

JETAA.NY

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

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THE "WELCOME BACK" ISSUE

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NATSUKASHII IN NEW YORK

Down Home Japan in NYC

by Steven Horowitz & Justin Tedaldi
with lots of input from the JET Alum Community



Ever have a moment when you need a good dose of Japan?

Well, here's a guide to help you get your *natsukashii* on, broken down into categories to strike back against culture shock and help you maintain (or at least simulate) the Japan experience in a way that brings it all back, even if just for a moment.

DO YOU PLAY KARAOKE?

Nothing brings back the fun (or painful) memories like exercising your vocal chords with some lively Carpenters tunes or a nice heavy *enka*. While it's hard to truly re-create the Japanese karaoke bar environment, the closest you'll come are any of the **Japas** locations (**Japas 38** on E. 38th St., **Japas 55** on W. 55th St., **Japas East Village** on St. Mark's and a new one near E. 23rd) where you can sit at the bar and sing or get your own karaoke box. **Duet** on E. 49th St. or **Sing-Sing** on 2nd & 2nd have similar offerings and ambiances.

KaraokeOne7 (www.karaoke17.com) on 17th St. between 5th & 6th Aves has all those options plus a flat-rate group room for those seeking a more communal experience. Their website boasts over 80,000 songs and even shows the top-requested tunes. But the best song for your buck is easily **Bar Toto** in Korea Town on 32nd St. between Broadway & 5th Ave., especially if you've got a big group. It's BYOB, so make sure to hit the **Korean grocery store across the street** for tasty beverages if you need some social lubricant to help you nail that Morning Musume tune. They do have Japanese songs, though perhaps not as



extensive a collection as some of the Japanese places.

For the wealthier and more courageous, you can try seeking out one of the "piano bars" tucked discretely behind unassuming doors in Midtown East. (They often have signs in Japanese saying "knock 3

times.") These are hostess bars and generally don't let in non-Japanese, but they skirt the legal issue by calling it a club and allowing entrance only to members. (*Ed. note: Let us know if you get into one. We'd love to have a first-hand account for the next Newsletter issue.*)

LET'S AUTHENTIC EATING!

While most of the rest of the U.S. just has "Japanese" restaurants (or worse, Benihanas), New York City is blessed with some real authentic Japanese joints—including *izakayas*,

(*"Natsukashii" continued on page 11*)

RELIGION ISSUE APOLOGY

As Newsletter Editor, I would like to apologize for an insensitive remark made in the Spring 2006 "Religion" Issue, brought to my attention by Zandra Ellis, a JET from the Bronx currently working in Nagasaki-ken.

(*"Letter" continued on page 10*)

The "WELCOME BACK" Issue

What do JETs want to know about when they come home from Japan?

Unfortunately, it's been 12 years since this *oyaji* set foot back in Gaijin Land. But while I don't have my own MySpace page, I think I have some idea of what might interest the young JET Set. You want to know how to find jobs, *omoshiroi* places to hang, *tanoshii* things to do, how to *atsumaru* with other people, how to recapture that *natsukashii* feeling when you need it and, let's see... oh right, how to find jobs.

This issue aspires to be a nice starting block for folks just getting into town as well as those of us contemplating other life issues. (Contrary to what you experienced in junior high, they say our 20s and mid-30s are the most stressful years of life as we grapple with major life issues. Then again, the 80s and 90s don't sound like a *mochi* bangin' *matsuri* either.)

My point is that JETAA-NY continues to grow and become an increasingly dynamic and multi-dimensional community offering a little something for everyone. It is my hope that this issue will enable you to feel connected with JETAA-NY and hopefully find ways to contribute as well. (Now where'd I put my Metamucil?)

Steven Horowitz
Newsletter Editor

WHADDYA THINK ABOUT THIS ISSUE?
 WHAT SHOULD BE IN A FUTURE ISSUE?



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COMINGS & GOINGS



YOKOSO HIRAI-SAN, FURUHATA-SAN & TUCK-SAN!



JETAA-NY welcomes **Shinji Hirai**, who began working as **Executive Director of the Japan**

Local Government Center (JETAA-NY's parent organization) on June 21st. Hirai-san, pictured here with **Governor George Pataki**, is the former Vice Governor of Tottori-ken and is proud to say that he has visited all 47 of Japan's prefectures. His hobbies include travelling, swimming and skiing, but his newest goal is to visit half of the states in the U.S. He expresses his heartfelt gratitude to the members of JETAA-NY who have greeted him with "New York Hospitality" which has helped relieve many of the concerns he had before coming here.



JETAA-NY is pleased to work with **Noriko Furuhashi**, originally from Kanagawa-ken, who is the new **JET Program Coordinator for the Consulate General of Japan in New York**.

Furuhashi-san, pictured with her daughter **Emi**, replaces **Lisa Sakaeda** who left the Consulate in June. Furuhashi-san has lived in the U.S. for 16 years and has worked at the consulate since 2003 when she began working on a media research project. Before the Consulate, she worked for **Nomura Securities International** in downtown Manhattan. Furuhashi-san is not just fluent in English, but actually speaks it better than most JET alums!

JETAA-NY is excited to have **Rob Tuck** (Miyagi-ken CIR, 2003-05) as its new **Secretary**. He's the one that sends you those weekly e-mails (not to be confused with the Quarterly Newsletter in your hands.) Hailing originally from Durham (England, not North Carolina), he moved to NYC from Cambridge (also England, as opposed to Massachusetts) last year to pursue a Ph.D in Modern Japanese Literature at Columbia. Rob is equally excited to be part of the team and says, "I'm looking forward to the great chance to meet alumni I haven't come across yet, hang out more with those I have, and to use my skills to benefit the JET Alumni community."



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

Grab a strong can of **Jive coffee** and pay attention, JETAA Society fans, because *takusan koto* happened over the summer since we last chatted,



Let's Pre-Depart!

and you need to know all about it... Last June's Newsletter stuff 'n mail was a perfectly fine affair, but took a fun twist when **Ryan "Lucky" Chan** found \$80 in a clear plastic bag on 53rd St. After a brief ethics debate, Ryan invested in karma and bought two rounds of drinks for the crew... On June 18 - i.e., **O-tousan Day** - in both the earliest event in JETAA NY history as well as the best-attended event this year, nearly 60 JET alums, **NYdeVolunteers** and other **Friends of JET** (including **Clara Solomon's tou-chan**) showed up at **Mr. Dennehey's** sports bar on Carmine St. in Soho to consume eggs, potatoes and coffee while watching **Japan vs. Croatia** in the **World Cup**. While the result was a sister-kisser, *tanoshii* energy flowed as high-pitched screams permeated the bar every time Japan came remotely close to the goal (or **Nakata** touched the ball). The big upset of

the morn turned out to be the females in attendance kicking male *oshiri* in the **Halftime Quiz**, answering 4 out of 5 questions to win the prizes supplied by JETAA NY's newest buddy, the **Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)**, i.e., the bestowers of **The Plaque** that featured prominently in this column last issue... Also in June, for the **Pre-Departure Orientation** a whole slew of committed JET



Clara, Donal (owner of Mr. Dennehey's), & Jenn

alum volunteers came out of the woodwork to make a great event for the rookie JETs and followed it up with a big gathering at **Faces & Names** including a surprise *soubetsu* cake for **Lisa Sakaeda**... On the topic of new JETs, ever feel like you're lacking for cocktail conversation? Well if you'd volunteered to help at Pre-Departure Orientation (or if you read this column), you'd know that of the **1,366 new JETs** accepted to the program this year, **148 (or 11%) came from New York**. So drop that dose of *chishiki* the next time you're trying to make conversation with your in-laws. Or if that's too hard to work into the chit chat, let 'em know that **Prime Minister Koizumi's son** is currently a student at **Columbia**... Major props to **Brian Hersey** for reviving the **Nihongo Dake Dinner** July 27 at **Dominie's Hoek** in ... Queens? Sounds like a trek but it was only one easy stop from Manhattan on the 7 train, and nearly 30 native and non-native Japanese (and/or Spanish) speakers sweated through the humidity and imminent thunder storm while enjoying the charming beer garden and learning how to say things in Japanese like "methanol" (*me-so-no-ru*) and how to romantically answer your fiancée's question about where to honeymoon ("*Anata ga iru to, dokodemo ii yo.*") (Special thanks to **Zack** and **Aharen-san**)... In an excellent product bundling move, the **JETAA NY Quarterly Development Meeting & Karaoke Night** was conducted in a large karaoke box room at **Japas 38** on August 24, which suffused the upbeat meeting with an intangible lounge-iness quality (and meant that it was perfectly acceptable to sip Sapporo during the meeting.) JETAA NY was honored by the presence of **Shinji Hirai**, the **new Executive Director of the Japan Local Government Center** (i.e., JETAA NY's parent org) who freestyled a thoughtful off-the-cuff introductory address to the roomful of new and veteran JET alums. Also, it's not set in stone yet, but **Dave Fusco** is rumored to be getting the ball rolling for a **ZogSports JETAA-NY Softball Team** (right Dave?) However, it does not appear there will be a **ZogSports cricket squad** despite the tasteful efforts of JETAA-NY Secretary and UK native **Rob Tuck** ... More importantly, on the karaoke front JETAA-NY seems to have found its nominee for **American Idol** in **Lee-Sean Huang** who wowed the room with **Purple Rain**, **Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me** and other power ballads, while **Nate Dummet** made his bid for **Japanese Idol** fame with some sweet covers of Columbia dropout **Hikaru Utada**. Everyone of course had an equally good time, though those who stayed until the end had bonus fun thanks in part to *karaoke ogori* on the part of **JETAA-NY's First Gentleman Tristan Loanzon** ...



Nakata-san, ganbarou!!!

SEEN AROUND TOWN: Former Treasurer and current Australia resident **Jo Sonido** power brunching at **Art Cafe** Aug. 20 with current and former officers **Jenn Olayon**, **Shannan Spisak** and **Rosie DeFremerly**... **Stuart "Green" Greenberg** in line back in July for the early

("JETAA Society" continued on page 9)

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What do people do after they finish JET? Every now and then the Newsletter likes to tackle this question to give you a sampling of what's out there. Maybe you're considering your career options and see there's someone out there you can talk to. Maybe you learn about a line of work you didn't even know existed. Maybe you find condescending comfort in knowing your job is better than any of these. Maybe you just enjoy the voyeuristic pleasure of hearing other people describe their jobs. (Hey, whatever floats your boat.) Contact newsletter@jetaany.org to get in touch with any of these fine JET alums.

CAREER CORNER

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Established JET alums tell you about their jobs

I work for Origin Data, an internet marketing firm specializing in customer acquisition. I do this through strategic search (pay-per-click campaigns) and co-registration. So we will manage companies' search campaigns, track the clicks, find out where they are coming from, how far along in the acquisition/registration process they got, etc.....

I'm just starting the job, so it's a steep learning curve for me. I'm liking it so far, but it is a sales job, so it always has its ups and downs. I found it through a client from my old job (mortgages) who thought that I would be a good addition, so they poached me away.

I'm not using my Japanese so far, but I hope to expand the company worldwide in the next few years, so I may have an opportunity to use my Japanese yet.
Chris Murphy, Atlanta

Post-JET, I moved to NYC to start the Masters of Architecture Program at Columbia University. Three years after returning from Japan, I began working at the architecture firm of Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM). We do large international and domestic projects and have over 1,000 employees in Europe, Asia and the U.S. In the past two years, I have been fortunate to work on many different parts of the design of the Freedom Tower at the WTC.
Julie Hiromoto, New York

I work at the New York subsidiary of Mizuho Trust, a major Japanese bank that administers offshore investment funds primarily for Japanese institutional investors. I'm an attorney who spent two years in commercial litigation, but I wanted to do more transactional work. I now coordinate the documentation for the setup of funds, usually coordinating parties across the globe from Japan to Hong Kong, to the Caribbean, England, L.A., and New York. Most of my spoken interaction is in Japanese and about 1/3 of the e-mails, etc. It took me about two years of looking but I got the job after I met a headhunter casually, who hooked me up with a bilingual job the next week. The interesting thing is the job is perfect for me, but I would not have taken it out of law school since I thought I wanted a job in a law firm.
Brian Hersey, New York

I am currently a Strategic Sourcing consultant for a start-up boutique consulting firm. I found a career in consulting upon my return from the JET Program in 2001, when I spent time in Tennessee consulting for a Nissan supplier. One thing led to another and I ended up in Chicago at the Huron Consulting Group, where I worked for three years for a multitude of clients.

As a strategic sourcing consultant, we look at our clients' indirect spending and identify areas where the client can improve discounts they are getting based on spend volume and market research. It is a great feeling when you can show a company a million dollars in recurring savings. This career choice is extremely interesting since I am always learning about new industries. It is very challeng-



ing and rewarding. Next year, I plan to continue consulting in Japan and have a goal of setting up an office in Tokyo.
Clinton Fairbanks, New York

I've been working as an in-house web designer for the past 10-11 years and for the past three in a huge corporation, Safeco Insurance. I am the visual designer responsible for the look and feel of our main website. I maintain the standards and do internal consulting with various departments. I also do the design work for big marketing pushes online. I truly enjoy what I do and have always felt lucky to get paid for my work.

I got this job through networking with friends. At the same time I interviewed here, I interviewed with Amazon and MSNBC, all the result of networking. My first job back from JET, though, I got through the newspaper. For designers, the most important thing you can do is to SHOW you know how design - do that by making your resume presentation unique and creative. You MUST also have a self-promotional website.
Gabriela Pedroza, Hokkaido, Kurisawa, B.S. in Art/Graphic Design, Oregon State University

I'm the Assistant Director, Graduate Division Career Counseling, NYU School of Law, though I was just promoted to this position at the end of August, so I can't say for sure what I love/hate about it yet.

What I can say is that I am in charge of all of the career counseling and career programming (resume workshops, networking sessions, mock interviews, on-campus interviews, etc.) for all of the international students at NYU School of Law. I also oversee career counseling for the tax law and other specialized graduate law programs (these are students who already received a basic law degree and are now getting additional training in a specialized area).

I moved up to this job from my prior position after completing my degree in international education and expressing to my supervisor a very strong desire to work closely with international students. As the sole full-time career counselor for the entire graduate division at the law school, I get to meet personally with a wide variety of students from dozens of backgrounds. In addition to being able to work with so many wonderful students, they also keep me on my toes by coming up with new questions and scenarios every minute — never a dull moment!

My previous position (util 8/06) was Senior Placement Assistant, J.D. Division, Office of Career Services, NYU School of Law. I honestly began this position as a way to get free tuition to a graduate program at NYU's School of Education, where I was interested in pursuing a master's degree in international education. I also had some inkling that I might enjoy working in Student Affairs, so I figured this job was a great way to get free tuition while also gaining an introduction to the field of student affairs.

It turns out that I really enjoyed working in Career Services. NYU itself is a very friendly, warm and supportive place to work, so it has been a great place to learn the ropes of this field. I found the job through NYU's HR site, but I'm fairly sure it was my personal connection to the school that got me the interview. Not only am I an NYU grad, but once I applied for the position, I reached out to everyone I was still in touch with at NYU to ask for advice/opinions about working at the school. I actually didn't get the original position I applied for at NYU, but so many people

(*"Shigoto"* continued on page 10)

BILINGUAL JOURNALISM

A Chat with Nikkei News Columnist and JET Alum STACY SMITH

Stacy Smith (Kumamoto-ken CIR, 2000-2003) has been working as a bilingual staff reporter for Nikkei Business magazine in New York since May 2005, in addition to being a frequent contributor to the JETAANY Newsletter. The Newsletter caught up with Stacy to learn a little more about what she's doing and how it's going.

anniversary of 9/11 which has, needless, to say been a heavy project as I have been going to the site on a weekly basis for research. I am exploring several themes such as organizations that were born as a result of the attack, how the building on the site is progressing, etc. Some articles will find their way into the September 11th issue of our magazine and some into my column. The anniversary is not getting nearly as much coverage in Japan as it gets here (even regarding crucial elements like the Memorial) so I want to give Japanese readers as much information as possible, particularly news they wouldn't normally have access to.

So Stacy, it sounds like you've got a pretty nifty job with Nikkei Business. Can you tell us a little bit about your life as a bilingual reporter for Nikkei?

After staying in Japan for a while following the end of JET, I came back to the States in early '04 with the goal of finding a job where I could combine my two passions, writing and Japanese. After a while this seemed like a tall order as most desirable writing related positions didn't involve Japanese, and most positions at Japanese media companies were primarily administrative. Finally, after a protracted year-and-a-half job search (during which time I kept busy with a *baito* as a waitress at a Japanese restaurant), one of the many Japanese employment agencies I had registered with told me about a job that fit both of my requirements. The timing was a bit crazy as I had already received a job offer that I was planning to take from a manga/anime production company, but I went on the interview as the content sounded great.



So what happened in the interview?

Once we started talking, I found out that the bureau chief (my current boss) was from Kumamoto, where I had spent three years as a JET! Starting with this crazy coincidence, everything about the job felt right and I accepted on the spot when I got an offer.

What exactly do you do?

My official title is Staff Writer for Nikkei Business Publications, and I work in the NY Bureau of Nikkei Business. We are a weekly magazine (think the "Business Week of Japan") and have a subscribership of 350,000. My job as a journalist is basically to provide American business news to a Japanese audience (in Japanese, as we only publish in Japan). I also contribute regularly to some of our sister publications, like computer and Chief Intelligence Officer-focused magazines.

What's this I hear about you getting your own column?

In April we launched our new webpage where I have my own monthly column entitled "USA Hot & Cool" (the name was picked by my editor in Tokyo!) Here I cover not only business trends but also anything I find newsworthy in the States, especially NYC. I appreciate that flexibility and it's been a lot of fun to write so far!

So what have you found "newsworthy" so far?

At the moment I am working on a series covering the upcoming 5-year

Is this job as glamorous as it sounds?

Yeah, it's pretty cool! I don't know if glamorous is the word I would use to describe it, but there certainly are perks. I get to travel about once a month to various conferences and to conduct interviews, and as a result I have the chance to meet many different types of people. Plus, with a press pass you can get into all kinds of events that would normally be off limits. Working for a Japanese company definitely has its disadvantages, but at the same time it is really nice to be able to feel connected to the Japanese community while here in NY. As my office is located on the same floor as Nikkei Shimbun and TV Tokyo (we're all in the same group), due to the large Japanese population we are visited daily by *bento* delivery people, Japanese video rental services, etc., so I often feel like I have returned to Japan!

What do you see yourself doing in the future?

That's a good question that I think about a lot these days! I am not sure if I will stick with journalism in the future, though for now it is a field where I can learn new things every day and am really enjoying myself. Graduate school is always in the back of my mind, and I certainly want to get back to Japan at some point in the near future, whether to study or work.

Any advice for aspiring bilingual journalists?

For print journalists, read in both languages to keep your skills sharp, especially publications similar to the kind you want to work for. Don't underestimate your ability to write in the foreign language despite not being "fluent." When I was in Japan I was horribly intimidated by translating from English to Japanese (though vice versa was fine), but it is a regular part of my job now. I usually write my articles in English first to gather my thoughts, and then translate them myself into Japanese for my bureau chief to check. Starting from my first article, he insisted that I write in Japanese and that has really helped me!

Thanks, Stacy! To read her column online, go to:

business.nikkeibp.co.jp/article/world/20060402/100955/

BAI-BAI NEW YORK! Reflections on a Move to Minnesota

by Alexei Esikoff

When I moved back to the States after my stint as an ALT, of course I moved to New York. My family was still living in the metro area suburbs, but I only wanted the big city: With my international experience, I was going to get that killer job. I'd have the kind of New York City social life you see on TV. Most importantly, I could still find my favorite things about Japan (the food, karaoke), but with the ease of speaking English.



Four years later I have left New York. I never thought I would. My boyfriend was accepted into the University of Minnesota's law school, located in Minneapolis. Love, of course, makes people act out of their comfort zone. It's not like I had gotten that killer job yet or ever: Teaching for CUNY left me living below the poverty line. Benefits? My parents paid for my health insurance. So I knew I was going to accompany him. But I still loved New York, and I also knew I had some things to do first.



I went to MOMA on its free night. I checked out a weird play about magicians at P.S. 122, and a documentary about American soldiers carrying cameras at the Landmark Sunshine Cinema. Biked across the Brooklyn Bridge. Shopped at Mexx and Uniqlo. Filled up on Cuban sandwiches, thin-crust pizza, and matzoh ball soup. One of my last meals was at my favorite Japanese restaurant, Soba-ya. Have you been? You must go; it's on E. 9th, and its soba is just like you had in Japan. After your meal, walk around Little Tokyo, taking in the *takoyaki* stand, the authentic *izakayas* on St. Mark's, the Japanese students wearing mismatched outfits that only they could make work.



As I've mentioned, one of my favorite activities ever is karaoke, which can be prohibitively expensive in the city. But this was what I wanted for a final memory. Off to Sing Sing with twelve of my closest friends in a sweaty little room. Oh, the Kirin Ichiban and the dancing and the power ballads. Even my boyfriend, who until now was a shower singer, performed a few solo numbers to much applause, including Shania Twain's "Man! I Feel Like a Woman." As the night

ended, we hugged beer-y hugs, and I fell to sleep very happy indeed.

For the move we loaded our well-used furniture, books, and my geriatric cockatiel ("Bird") into a Budget van. It took two and a half days.

Here in our corner of the Twin Cities are many Somalis and hippies, which means you can get organic injera at the local food coops. There are bike paths everywhere, including some lovely ones along the 10,000 or so lakes, and people actually use them. Our entire two-bedroom apartment costs less than renting one bedroom in New York. And the size! We have a sun room, of which the couch in the corner is my favorite new reading spot. What we don't have is enough furniture: Used to the cramming culture of New York home life, a bookshelf that once seemed big sits isolated in a corner.

Minneapolis does not overrun with choices like New York does. I inquired about sushi (citysearch.com here only had one listing) to my few friends here. They knew of one, in a chi-chi area, far from me, that was on the pricey side. I haven't been there yet. In hopes of meeting new people, I also looked up the website of the JETAA Minnesota chapter. So far they haven't written back either.

One of my boyfriend's new law school friends got his master's degree in Japan, bringing home a Japanese wife. While my language skills had deteriorated to the point of lousy, she was still thrilled to meet someone who was familiar with things like *onsen*. "I'll make *okonomiyaki* for you," she said, pressing her arm into my elbow.

I can't wait.

HEEERE'S JANAK! JET Alum Stars in 'Net Video Program

by Clara Solomon

Watch JETAA NY alum **Janak Bhimani** on his very own "vlogozine" online.

What is **Watch Me TV**? JET alum Janak and Columbia grad student **Scott Filipksi** act as your on-the-



ground, in the know guides to NY and the surrounding area. Each episode is a brief talk

show focusing on one specific current event or hot trend. Janak and Scott also hit the streets to interview New Yorkers like us and bring the everyman's perspective to their stories. Like Katie Couric and Matt Lauer, only in Japanese, on the Web, and without all the make-up.

What do they talk about? Recent topics included the blackout in Queens, Jon-Benet Ramsey, and even the "virtual windows" in Ralph Lauren's store on Madison Avenue.

All this in Japanese? You bet. Janak and Scott even throw in catchy slang like "*bochi bochi desu ne*." But don't let your lack of Japanese language abilities stop you from watching this vlogozine — Janak and Scott are plenty entertaining without understanding a word of what they say!

What better excuse to log on and brush up on your *Nihongo*?

www.watchme.tv/e/NY/

8th Annual JETAA-NY Softball Tournament

by Zack Ferguson

The annual JETAA Softball Tournament on Saturday, August 12 at Randall's Island was a huge success again this year.

Despite "base stealers" (not the kind usually associated with baseball) and a bulldozer taking over one of the fields, we were able to include a record number *eleven* teams.

Each squad brought its big bats this year as a record 15 run/game average was tallied. **Mitsubishi International Corporation** walked away with the 1st place trophy, ending a three-year championship run by **Kintetsu USA Travel**, as they supplied the park police with ample exercise by hitting **six home runs** over the fence in the championship game against 2nd place-finisher **Actus Consulting**.

The **JETAA-NY** team forgot to eat their Wheaties the morning of the tournament, and they were soundly beaten in each of their three games. Captain **Scott Hiniker** was surprised at the results especially since the team took 3rd place last year, but according to Scott, "Despite our losses, we do what JETs do best — have a good time."

Though the JET alums, unlike the students they taught in Japan, were unable to sort out their *bento* orders during lunch, no one keeled over and everyone was treated to a free keg of *oishii* beer at the awards ceremony.

Speaking of the awards ceremony, the award for **Best Uniforms** went to **JTB USA** (employer of JET alum **Carol Elk**) for their jerseys featuring the *Rakuda* (because traveling is *raku da!*) combined with pinstriped bottoms as a nod to the Yankees.

As this year's tournament organizer, I want to note that this year was a turning point for the tournament in that we had a record number of teams and participants, and an awesome after party which is sure to grow next year. JETAANY is quickly gaining lots of positive attention within the Japanese community of New York and it's due to events such as this one.

Many thanks for support from **CLAIR NY**. Also, in-kind support was provided by **Ito En USA** (with thanks to Marketing & Sales Manager and JET alum **Beau Bernstein**), **Genji Sushi Express** (courtesy of Genji Sales Manager and JET alum **R. Michael Wirin**), and the **Japan National Tourist Organization**. JETAA-NY collectively says, "*Arigatou gozaimashita*" for the complimentary Ito En tea bottles, "*Yokoso Japan*" towels, and sushi delights which were indeed enjoyed by participants!



Team JETAA-NY in their Yokoso Japan jerseys



JETAA Softball Tournament Winners Mitsubishi Corp.

FINAL STANDINGS

- 1st - Mitsubishi Int'l Corp.
- 2nd - Acutus Consulting
- 3rd - Kintetsu International
- 4th - Japan Travel Buearu
- 5th - The Center on Japanese Economy & Business at Columbia
- 6th - Docomo USA
- 7th - NY de Volunteer
- 8th - Greenwich Japanese School
- Japan Local Government Center
- 9th - Quick USA
- 10th - JETAA-NY (but 1st in our hearts)



Zack Ferguson and Mitsubishi teammates receive the trophy

BEST UNIFORM

JTB USA



JTB USA's award-winning uniforms, featuring the Rakuda!

("JETAA Society" continued from page 4)

morning Prince concert at Bryant Park on ABC's Good Morning America ... JLGC's Aharen-san hiking and cavortin' in Utah, Arizona and Spain... And all-around good guy Janak Bhimani roaming around the streets of NYC like a *talento-baka* for his increasingly popular weekly Japanese video log program at www.watchme.tv/e/NY/ ...

MU-BAS AND-O SHEI-KAS: *Omedetou* to previous NY Chapter Prez Shannan Spisak who was elected to be one of the two U.S. Country Reps along with former Pacific NW Chapter Prez Shannon Quinn. No truth to the rumor that she'll also assume John Bolton's responsibilities at the U.N., but she will be a great asset to JETAA International as it works to unify the international JETAA community... JETAA-NY says *sayonara* to Carey Lynn Asselstine, former Secretary, who moved back to her *furusato* of Toronto for a great teaching gig... JETAA-NY also is sad to say *jaa ne!* to Newsletter star writer Alexei Esikoff who will now write her wonderful fiction and Museum of Sex reviews from Minnesota where she's followed her law school-bound *kare-shi*... Meanwhile, Cindy "Mc" Hoffman has re-located to Queens from Connecticut where she's teaching Japanese and Chinese History at the UN International School in Flushing... Former NY'er Lynette Martyn is the director of the non-profit teacher training organization MTI in Needham, MA... On the family front, Glen Anderson and his wife were blessed with Heather Mei Anderson on August 9, and Joe Zamoyta and his wife Bo just had their second child in August. Also, special *omedetou* to Newsletter cartoonist Brian Hall and his wife on the birth of his daughter Chihiro Alexis on July 22... Also of note, Steven Horowitz, the editor of this fine publication (he made me put that in there) announced his engagement to the love of his life Wynne Wu at the end of July. I am not allowed to tell you that they met on J-Date. A spring 2007 wedding is planned... That's all for this issue. See you next issue/When the leaves have turned orange/And Santa-chan awaits. (That's a *haiku*, baby!)

A CHAT WITH CHIKA TV Tokyo Reporter Fields Questions from JET Alums

On Friday, August 18, a handful of JET alums and some JLGC staff were fortunate to have the opportunity to Q&A with Chika Yoshida, a bilingual reporter for TV Tokyo, who was passing through New York City.



Yoshida-san, who covers the Bank of Japan and the Tokyo Stock Market, talked about everything from Japanese finance issues to the challenges of reporting with a bare-bones staff to the differences in interviewing Japanese versus American CEOs. Asked how she went from covering the HIV-tainted blood scandal to covering the Bank of Japan, Yoshida-san joked that that's where the Human Resources Department assigned her and that she could just as easily have ended up in the Accounting Department. She said her most interesting experience was going to the U.S. Automakers' Convention over a three-year-period and watching the downward change in confidence of GM CEO Rick Wagoner, noting that by the third year he seemed tired and his palms were a bit sweaty.

Yoshida-san also discussed recent hostile takeover activity in Japan, including how interesting it was to observe the old-school paper business participating in cutting edge M&A processes and how the average Japanese person just sees the foreign investment banks as carpetbaggers profit no matter who takes over whom.

JETAA NY President Jennifer Olayon expressed her appreciation to Yoshida-san for stopping by and leading an engaging discussion.



Kat, Donal (owner of Mr. Dennehey's), Carol, Rob and Cindy stay cool during a tense match.



Stacy Smith, Dave Fusco, Hiro Tsuboi & Monica Yuki get ready to represent JETAA-NY



Lisa Sakaeda blows out the candles on her surprise *soubetsu* cake.

JET Programme's 20th Anniversary Logo Contest Winner a NY Alum!

by Justin Tedaldi

Two former JETs, Cathy (Saitama 2000-2003) and Vlad (Saitama 2000-2002) Baranenko--who met and got engaged while on JET--both submitted entries for the JET Programme's 20th anniversary logo contest earlier this summer. In July, Cathy's submission was chosen as the winning entry. She will receive a roundtrip ticket to Japan and a prize of 100,000 yen at the awards ceremony on November 22nd at the Hotel Okura in Tokyo.

Cathy, who currently works for NTT Docomo USA, said of her design, "My intention was to convey a sense of human connectivity, cultural convergence and a sense of harmony. I hope the silhouette of the man and child shaking hands is able to remind participants of the programme's true purpose, which is cultural exchange. I am extremely honored to be able to leave a mark on the programme...literally!"

Congratulations to Cathy and best wishes on her JET homecoming!



("Shigoto" continued from page 5)

knew what I was looking for at that point that it wasn't long before my resume found its way to the hands of my current employer.

Clara Solomon, New York

I'm a Vice President at MWW Group, one of the top ten PR firms. I work in corporate communications and public affairs, specifically with education related organizations and in economic development. The work can be intense at times, but I really enjoy it because I'm a social person and I am constantly interacting with people and helping them communicate their ideas and strengths. One of my clients is the Scottish government, and I help them by promoting business initiatives in Scotland as well as coordinate U.S. media opportunities for government officials.

Until recently I had been freelancing, but I joined a firm again to have more professional interaction and work with larger projects. Freelancing was a challenge, but I use a lot of what I learned in my job today — especially in networking for media and new business opportunities.

Tamara Boorstein, New York

Earlier this summer, I completed a two-year program called the Rotary World Peace Fellowship at one of the Rotary Centers for Peace and Conflict Resolution. There are seven centers in the world — mine is at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan. Although it is not a "job" per se, it was a fully-paid two year master's in Peace and Conflict Resolution. I got the scholarship through a recommendation from the Consul General of Japan at Kansas City, where I worked from 2002-2004. That job was clearly a result of my experience as a JET — I got the job announcement through a JETAA mailing list when I was living in Los Angeles. If you're interested, check out the www.rotary.org/foundation/educational/. It's been a great way to get back in touch with Japan and see many other parts of the world, too.

William Nealy, Kansas City/Tokyo

Since I returned from Japan in April '04 (Oita City CIR), I've been working for FIREBORNE Corporate Awards (www.fireborne.com). It's a family business. I design and maintain the website and am involved in nearly every aspect of the business. I enjoy being in private enterprise as opposed to government work, both in Japan and in Texas where I lived before Oita. There's more creativity and enthusiasm, more highs and lows. I like the glass, the colors, and hearing from jubilant clients after their events. What I don't like about it is the risk of failing, but that's tangled up in the rest of what I like about it! To supplement this work, I've been working part-time at the Kinokuniya Bookstore since March '06. There I enjoy the opportunity to occasionally speak Japanese and help customers. It's been a favorite place in Seattle for me since I was a kid.

Ardis Burr, Seattle, WA

After spending 3 years in Japan, I came back stateside and was not excited about purchasing a vehicle and/or paying the steep insurance prices that I was going to have to pay because of my three-year hiatus. Therefore, I just borrowed from friends and relatives when I needed a vehicle. But, even though I always filled up the tank, washed it spotless and even provided barley and hops in exchange for these rentals, the relationships started to suffer as I kept mooching off them.

Then it happened. I saw a Flexcar parked on the corner near where my brother lived. I then went to their website and learned all about car-sharing. So, I joined and have still not bought a vehicle since coming back from JET 6 years ago. And because it was so good to me and I was so passionate about the concept, when they had a job opening two years ago, I applied and now I am living and working for this amazing concept called car-sharing. Check it out! Both Flexcar and Zipcar are expanding fairly rapidly so they may have openings in a city where you live or want to live.

Toby Weymiller (JET Alum, Hokkaido, 1997-2000), Seattle

("Letter" continued from page 1)

In an anecdote that I wrote, I described an encounter with members of the Jehovah's Witness church in my town and then described a conversation I had where I referred to them as "strange." While the conversation happened over 12 years ago, after some reflection I believe it still was inappropriate to include. Had someone submitted a similar anecdote with a JET referring to Jews as "strange," I would likely not have included it.

The Newsletter aims to be open-minded, and in this case my comment unfortunately represented a kind of narrow-mindedness that I believe the JET Program is intended to help reduce. At the same time, Zandra's thoughtful response will hopefully help right the wrong by educating readers and correcting misperceptions.

Here are some excerpts from Zandra's e-mail, with permission:

Kudos for focusing on religion in this issue and not shying away from it as a taboo subject, and thanks a lot for your thoughts on Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan... I thought you might like to know that the official name is Ehoba no Shounin. (There is a smaller, unrelated religious group in Japan called Ehoba.)

I'm a Jehovah's Witness JET, and I was glad to hear your experience on getting to know a little about JW's. I had the reverse experience of knocking on a door, Bible in hand, and meeting one of my students. She said, "Oh, Zan-do-ra-sensei!" and just grinned. Many JETs I've spoken to are surprised to find out that I'm a Witness, and I've gotten the impression that some think we as a people are "strange" as you stated. It's kind of sad, but I didn't dare put it anywhere on my JET application for exactly that reason. And speaking of the non-conformity you mentioned regarding the Kimiga yo, Ehoba no Shonin in Japan also recently won a landmark legal case involving students who were unlawfully expelled from school due to their refusal to participate in kendo or other martial-arts classes. They don't celebrate Christmas here or visit shrines for good luck on exams, either. They often do very well in English class due to opportunities to actually use the language in weekly preaching and ministry work, and they're taught that being different at school is OK.

It's not really well-known by many JETs that there are Witnesses all around the world in well over 200 countries besides Japan, and in all strata of society (Columbia Law School students, engineers at NASA, missionaries in Albania and even a handful of JETs in Japan). There's also a very active Japanese congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge on the Manhattan side, as well as one in Westchester, with all meetings held in Japanese.

I have to concede that it may seem "strange" or difficult to believe that someone who doesn't know you is interested in your spirituality and well-being. But I guess what I want to communicate to you is that we are not weirdos with no jobs and no life who go around bothering people; we are ordinary people with hopes and dreams and car payments, who are simply passionate about having a dialogue on faith with any community members who are interested.

Thanks for listening. In your newsletter you gave your honest perspective on the experience, and in the future I hope you can keep an open and honest attitude towards JW's as people.

Zandra Ellis, ALT, Nagasaki-ken, Kitamatsuura-gun, Emukae-cho

(“Natsukashii” continued from page 1)

ramen-yas and even *kaiten-zushi*—that come as close to approximating that paradoxically exotic, down-home feeling of being back in Japan.

But before you run out and hail a cab, you might want to first peruse oyajilife.com, which is a site obsessed primarily with ramen and soba in Japan, NY and elsewhere, and also the **Japan in New York** section of the jetaany.org website (bottom of the menu on the left).

Contenders for the top *izakaya* might be **Yakitori Taishou** and **Yakitori Taishou II**, both on St. Mark's Place off of 3rd Ave. where you're given a friendly “*Irrashai!*” every time you walk in along with all the standard Japanese tapas as well as *daijyouki nama* beer and even *chu-hais* in those gi-normous glass mugs. Right down the street on St. Mark's is also the notorious **Kenka**, marked by the big red-eyed *tanuki* and the random dip-your-own cotton candy machine in the front. It's also a great noisy *izakaya*, with retro Japanese posters, pachinko machines and music blaring (including an occasional un-PC nationalist tune). But the main attraction at Kenka is the price—\$1.50 draft beers Kirins and Sapporos! You can't beat that anywhere in Manhattan, or outside as well. Indulge in the *aspara-bacon* or the *jagaimo*, but stay away from the bull penis! (We're not joking.)

For a more Japan-East Village fusion experience, move a block up to 9th St. and walk downstairs to **Sake Bar Decibel**. Those seeking a classier *izakaya* ambience can head up to **Riki** on 45th St. just off of Lexington Ave or to **Donburiya** on 47th St. between Lexington & 3rd Aves. And if you're stuck in the neon prison of Times Square and looking for a nice escape, slip downstairs to **Sake Bar Hagis** (152 W. 49th St.) which has good cheap *natsukashii* eats including that old fave - spaghetti with ketchup. **Ariyoshi** on 53rd St. between 2nd & 3rd Aves is as close as you'll get to the thousands of little family-run *izakayas* in Japan, right down to the mostly-Japanese clientele and Japanese programs on the TV.

In the mood to make your own *izakaya* experience? Get some take-away *okonomiyaki* or *takoyaki* at **Otafuku**, the hole in the wall *okonomiyaki-ya* on 9th St. between 2nd & 3rd Aves, brown-bag some beers and grab some seats outside at the Starbucks at St Mark's & 3rd Ave. Better yet, hunker down into a *yanki-zuwari* squat by the Astor Place Cube with your food and beverage while your friend strums some Nagabushi Tsuyoshi tunes on the guitar.

Everyone knows there's plenty of good sushi in New York, but for the authentic sushi eating experience, go to **Kaiten Sushi** at E. 27th St. & 3rd Ave. to pick your sushi fresh off the conveyor belt.

On the ramen front, the go-to spot used to be **Menchanko Tei** on W. 55th St. between 5th & 6th Aves. While they still serve a great bowl or ramen, vets say they're coasting a bit on reputation at this point. The best bowls of ramen now might be **Minka** (E. 5th St. between Aves. A & B) and **RaiRaiken** (E. 10th St. between 1st Ave. & 2nd Ave.), and also **Menkuitei** on 56th St just east of 6th Ave. (There's also a location just below St. Mark's place but more of a small *izakaya* and not as much variety on the ramen.) For *tonkotsu* ramen, go to **Rokumeisha** in the West Village (11 Barrow St between 4th & Bleecker.) Another great homestyle restaurant with excellent *al dente* udon and one of the only places to get both Sapporo-style butter ramen and Kyushu-style *tonkotsu* ramen is at **Sapporo** on the northeast corner of 1st Ave. & 10th St. If you're more of an upscale non-traditional type, (which I suppose misses the whole point of *natsukashii*) then across the street is **Momofuku**. Its modern approach to ramen includes top quality ingredients such as Berkshire pork and fresh veggies, making it the most unique bowl of ramen in the city.

For *shabu-shabu*, the number one choice among Japanese and *gaijin* (which

in this context we of course mean Americans) is **Shabu-Tatsu** on E. 10th St. between 1st & 2nd Aves. If you like your *shabu-shabu* a bit thicker, **Chie** of **NYdeVolunteer** recommends **Lan** on 3rd Ave. just below 12th St.

Note that **Yoshinoya** in Times Square has been intentionally excluded from this list because it tastes nothing like Yoshinoya in Japan and it feels like a McDonald's. But if you do happen to go, make sure to ask for a raw egg, because health regulations require that they not provide one unless you specifically request it.



TEA TIME

For Japanese tea and desserts, there's the **Cha-An Tea House** (also see the section on Japanese Culture) on 9th St. between 2nd & 3rd Aves. For choux-creams, green tea-flavored puddings and various red bean pastries and Japanese-style cakes, check out **Cafe Zaiya** on 41st St. between Madison & 5th Ave. and now also on 3rd Ave just below St. Mark's Place, **JASMart** on St. Mark's, and **Beard Papa** at 77th & Broadway and also at Astor Place.

You can also get your own Japanese tea at **Ito En** on Madison Ave. or **Takashimaya** on 5th Ave., and your own Japanese rice balls or other sweets at **Oms/b** on 45th St. between 3rd & Lexington, and at the high-end **Minamoto Kitchen**, right near **Kinokuniya Bookstore** on the south side of Rockefeller Center.

LET'S SHOPPING!

If you want to recreate the true Japanese shopping experience, go to Canal Street and snap up some *nisei mono* Louis Vitton bags. But if you want to recreate the experience *you* had shopping in Japan — and the idea of crossing into New Jersey doesn't frighten you — then shell out \$4 for a 30-minute bus ride to **Mitsuwa** in Edgewater where you can get everything you need including a *katatsu* or even a heated toilet seat!

If you're the type for whom leaving Manhattan violates deeply-held principles, you still have plenty of options: **JASMart** in St. Mark's Place or **Katagiri Japanese Groceries** on E. 59th St. between 2nd & 3rd Aves to get that Japanese mayonnaise you love so much. The **Sunrise Mart** on 9th St. (2nd floor), and the **Family Market** in Astoria can help you recreate that Japanese convenience store ambience. Also in Queens you can find **Oishii's** in Forest Hills.



Alternatively, if you want cheap basic clothes that don't look exactly like the Gap threads everyone else is wearing, then go to **Uniqlo** in Soho where they'll even hem your pants for you within an hour at no extra charge!

And for the *kecchi* (i.e., stingy) among us, there's the **Saumurai** chain of 99-cent shops, just like the 100-en shops back in Japan. There's one on 8th Ave. just south of Port Authority, as well as locations in Forest Hills, Astoria, Jackson Heights, Flushing and Grand Street in Chinatown.

CAN YOU SPEAK JAPANESE?

Another way to keep that Japanese connection alive is to re-immersify yourself in the language. One great option is the **Japanese Meetup.com** language group which meets once a month at a pre-designated cafe somewhere. Just go to meetup.com and sign up to get the updates.

Another excellent option are the **JETAA NY Nihongo Dake Dinners**, which are announced occasionally in the weekly JETAA NY e-mail. (If you're not getting the e-mails, contact secretary@jetaany.org to fix

(“Natsukashii” continued on page 12)

(“Religion” continued from page 11)

that. Non-JET alums can be on the e-mail distribution list too as Friends of JET (it's pronounced FOJ's)). If you don't see any happening, then that just means you have to take the initiative and organize one yourself. Folks will definitely show up.

If you're more into the idea of doing an activity in Japanese, a great organization to get involved with is **NYdeVolunteer**, a Japanese volunteer organization founded by the wonderful and entrepreneurial Noriko Hino. NYdeVolunteer is for Japanese people in New York who want to get involved in the community and help out. Their meetings, volunteer activities and communications are primarily in Japanese (though they have an English version of their e-newsletter) meaning you can do something for the betterment of society while simultaneously using your Japanese. Go to www.nydevolunteer.org to learn more and subscribe to their weekly e-mail.

For straight-up studying, the classes offered at the **Japan Society** are top notch. Not much reason to go anywhere else. But if you want a somewhat unorthodox approach, kill two birds with one stone and use **Craig's List** or the classified postings at Sunrise Mart or JASMart to find a Japanese person to teach you guitar, yoga or whatever—in Japanese.

“INTERNATIONALIZATION”

Miss talking about Japan? Get yourself to the **JETAA NY Happy Hours** when you see them in the weekly e-mail. Miss all the people from other countries that you used to meet in Japan? Try volunteering at **The International Center** on 23rd St. between 5th & 6th Aves. You'll find yourself surrounded by people from around the world. Make sure to check out the bulletin board for events and activities, or hang out in the conversation lounge where you can sit at any table and join in the conversation.

Or, get yourself a job teaching at any of the numerous English language schools where you'll teach students of all backgrounds and meet other teachers who are also likely to be well-traveled.

Also, check the mailing lists or websites for the **Japan Society** (japansociety.org) and **Asia Society** (asiasociety.org) which are always hosting cultural exhibits, lectures, discussions, networking parties and various classes.

JUST LIKE O-KAASAN USED TO MAKE IT

Step 1: Look for good Japanese recipes on epicurious.com or freshdirect.com, or any other good websites you know.

Step 2: Go to **JASMart**, **Sunrise Mart**, **Family Market**, the **Park Slope Food Co-op**, **Whole Foods** or any other bourgeoisie upscale establishment to get all the daikons, tofus, squid, etc. that you want.

Step 3: Cook it all up yourself, or get some JET alum friends together. Or take it a step further and organize a **JET alum potluck dinner**, or even a **JET alum Iron Chef** event like the JETAA Portland chapter. (Of course, if you really want to recreate the cooking experience you had in Japan, then just challenge yourself to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner with a rice cooker, one burner and no stove.)

CULTURE CLUB

Not enough tea ceremony at home or in your office? Enjoy and appreciate the **Cha-An Tea House** on 9th St. between 2nd & 3rd Ave. which not only looks like a classic Japanese cafe (if such a concept even exists), but has a separate *tatami* tea room inside it where they hold three tea ceremonies per day that you can attend and also participate in.

For art exhibits, film and lectures, the **Japan Society** on E. 47th St. (employer of several JET alums) always has interesting cultural activities to choose from and is a great place to meet new people. Across the river in Queens you can take in the **Noguchi Sculpture Garden** and enjoy peace and quiet on par with visiting your local temple in Japan. The **Hammond Stroll Garden and Museum** in northern Westchester is tough to get to without a car, but it is a lovely Japanese-style garden. Visit hammondmuseum.org for more details.



HAPPYFUNMUSIC

There are two Japan-related bands you need to know about in New York. One is good time *natsukashii* in a unique and hip way, and the other will tickle that irony bone that kept you sane at times on JET. **Happyfunsmile** (happyfunsmile.com) is one of the more engaging bands you'll ever experience. With a posse of American and Japanese members, this Okinawa-style *chindon* band takes over whatever joint they're in and dances around while playing those bouncy Okinawa-style tunes that you'll recognize as soon as you hear it without ever realizing you knew it. For your irony fix, you'll relate well to **Gaiji-a-Go-Go** (gainjin55.com — get it — 55? Go go?), with their entourage of Japanese and *gaijin* who lived in Japan and who not only play B-52's style pop tunes sprinkled with Japanese slang about life in Japan, but dress the part as well (we're talking backup singers in kimono mini-skirts made of American flags) and come to party. Get on both of their e-mail lists to know when they're playing and learn what else is out there.

MEDIA BISTRO

Maybe you like to keep your connection with Japan by watching your favorite Japanese TV shows, reading manga or keeping up on the Japanese news in English or in Japanese. To watch Japanese TV programs in NY you have three options: 1) Get cable TV and find that channel that shows Japanese news and *do-ramas* at random select hours during the day. 2) Order from **Video 7 Seven** at 718-786-5166 or go to **Sunrise Mart**, **Family Market**, **Oishii's** or **Katagiri** and rent all the episodes of your favorite *do-rama* or comedy that you want. 3) Hang out in Japanese restaurants such as **Ariyoshi** where they have Japanese TV programs running all through the night.

Actually, there's a fourth option now. Check out **JET alum Janak Bhiman's video log** Japanese program at watchme.tv/e/NY/ where you can watch a new episode each week of Janak and a fellow *gaijin* adapt the Japanese comic form of running around the streets of New York and getting people to do stupid things. It's mostly in Japanese, but you can get the gist of it pretty easily regardless of your *nihongo* level.

Everyone knows **Kinokuniya** in Rockefeller Center has all the Japanese books, magazines, manga, music and DVDs you need (not to mention a quaint little café inside). **Asahiya** on E. 45th St. has a lot of this as well. But the less known **Book-Off** discount Japanese bookstore on E. 41st St. between 5th Ave & Madison will really rekindle that Japanese bookstore feel you may not even realize you've missed.

For all the *manga otaku*, find the **manga group at meetup.com** which meets monthly.

To keep up on Japanese news in English, the one-stop source is **newson-japan.com** which aggregates and has links to all the Japanese news sources.

And for the *gaijin* perspective—in Japanese, no less—read Nikkei bilingual reporter and **JET alum Stacy Smith's weekly column** on whatever suits her fancy that month at business.nikkeibp.co.jp/article/world/20060402/100955/.

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Concert Review

Puffy AmiYumi Splurges for NYC

by Justin Tedaldi

"on June 8th 1853 the us navy sailed into yokohama bay and opened japan to western influence. 153 years later puffy amiyumi are touring usa"

-Back of T-shirt for Puffy's summer 2006 U.S. tour

Few pop groups—especially Japanese ones—would dare to compare their recent tour with an epochal historical event, but that's Puffy for you.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Ami Onuki and Yumi Yoshimura's debut as pop superstars in their homeland, and their first New York appearance since their scarf-and-earmuffs-clad performance of "Friends Forever" at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. To celebrate, the girls waxed a new album, *Splurge*, featuring songs written and/or produced by Butch Walker, Dexter Holland and Jon Spencer in addition to songs written with longtime collaborators Tamio Okuda and Andy Sturmer.

On July 11, a crowd of hundreds gathered to see Puffy as part of New York's River to River Festival, a series of free summer concerts held mostly at the World Financial Center. The sunny weather and all-ages crowd provided a welcome reception to the group and their good-time tunes.

Kicking things off with "Nice Buddy," an up-tempo number from the new album, the girls revved things up with the older "That's the Way it Is," a dead ringer for vintage Beatles.

Following some between-song patter read from notepads in mangled English such as "so, I rub New York because there is the shopping!" and



"our new album comes out July 5th," the girls expressed their admiration for Butch Walker and barreled into "Call Me What You Like," another new track peppered with musical references to Def Leppard, Gwen Stefani and the Knack. Shifting gears into "Mole-Like"—another new one—the girls were joined onstage by a Devo-ish figure that busted out some moves that were, well, mole-like.

Though they might have been tempted to perform more of their English-language songs and covers for the mostly-American crowd, Puffy still performed as if playing for their fellow Japanese, shoring up early hits like "Jet Keisatsu" and "Into the Beach." Their five-piece band (including a guitarist who wasn't shy to dress up like AC/DC's

Angus Young or horse around with a shark puppet for the occasion) was tightly loud, and a surprise performance of Green Day's "Basket Case" mid-set was the night's sonic highlight.

Throughout the show, Ami and Yumi shared stories with the crowd about their adventures on tour in the U.S., with Ami sharing one particularly personal one about the connection between riding Amtrak and getting a rash. As ragtag as their looks can be at times, the girls were impeccably polite, even going as far as to thank the audience for the encore before ripping into "Radio Tokyo" from the new album and capping things off with "Asia no Junshin," their first single and a J-pop classic.

Though the girls now draw a younger audience stateside with their Cartoon Network show *Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi*, they're still fiery on stage. And their English is probably better than Commodore Perry's Japanese, to boot.

(*"Natsukashii"* continued from page 12)

PERFECT CUTT-O

By now everyone in New York knows that Japanese haircutters are among the best — all that late-night practice in the Harajuku salons has paid off. So make the mundane more interesting by getting your own Japanese stylist. Make gossipy small talk about your hometown on JET. Recreate the conversations about the differences between Japanese straight hair and *gaijin* curly hair. While there's an endless array of mop-choppers out there, a couple that have been recommended to us are the **Cutting Room** on Green Street (ask for Chie) and **Hair Mates Hair Salon** at 2 St. Mark's Place.

FIND A GOOD THERAPIST

None of this really clicking? Maybe your craving for Japan is a masked desire for something deeper, in which case finding a **good therapist** (metanoia.org/choose/) might help you figure out what it's all really about. And if you're seeking a Japanese therapist in New York, see the article on Hope Nozomi Konno in the Spring 2003 issue of the Newsletter (jetaany.org/_newsletter.php).

Finally, if this is all too much information to process, just go wander around the East Village and you'll figure most of this out for yourself.

In the bigger picture, re-creating the JET experience is actually very difficult, particularly in New York. One of the key dynamics underpinning much of our experience was the limit on choice, forcing us to bond with and experience people and places in ways we otherwise wouldn't. New York is, in a sense, the opposite — there are infinite choices, people, scenes and niches where you and everyone else can always choose something new. Hopefully JETAA NY creates a bit of an oasis that lets you occasionally regain an occasional bit of that elusive *natsukashii*.

This is an admittedly far from complete and extremely biased list. Plus, New York changes faster than you can say, "This is a pen." So if we missed something so natsukashii that you nearly choked on your omu-raisu, let us know by e-mailing newsletter@jetaany.org.

FILM REVIEW

Premiere of

RIDING ALONE FOR THOUSANDS OF MILES

Hosted by the Japan Society

Reviewed by Lyle Sylvander

On August 24, the Japan Society hosted the New York premiere of the film *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*. The Japan Society was kind enough to provide JETAA NY with 20 free tickets for the special event. JETAA NY and the Newsletter would like to extend special thanks to Michelle Andrews and Christy Jones of the Japan Society for their hospitality and for enabling Lyle Sylvander to attend and provide the below film review.

Zhang Yimou's new film *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* (the title hopefully sounds better in Mandarin) marks an anomaly in the great director's filmography: previously, Zhang's narratives concerned strong-willed women. His early collaboration with Gong Li (*Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou*, *To Live*, *Raise the Red Lantern*) brought both of them international recognition — so much so that the two were inseparable. When that partnership ended, he formed a new one with Zhang Ziyi in *The Road Home* and the martial arts extravaganzas *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*. Even the films made in between — *Not One Less* and *Happy Times* — concerned female protagonists. *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* is Zhang's first film to revolve around a male protagonist. In fact, Zhang seems to be seriously examining the notion of patriarchy or fatherhood — the female characters exist on the periphery while the plot involves not one, but two, father-son relationships.

Playing the lead in *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* is the famous Japanese actor Ken Takakura. Takakura has appeared in over 100 films during his lifetime, most famously for a series of *yakuza* films during the 1960s and 1970s and the Hollywood film *Black Rain* (1989). At one point, the Japanese media dubbed the hard-boiled actor the "Clint Eastwood of Japan." In *Ridings*, he plays Takada, a man who is estranged from his son Ken-ichi, who is dying of cancer. Takada travels from his seaside village to a Tokyo hospital but Ken-ichi refuses to see him. When he learns that Ken-ichi had been studying a form of Chinese folk drama and that he had planned to visit China and videotape the singer Li Jiamin, he decides to under-



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take the project himself. When he arrives in China, he finds that Li Jiamin (a Chinese opera singer playing himself) is in jail and unable to sing. Li is also estranged

from his young son, who is just a child, and Takada's situation reminds him of his own. Takada journeys to rural Yunnan Province to find Li's son and bring him to see his father. Takada's first journey is an attempt to bridge the gap between himself and his own son while the second journey is one between Li and his son. Despite the title, Takada does not travel alone but with a comically inept translator played by Qiu Lin. *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* refers to a song in the literary classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in which a general selflessly embarks on a long journey at his friend's bequest.



The film naturally rests on the talents of Takakura and he does not disappoint. He displays a surface stoicism throughout yet exudes tenderness within. It is a sublimely nuanced performance from a masterful actor. Yang Zhenbo is cute and charming as Li's son and he and Takura interact well even though neither speaks the other's language.

Zhang has also directed his film with style and restraint, only giving in to excessive sentimentality in the final reel. Unlike his previous two films, *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, *Riding* employs a static camera throughout and dispenses with flashy color-coded systems. Cinematographer Xiaoding Zhao shoots the film in a subtle blue tinge and his compositions highlight the natural beauty of Yunnan Province. The understated composition and pacing of the film is more in line with refined Japanese art, along the lines of directors Yasujiro Ozu and Kenji Mizoguchi, rather than Zhang's usual epic scope. By doing so, this Chinese director acknowledges his own respect for the fathers of Japanese cinema.

And judging from the audible sobs in the house and the round of applause during the end credits, everyone in attendance had great respect for not only the film but the Japan Society's wonderful event as well.

THE "WELCOME BACK" ISSUE TOP 13!

You can take the JET out of Japan, but you can't take Japan out of the JET. Not immediately anyway. So to assist the recent returnees as they re-adjust to life outside Japan, we have compiled ...



THE TOP 13 MISTAKES MADE BY RECENT JET RETURNÉES

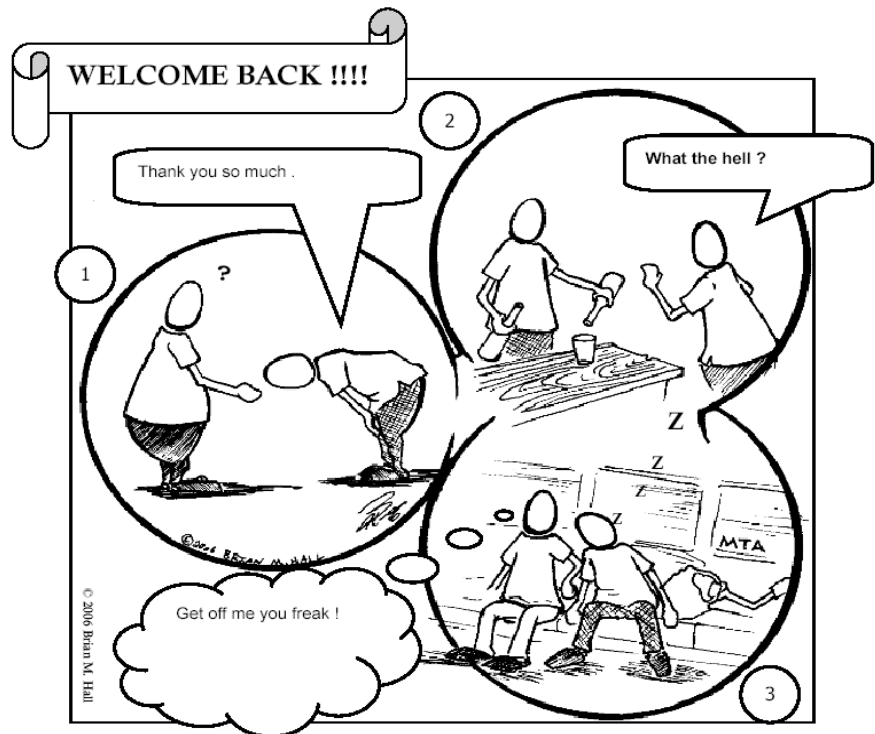
13. "I'll have the minestrone *and-o* a garden salad."
12. Showing up to parties "fashionably early".
11. "Now that I'm back in New York I'll finally be able to meet some nice, normal guys."
10. Requesting chopsticks at Katz's Deli to eat your matzoh ball soup.
9. "To-in-crease-e-ffi-cien-cy I re-co-mmend that-you le-ve-rage your sy-ner-gies. Repeat after me - 'le-ve-rage...'"
8. Thinking that non-JETs actually are interested to hear how you (choose one) memorized 2,000 kanji/ learned flower arranging/taught an entire town how to speak English.
7. "It's a Japanese restaurant. Of *course* they speak Japanese."
6. Dating all correspondence as "Bush 6."
5. "What can go wrong? See, we take the 6:53 train from Penn Station which gets us to Trenton exactly at 8:12 for the transfer to..."
4. Bowing to taxis when you jaywalk in front of them.
3. "With my sharpened my humor skills and raised confidence, I'll be a big hit with the ladies in New York."
2. Walking into Famous Ray's and ordering a slice of seaweed and squid, heavy on the corn.
1. "Hey, check it out! *Another* gaijin bar!"



*Special thanks to Justin Tedaldi and Laura Epstein for their contributions.

THE RECENT JET RETURNÉE EXPERIENCE

Don't be surprised if it takes a little time to adjust...





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