is that he is at least a good man.

He grew up alone, son of a dead mother and an absent father (away playing with a jazz band, Tony's father Shozaburo is also played by Ogata), and settled into a career as an illustrator, straddling the line between high art and pure functionality. Competent but never entirely comfortable, good but never entirely happy, Tony is unlocked one day when he meets a beautiful young client, Eiko, who is interested in high-end fashion. It is clear that Tony is in love with her from the start. After a short time they are married. Despite the many brushes, charcoals, paints and other implements of art-making that surround him, Eiko, played by Rie Miyazawa, is the first object of real beauty in Tony's life – the illustrator gets animated.

But there are down-sides to being so alive. The detachment Tony has lived with for so long evaporates as he attaches himself to this beautiful young woman. He knows love but now can anticipate loss. His monochromatic self-sufficiency is swarmed and overwhelmed by Eiko's vibrancy. She quite literally brings color and texture into his home – instead of the creamy off-whites and dull sand-shades of his abode, we are treated to a long moving

close-up shot of rack after rack of exotic fabrics and patterns and colors.

This wouldn't necessarily be bad, but her shopping seems out of control. Her love for the clothes and shoes and hats she brings home is obsessive, almost anthropomorphic. After getting accustomed to Tony's minor-key bachelor habits for the first 45 minutes of the film, Eiko's intensity is as unsettling and bizarre to the audience as it is to her husband. Tony clears out an entire room for her wardrobe, entire closets for her shoes, but he senses something is not quite right. Finally he speaks up and asks her if she can tone down her shopping. Money is not the issue – he simply cannot understand her need to buy so much so often.



Thankfully, this is not "Married With Children" or some other screeching middle-brow sitcom, in which the harried husband pleads with the shopaholic wife to come home from the mall, to a resounding guffaw from the laugh track. The consequences are much more severe in this film. After Tony asks Eiko to cut back, she never appears again.



Or does she? In the most beautiful shot in the entire film, Tony mourns Eiko's loss from his knees in her walk-in closet room under a fluorescent light. The garments she bought so fanatically are all he has left of her, and they hang like a hundred skeletons around him. If she poured herself so obsessively into the clothes, and the clothes are still in place, is part of her still there? To further complicate matters, Tony's loneliness and desperation pushes him to place an ad in the newspaper, seeking a perfect size 7 to wear Eiko's clothes.



Miyazawa plays Hisako, the surrogate, as well. She comes, she interviews with Tony, for a brief time she wears the clothes. She is perfect for the "part" but unnerving and Tony recognizes his folly quickly.

With only two principal actors, "Tony Takitani" is a study in compression and restraint. I watched it on an early summer night in Manhattan, which is a study in neither of those traits, but the film was stronger than the city on that night and made New York seem quiet, which was refreshing. Re-imagining Tokyo and hushing New York – no small feats for such a small movie.

THE "INTERPRETATIONS" ISSUE TOP 10!

When you're interpreting or translating, not every situation can be ideal. Every job is a new adventure and you don't always know what you're getting yourself into. That's why we present the Newsletter's ...



TOP 10 INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR NIGHTMARES

10. "Sorry for the misunderstanding. We just need you to do this conference with a Japanese accent."
9. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. All work.."
8. "And now please turn your attention to PowerPoint slide number seven hundred and sixty-eight..."
7. "Thanks for coming to the Tokyo Trekkie Convention. You can do Japanese to Klingon?"
6. *Finnegan's Wake*, by James Joyce
5. "And after you're done interpreting Mr. Fudd's speech on "Rascally Rabbits," we'll need you to interpret for Mr. Pig.
4. "And we'll start the bidding at fifty-doIhearfiftyfiftyfiftynowsixtysixtydoIhearseventy?Seventy seventynowuptoeightyeightyeightyeightdoIhearninety?NinetyninetyninetydoIhear..."
3. "As our President's father and a former President myself, I'd like to say it's great to be back in Japan speaking to all of - BLEAAARRRGGGGHHH..."
2. "I can't believe my eyes!! Hulk Hogan has just body slammed Yokozuna's interpreter, and the ref didn't even see it!!"
1. "Ina-sama-may, onnichiwa-kay. Atashi-way a-way otemo-tay orokondeimasu-yay..."



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