

JETAANY

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

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The "TRAUMA" ISSUE

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DOCTORS, EARTHQUAKES AND CHIKAN (Oh My!)

Tales of Trauma from Days of JET

Despite many wonderful and inspiring moments while on JET, there were of course moments that were downright traumatic. Let's relive some of them, shall we?

While playing baseball with my junior high school club baseball team in my host city, I twisted my knee and tore some medial meniscus cartilage. The knee ballooned to the size of a honeydew melon as I got on my bike and pedaled as fast as I could, with one leg of course, to the local hospital.

At the hospital, they took me to the MRI room and proceeded to force my knee straight (something it did NOT want to do) and then asked me to keep as still as possible for forty minutes while they took the test. I am a grown man, but the pain was so unbearable that the tears and sweat got intermixed as the area around my head began to resemble a small lake. The MRI technicians didn't talk to me during the entire episode (very unusual if you've had an MRI before) and didn't seem to think it important to tell me that they needed to run the test again. Yes, I was in that damned machine for an hour and 20 minutes while screaming bloody murder internally. When they finally took me out, I let out a fairly good-sized "Arrrrrrggghhhhh!"

In the end, I ended up talking my way into getting to go to the big city, Asahikawa, to have my surgery as there was a "knee specialist" who studied in Chicago. Even though I was able to communicate with the doctor in my local town, I did not like how behind the curve the local hospital was. It is truly amazing how advanced Japan



is technologically, yet they can still be very behind in many areas of medicine.... at least in the small towns. The big cities are a totally different ballgame.

By the way, I ended up playing baseball for the local city hall team the following year and got my revenge against the local hospital team (yes, those two MRI technicians played ball) by getting a couple base hits and scoring the winning run. Take that you crazy, pain-inflicting SOB!!

-Toby Weymiller, Hokkaido-ken, 1997-00

Once at an *enkai*, I threw up on my *kocho-sensei*. Embarrassing.

-Anonymous

I was actually not home for the most traumatic event to happen to my town while I was on JET. I was on the Shinkansen on my way up to Tokyo to meet my boyfriend Jeff at Narita. As I typically did when on the Shinkansen, I was reading the electronic news ticker at the front of the car to practice my kanji when up popped something about "O-jishin Tottori-ken, Hino-Gun," which I was pretty sure meant "Big earthquake Tottori-ken, Hino-gun."

Well, I just happened to live in Hino-gun in Tottori-ken, and I didn't like the idea of an *o-jishin* in my hometown. I turned to the businessman next to me and asked if I had indeed read the ticker correctly and that there

("Trauma" continued on page 10)

The "Trauma" Issue

Why a "Trauma" issue? Well, because not everything on JET or in our lives is rosy and heartwarming, so sometimes it's important to acknowledge and examine the less comfortable side of life. (Plus, *shoujiki ni itte*, it makes for much better stories.)

That said, I don't want you should have a nervous breakdown, so we've made sure to also include the usual fun stuff, like JETAANY Society, the Top 10 and Japanese theatre and DVD reviews. Speaking of which, make sure to read the article about the JET alum who produces travel videos for children with his wife. Traveling the world with two small children — now that's trauma.

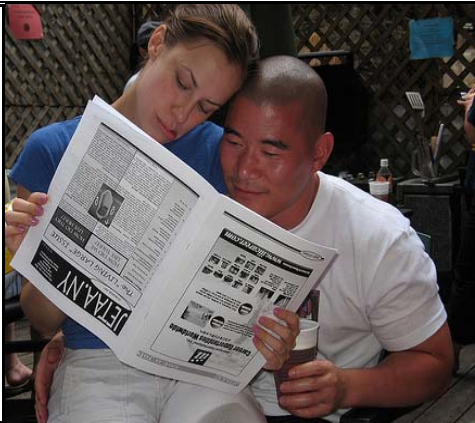
Ultimately, of course, it's about finding a good balance and keeping things in perspective. And hopefully that's what we've done for you in this issue. So sit back, enjoy and, most importantly, don't panic.

Steven Horowitz
Newsletter Editor

"Upside-down. With my fiancée. That's how I take my Newsletter."

Got your own perspective to share? Contact us at:

newsletter@jetaany.org



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS GO-SHOUKAI



Now that JETAA NY is an official 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, we are required by law to have a real live Board of Directors, and on September 27, the new Board held its first official meeting. Here's a brief intro to each of your Directors.

**Tony McCormac (Gifu-ken, 1998-99)
Chairman of the Board**

Tony served as JETAA NY Treasurer from 2005-07 and in that role became the point person for moving JETAA NY to 501(c)(3) status. He currently works for Kaplan Test Prep & Admissions as Director for International Business Development and lives in New York.

Sara Beinert

Sara, the only non-JET alum member of the Board, is currently Major Gifts Officer at the Center for Constitutional Rights. Previously, she was Manager of Individual Gifts at the Brennan Center for Justice, and Special Events Manager at the Ms. Foundation for

Women. She also serves on the Board of Women in Media and News.

Joshua Safier (Oita-ken, 1991-92)

Joshua is the Director of the Jerome A. Chazen Institute of International Business at the Columbia Business School and has fourteen years of experience in the field of higher education with particular expertise in intercultural learning and exchange. He also heads Columbia University's Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER).

Evan Hyman (Osaka-fu, 1995-96)

Evan served as JETAA NY Secretary from 1997-98. He currently works as a Product Manager at Mitsui Foods International, heading up marketing efforts for the company.

Shannan Spisak (Kanagawa-ken, 1996-98)

A former JETAA NY President (2002-05), Shannan is serving her second term as one of JETAA USA's two Country Representatives and has been deeply involved in efforts to obtain 501(c)(3) status in all of her roles. She has also served as JETAA NY Database Manager since

2005. Shannan currently works as an assistant in the Barnard College President's office.

Jennifer Olayon (Nagasaki-ken, 1999-2000)

Jennifer served as JETAA NY President from 2005-07 and helped manage JETAA NY's efforts to obtain not-for-profit status. She currently is a senior program officer at Columbia Business School's Center on Japanese Economy and Business.

Katrina Barnas (Chiba-ken, 2001-02)

Kat served as JETAA NY Vice President from 2005-07 during which time she was actively involved in the efforts to obtain not-for-profit status. She is currently a senior program manager at the Jerome A. Chazen Institute of International Business at Columbia Business School.

Robert Tuck (Miyagi-ken CIR, 2003-05)

Robert is the current JETAA NY President and previously served as Secretary in 2006, working closely with the former officers on not-for-profit issues. He hails originally from Durham, England and is pursuing a Ph.D. in modern Japanese literature at Columbia.

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**JETAANY
SOCIETY PAGE**
by Yoku Shitteiru

Welcome back to JETAANY Society and hope you enjoyed the last issue, because it apparently went out with a bang as the **Stuff 'n Mail** at the JLGC on September 12 was interrupted by news that an explosion had occurred somewhere in Midtown. The explosion, of course, was the sewer pipe on East 41st St., the **Stuff 'n Mail** continued, and the stuffers (**Carol, Kia, Nancy, Cindy, Rob** and **Monica**) all trekked through the intense humidity to the **Old JET/New JET Dinner** which, thanks to amazing clairvoyance by the organizers, was on the **West Side** at **Patsy's Pizza** on 23rd St. **JETs on the Go!** In Miami in July, ex-Prez **Jenn Olayon** was spotted at **Prime 112** with Mets star pitcher **Pedro**



Yukata night at the JETAA Conference in Atlanta.

Martinez. (See the photo on p. 15 for visual proof!)... **Nancy Ikehara** turned 25 (it's not Yoku's place to argue) on August 25 and celebrated in style with cheap Indian food and good JET friends in the garden at **Panna 2** in the **East Village**... **FOJ Keiko Mit-sunaga** (wonderful

wife of **Scott Hineker**) celebrated her birthday September 28 (also probably her 25th, but no point in getting *komakai-sugiru*) at the **Bently Hotel's rooftop lounge**, one of the best-kept secrets in Manhattan (beautiful views, \$5



Noriko, Miko, Carol, Hiroataka and Shin manning the Japan booth at the 92nd St. Y Festival on Sept. 16.

beers and none of the usual riff-raff). Tip of the hat to bar guru **Matt Jungblutt** for putting this one on the JETAANY map.... Meanwhile, **Shannan S.** and **Jenn O.** dined recently with former Treasurer **Jo Sonido** in NYC and report that he's still doing well in **Ozzie Land**... July 27 saw another excellent farewell reception at the **Ambassador's Residence** to say goodbye to the future JET alums... And another fun happy hour unfolded on September 19 at the bar **Social** in **Hell's Kitchen**. Stats show a high turnout of recent returnees including a pack of **Kobe-shites**. It was a great chance for returnees to bond and share stories of their culture shock caused by being back in NYC... For those who missed it (which was pretty much all of you), September 25 was the **Quarterly Development Meeting** held at JETAANY's office-away-from-office, a.k.a. **Japas 38**. Surprisingly, attendance was low despite the Holy JET Grail of **FREE FOOD** and **FREE BEER** and **FREE KARAOKE**. Seriously, dear readers, get your priorities straight, plan ahead and don't miss it next time.... **And That's Why She's the JETAA Social Chair:** Softball-*baka* **Monica Yuki**, in addition to her JET-ly duties, played in over **sixty softball league games** this summer and also fit in a half-marathon.... *Omedetou gozaimashita* to **Christy Jones** who got *kekkon'd* to her mega-stud **Matt** on July 13. The happy couple now resides in **Park Slope** where they still haven't decided whether to join the **Food Co-op**... And the wonderful and talented **Noriko Furuhata**, JET Coordinator at the **Japanese Consulate**, is expecting another child in December! *Ganbatte* Noriko-sama! *Mochiron*, please feel free to post a request on the weekly e-mail whenever you need a babysitter.... **Mu-bahs ahn-do Shei-kahs:**



JLGC Director Hiroshi Sasaki, Miho Hatano from the Consulate, Shiranai-san from Dokoka and the JLGC's star wide receiver Shou Nakazono enjoying the Farewell Reception at the Ambassador's residence in July.

It's official - the **New York Yankees** have hired **George Rose**, former JETAA NY Prez and interpreter for **Hideki Irabu**, to set up a Yankees office in Japan and sign up Asian sponsorships.... And another former interpreter, **Glen Anderson**, moved out to **San Francisco** in Au-

gust to take a sales position with his company, **Nomura**.... Also, former Secretary **Bryan Sherman** is going a little farther, moving with his

("Society" continued on page 6)

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TO-RAMA DO-RAMA

Tales of Japanese Trauma in the U.S.

Sure, we faced some trying moments when we were on the JET Program. But what about Japanese expats living in the U.S.? Surely they've faced their share of to-rama as well. Here are some of their stories.

I was an exchange student in Florida at the time and went for dinner at an Outback Steakhouse. When I went to the bathroom, though, I couldn't tell the difference between the men's and women's bathrooms, so I chose what I thought was the right bathroom, went in and fortunately didn't see anyone else. However, as I was sitting in the stall, I noticed men's legs going by and I heard men's voices. I was petrified and didn't know what to do, so I just sat there frozen for about ten minutes. Finally, I burst through my stall door and just hurried out of the bathroom very embarrassed.

-Anonymous

About eight years ago, I was walking on Madison and 52nd St. on a Sunday afternoon and some kind of animal fell down from the sky, seemingly from the middle of nowhere, and almost hit me. I heard the sounds of the dead animal on the ground, and it looked like a white rat, but of course there is no white rat, so maybe it was just a rat or mouse or white rabbit or some other kind of animal. I saw some blood and body fluid on the ground which made me feel really sick and scared, so I did not really look closely and left. There was no one walking around me, so I am not sure if anyone saw this. However, I was walking around the business district, so there is no way someone dropped the animal from the building... Plus, it was Sunday... And I noticed that there was some blood and body fluid on my pants that I was wearing, so it really shows me how close I was to getting hit by this animal! Ever since then, I am so scared to walk in the Madison and 52nd St. area and always looking up to make sure that nothing is falling from the sky.

-Anonymous

Seventy-two hours after my company transferred me from Tokyo to New York, I found myself abandoned in New Jersey, in an office full of strangers, and no idea of how to return to New York. My supervisor had taken me to the New



Jersey office. We were planning to return together so I paid scant attention to buses, directions, turns, etc., just trailing along after my my supervisor without even purchasing a return ticket. After we arrived at the New Jersey office, however, my supervisor experienced a dramatic change of mood and abruptly declared that she was returning to New York, and then did so by herself.

Later, as the time came for me to leave the office, no one in the office seemed willing or able to offer any help I asked repeatedly in the office for directions for returning to the city. No one seemed to know or be willing to help. Eventually, I gave up and went outside -- it was pouring rain, of course -- and I resorted to asking strangers for directions to the bus to New York. After a long walk, I found my way to a bus stop, but not before my shoes were ruined and my feet were literally bleeding. Of course, I was not sure which bus went to Port Authority.

A bus eventually stopped. The driver, a large and impatient woman, seemed to ignore my question about where the bus went. Eventually, I just got on. At least it was out of the rain. There were only three other passengers on the bus. The George Washington Bridge was a giant traffic jam, and the driver began to violently curse and swear at the traffic in general and the surrounding vehicles in particular. I was terrified. Japanese bus drivers would never react that way. Was this rude, angry woman crazy?

Eventually, I made it back to Port Authority. Still not home though. I needed to take the subway back to my office. Three days into my tenure in New York, the subways were a mystery. I wandered into a McDonald's and asked people for directions but no one seemed willing to help. Eventually, I gave up and wandered back outside, found a subway map and worked out the trains myself.

I still had not learned my lesson about asking strangers for help, though.

("To-rama" continued on page 7)

BON O-DORI IN NYC?

For many JET alums, *bon o-dori* is synonymous with their first JET experience. No surprise, then, that a high turnout of JET alums participated in an exclusive August 7 *bon o-dori* class taught by **Sachiyo Ito**, a teacher of Japanese classical and Okinawa dance, organized by **Samara Stob (Saga-ken, 2003-05)** at Steps, a dance studio at 74th & Broadway and generously offered for free to JET alums.

Five different dance routines were taught, and the participants enjoyed learning how many of the moves mimic actual everyday chores or occupations such as mining for coal, fishing or washing clothes. The one non-traditional aspect was realizing afterwards that everyone's feet had turned black from the rosin left by the shoes of tap dancers who usually use the room. But that merely led to a new tradition of cramming into the women's locker room together (except for the two men) for washing their feet followed by food and drinks on the Upper West Side.

O-sewa sama deshita to Ito-sensei, and special thanks to Samara and to Vice Prez Megan Miller for making the event happen.

You can learn more about **Sachiyo Ito & Company** at dancejapan.com.



Sachiyo Ito (center) and the new JET Alum Bon O-dori Dance Troupe!

BAR GREAT HARRY!

Ben Wiley (Fukui-ken CIR) Opens Up New Bar in Brooklyn...

On August 17, JET alum **Ben Wiley**, a former Fukui-ken CIR who lived and worked in Yokohama prior to that, opened **Bar Great Harry** with his brother Mike on the corner of Smith and Sackett Streets in the **Carroll Gardens** neighborhood of Brooklyn.

After a small gathering of JET alums there on August 23 to say *konbanwa* and *o-jama shimasu* and show support for a fellow JET alum, the Newsletter caught up with Ben and engaged in investigative reporting (i.e., used Google) to better understand what makes this bar unique.

What the Newsletter found is:

1. Ben is obsessed with beer, and Bar Great Harry serves some of the best and most unique "craft" beer around.
2. One of those beers is called **Butternuts Pork Slap**.
3. One of the bar's biggest fans is **El Presidente Rob Tuck**: "It's got a fantastic selection of beers, ex-JET bartenders, and it's on possibly the funkiest street in the city. What's not to like?"
4. Ben also writes a blog about the bar (bargreatharry.com/blog) that's worth a read.



Ben says irrashaimase to JETAANY Social Coordinator Monica Yuki.

Ben: *I like tending bar and I really like beer. So does my brother. Brooklyn is awesome — nice people, and they all seem to really like beer, too. I live here. I know the neighborhood. I knew that people would accept good beer if you teach them and tell them what it is. There's enough decent (but not really really craft, micro stuff) beer around that I knew with a little tweaking we could present true craft beer to the people.*

But what's so unique about the blog?

We're not sure if it's common practice for bar owners to write blogs these days, but it's clear from his prose that Ben enjoys writing and that the bar is more than just a business to him. Here's a choice nugget:

Can has Stella plz? No. (September 1) When we opened everyone warned us that we needed to offer Stella. What did we do? We listened and ordered three kegs, assuming that we would run through it opening weekend. What happened? We took it down after about five days. Now we have the same three kegs taking up valuable real estate in our walk-in.

And now, the the question that's been on your mind since you started reading this article...

What's the story behind the bar's name?

Ben: *Well, I used to live and bartend at WINDJAMMER in Yokohama. But the bar that I used to hang out at a lot after we closed up was called Bar Great Harry. We took that name for lack of anything better and because we thought it sounded weird and fucked up and cool. Nice to have a little homage to Nippon.*

And now a more prosaic question that is still worth including in this article for contextual purposes...

Why open a bar in Brooklyn?



(Left to right) Matt, Christy, First Brother Mike, Monica, Cindy, Kate, El Presidente Rob and Nick chillaxin' with high quality beer at Bar Great Harry.

We didn't realize it at the time, but this was a one-way street. What are we gonna do, put Stella back up? And anyway, fuck this beer. It's expensive as shit and isn't anything special. Don't get too twisted; I've had many a Stella on many a night. However, it makes us feel warm and fuzzy when someone sips on, say, a Stoudt's Pilsner.

To read more, go to bargreatharry.com/blog. To drink more, go to the corner of Smith & Sackett (F Train to Carroll Street stop). And to see **Metromix's** review of Bar Great Harry, go to: newyork.metromix.com/bars-and-clubs/article/inside-bar-great-harry/163165/content.

(*"Society"* continued from page 4)

fantabulous wife **Miyuki** back to Japan in November to head up international HR for **Uniqlo**, which has outfitted him with a 30% discount on future purchases!... Oh, and **Amazon.com** just released a book edited by JET alum **Alexei Esikoff** called *Willow In A Storm: A Memoir* which is getting great reviews..... **I Wish I Was in Dixieland:** The JETAA National Conference went down in Atlanta in July with



33 chapter delegates from the 18 U.S. chapters, plus three CLAIR NY representatives (including **Executive Director Hiroshi Sasaki**). The New York vibe was noticeably present in the form of International Rep **Shannan Spisak**, who co-organized the whole shebang and who is quietly behind the scenes of many a good JETAA event; and the always-entertaining **Scott Norman** — the former JETAANY webmaster, long-time JETAA International Content Management System guru, and current **JETAA Great Lakes Prez**. Also **Alexei Esikoff**,

(*"Society"* continued on page 14)

("To-rama" continued from page 5)

I got on a subway. When I asked a fellow passenger what station I should exit at, he asked where I wanted to go. "Grand Central," I replied. "Oh, get off here." We both scrambled out the open door, and then he quickly disappeared up the stairs. Locating another map, I learned that this was not the right station at all. I settled in to wait for the next train.

Eventually, I managed to get back to a familiar station near my office. Exhausted, I clutched the handrail as I rode the escalator up. At the top, I discovered my hand was covered in black dust. Life in America might just prove too much, I thought as I stood there still wet, with ruined shoes, bloody feet and blackened hands, reflecting on the consistently unhelpful people I had encountered all day. Even today, after seven years in New York, I can barely stand to be in the vicinity of the Port Authority.

-Mari

Immigration in this country bites, as everyone knows. Being a foreigner, I have to go by the book. I don't take any chances when it comes to immigration law, since I am such a chicken. As you may know, when you are about to graduate from university, your visa needs to be switched from student status to a temporary working permit. During this time, you can't leave the U.S. until the new visa arrives. It was 1999, a week before Thanksgiving, when I sent my application to the INS, and called my mother. I told her that I couldn't leave the country for a while, and she said everyone was fine, and nothing to worry about. A day after Thanksgiving, still munching on leftover turkey, I got a call. It was my brother. He never calls me. He said "Don't be surprised." I was like, "What do you mean?" and he kept saying not to be surprised. I was almost getting excited, thinking, is he getting married? Did someone win the lottery?! Then he quietly said "Your father passed away." I didn't believe him, and I kept asking what the real surprise was. Finally my mom came to the phone, and told me it was true. Disbelief. Of course I told mother that I couldn't go home a week earlier, so I was like, "WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?!", sobbing. She said not to worry about it since there was not much anyone could do at that moment. Even if I tried, by the time I got back home, it would have been after the funeral was over. It was the most traumatic moment of my life, yet, such a hard-core realization moment. I was just studying abroad, 10,000 miles away from home, but never thought about this type of serious thing happening to anyone at home. It made me rethink the whole reason of me being in America, the land of opportunity. I thought about going back to Japan, but I remembered how my father was the most supportive when I said I wanted to go study abroad, so I stayed. When I went home in March of 2000, it was so odd. The only thing visible was his picture and a *butsudan*. Since my father had been in and out of the hospital, I felt like he was still in the hospital. It's been seven years since, but I sometimes still have to tell myself "My father is dead."

-Anonymous

When I first arrived in the U.S. in 1991, I got in to JFK Airport with my two friends, all of us female. As we started to figure out transportation from the airport, a man just took our suitcases and started putting them in his car. It turned out he had a big stretch limousine. I was getting a bad vibe, but we asked him "How much?" and he said \$35. So we got in, and he took us to our hotel in Manhattan. When we got out, he started saying it was \$35 "per person." But I didn't know what "PAH--pasun" meant. So I kept saying I didn't understand and he kept saying "PAH-pasun." Finally I figured it out and we gave him \$35 per person. Then he complained we have to give him a tip, and I was so scared I gave him \$20. Afterwards I told my friend who lives in New York. She was so mad and said I shouldn't have paid the driver that much.

-Hiromi

A few years ago when I was living in Southern California, my friends and I rented a car to drive from Oxnard, where I was living at the time, to Santa Barbara. I was still new to living in the U.S., and while I experienced many culture shocks while getting used to my new life here, I was still confident of my driving abilities.

Life in America might just prove too much, I thought as I stood there still wet, with ruined shoes, bloody feet and blackened hands, reflecting on the consistently unhelpful people I had encountered all day.

We got on the 101 and my two friends took an afternoon nap as we began the hour-plus journey. I was comfortable behind the wheel — maybe too comfortable. After some time, I noticed another car that appeared to be coming straight at us! This was strange, and I thought maybe the driver was lost or something. Staying in place, I continued to drive even though the car was still speeding towards me!

The car moved closer and closer, and we were doing at least 50 MPH. I thought about what was going on when the other driver suddenly blared its horn, waking my friend who was sitting next to me. In a flash, she saw what was happening and screamed at the top of her lungs, grabbing the wheel and turning it hard. We just missed the the other driver, who sped away without even slowing down. It wasn't until I looked at the road again that I realized what happened -- I somehow drifted all the way to the left side of the road! And here I thought that I had finally gotten used to driving on the right! Fortunately, nobody was hurt and we safely arrived at our destination. This story might seem more accidental than traumatic, but the sad thing is that during the rest of my time in California, the same thing happened two more times -- with the same friend in the passenger seat! Now I stick to riding the subway, but I still enjoy driving in America!

-Aya Shimizu

If you have ever ridden a subway in Tokyo during rush hour, you know about the subway employees responsible for pushing people into the trains. I was born and raised in Tokyo, so, I have successfully learned how to get myself into the train and to get comfortable most of the time without getting into a fight in Tokyo. However, on the first day to work in NY, I did what I used to do in Tokyo. Haha... A big and tall woman pushed me out of the train with her hips saying "What the hell you think you are doing. No more space for you!" When I arrived in NY four years ago, the complexity of the MTA subway map did not intimidate me — until I started riding the subway myself! For my first job interview in NY, I had to call the interviewers twice to let them know that I was coming late since the train was delayed, since I could not hear or understand the announcement telling that the train was going express, etc. On my third call to them, I apologized for the inconvenience, explaining that I did not think I would be able to get to their office in the near future, and thanked them for contacting me for the interview. I was not crying. But, when they told me that they went through the same experience and said, "We will be here and wait for you," I started crying. As you know, this would not have happened in Japan, but only in NY.

-Emiko

The first year I came to the U.S. I was in a dormitory room with some friends watching TV. I wanted to switch channels, so I said to everybody, "Where is limo-con?" Everybody was like "???" I realized I pronounced it wrong, so I said it again, "Where is rimo-con?" Everybody was still like, "???" I thought my "r" pronunciation was pretty bad, so I said, "RRRRRimo-con?" After a while, somebody said "You mean remote control?" I was sooooo embarrassed! But we call it "limo-con" in Japan!

-Noriko

**JETAA NY SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT
JULY 21, 2007 - RANDALL'S ISLAND**

JETAA NY continued its annual softball tournament tradition by selecting the perfect weekend to hold the tournament. Ten teams participated with **Actus Consulting**, **IACE Travel**, and **Quick USA** finishing first, second and third, respectively. The strenuous workouts that JETAA team captain **Monica Yuki** put the players through were reflected on the field as their results were far better than last year's. The only problem of the day was that the catering company failed to bring enough chopsticks for each bento and **Columbia's** team had to eat with their fingers. On a positive note, the after party was raised a notch with a BBQ and, as expected, the Brooklyn Lager keg was kicked, along with sluge bucket!!! Special thanks to **JNTO** for sponsoring the JETAA NY t-shirts again and for the 200 beautiful *uchiwa* for keeping cool, to **Ito En** for providing drinks, to Cindy for picking them up, and to Zack Ferguson and everyone who helped organize another great tournament. See everyone next year!



JETAANY officers representing: C.J. Hoppel (Treasurer), Megan Miller (VP) and Carol Elk (Secretary).

- #1 - Yushou:** Actus Consulting
- #2 - Niban-me:** IACE Travel
- #3 - Sanban-me:** Quick USA

Betsu na Teams:

- *JETAA NY
- *Japan Local Government Center
- *Mitsubishi International Corp.
- *Columbia Center on Japanese Economy & Business
- *Kintetsu Travel
- *DoCoMo
- *TV Japan



Meet the JETs!



Yoroshiku onegaishimasu!!!



Monica, Margaret, Mack and Nicole flash some leather.



"Fans here! Get your JNTO fans here!"



Go! Go! DoCoMo!



Monica unleashes a brushback.



Quick USA's slugger's row: Harumi, Mayuko and Shiori.



Is it in you, Dave?



Zack and the Mitsubishi crew.



"Repeat after me: This is a pen!"



Ka-ttou-basei!!!



JETAANY slugger Mack Maloney.



C.J. reads about the softball tournament in the Newsletter. Hey, wait a second...

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was, in fact, a big earthquake in my hometown. His reply was "Yep, there was a huge earthquake out there, sounded really bad. But, it is very *inaka* and not near anything, so you don't need to worry." Right. Not near anything, that pretty much describes where I lived. Yikes.

As soon as I got off the train I found myself a TV and tuned to the national news, which was full of pictures of my beautiful town in ruin — the road to my house was a pile of rocks; houses down the street were falling apart. Fortunately, the news said no one was seriously injured or killed, but many were homeless and much of the damage was still not reported. What to do? My boyfriend was arriving in Narita in a few hours, and the news said no transportation was running to my hometown anyway. I tried calling my co-workers but the phones were out. So, I went to Narita as scheduled and spent the weekend in Tokyo.

Coming home that Sunday afternoon was one of the most memorable experiences of my two years in Japan. Trains and planes were still not running so we had to take a train to a bus to my car, which was parked in a city forty-five minutes from my town (a.k.a. the heart of the earthquake zone). We were still experiencing frequent aftershocks when I picked up the car. I tried heading down the normal road to my town only to find it was closed by multiple landslides. So, I turned back and found a skeptical policeman, who told me which roads remained open, all the while reminding me that it was very very *abunai* and that I really shouldn't be driving there. Right, but that was home, so I had to go back. I had to make sure my friends were OK, my neighbors were OK, my home was OK, my office was OK. I had to go to work on Monday to do my duty as a town employee and help with the cleanup. I had to get back. So Jeff and I followed the policeman's hand-drawn map down roads I'd never been on through winding mountain passes.

By now it had begun raining very hard (the policeman had warned me about this, and helpfully said that it would also increase the risk of mudslides on these mountain roads). It was also very late and very dark and there were no lights anywhere. Not only did these mountain roads not have street lamps, but electricity was out in the area, so there were no lights in any of the houses. Oh, and I was almost out of gas. The gas tank light was flashing. I was miles from nowhere. It was pouring. The ground was shaking. The animals were even freaking out (we had to stop or swerve more than once to avoid wild animals of some sort sprinting across the road). All the while, I'm trying to convince Jeff that the situation is under control and I am not about to burst into tears.

We finally made it home, after a lot of deep breaths, a lot of wrong turns, and a very empty gas tank. My house was in pretty good shape, though all of my plates were broken along with some of the furniture. Jeff spent the next few days cleaning up my house while I helped clean up the town (yes, I married this man).

In the end, everyone came together: JETs, locals, even people from out of town, and we made the community even stronger than it had been before.

-Clara Solomon, Tottori-ken, 1999-2001

I was driving back from hockey practice in Nagoya one night and was getting impatient in the slow lane, and changed lanes a little abruptly. I cut off the wrong guy.

He rode up to within inches of my bumper flashing his lights. We were going about 60 MPH at the time. When he got some room in the slower lane, he sped around on my left and continued to harass me. I thought,

"enough of this," and zoomed ahead of him, approaching speeds of 80 MPH or more. There were cars impeding him, and he zoomed around them on the shoulder. After about a minute he raced up on my left just as my exit on the right approached. I noticed he had a big American car, an old Cadillac. At the last second, I kind of waved and muttered "see ya," and veered off on the highway to the right, a highway with one lane in both directions. He cut across the pylons dividing the main highway and the smaller one, and maintained pursuit.

He was trying to get around me now on my right in the oncoming lane. I tried to block him from passing, but could not. He sped ahead of me and then stopped right there in the middle of the road and got out of his

"Could I defeat him? I had a hockey stick in my car and, for a brief second, I contemplated the prospect of fending him off with slap shots."

car, fists pumping. I screeched to a halt, horrified. He was about 65. Could I defeat him? I had a hockey stick in my car and, for a brief second, contemplated the prospect of fending him off with slap shots. Then, I backed the heck up as he was about ten feet from my car. Thankfully, no one was coming in either direction. I envisioned doing one of those 180 degree turns that you see in the movies, all in one smooth move. Instead, I clumsily turned around in about three tries, and eventually escaped in the other

direction.

I took a circuitous route home, locked my door, turned off the light, shut the shades, and got under my futon, quivering like a fleeting *sakura* petal in the wind. The big *gaijin* hockey player, cowering 'neath his covers. And this concluded my traumatic run-in with road rage in the Land of Zen.

-Scott Alprin, Aichi-ken, 1992-95

So, there's that famous saying: "I left my heart in San Francisco." But what about MY famous saying: I left my appendix in Japan?

Yes, it's true, and I'm sure I'm not the only JET over the twenty years of the program to have a major organ removed during my tenure there. Although I came out of it in one piece (well, two pieces technically speaking), it was definitely a traumatic experience, from the moment that a fellow ALT and I arrived at the local hospital to have the security guard tell us it was closed...ummm....on a Wednesday morning at 8:30 a.m....how can a hospital be closed?

It appeared that he didn't realize from my hunched over posture and death grip on my friend that something was terribly wrong and we needed an emergency room. After some serious pestering in broken Japanese, the guard finally instructed us into the building towards the emergency window in the rear. After several hours of questions, blood tests, x-rays and urine samples, the cramping pain in my side was beginning to subside and I was convinced that it must have been something I had eaten the night before. Or was it something more serious like a bug I had contracted during a trip to Thailand a couple weeks ago? To be honest, appendicitis hadn't even crossed my mind, so you can imagine the shock I had when I was wheeled in to meet with the doctor, and a nurse presented me with a cost list for overnight hospital rooms. I tried to explain in Japanese that I was feeling better, and that I'd rather just go back to my apartment (a short walk away) to rest.

That's when they pulled out the English: "operation"..."appendicitis." WHAT???! Call my supervisor, get someone to explain this to me in English. The first words my supervisor uttered were: "I'm very worried about you" – oh God, am I going to die? What is going on here? Turns out that my white cell count was high and the doctor was afraid my

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appendix would burst if they didn't remove it soon. And by "soon" he meant in three hours – I was already scheduled for the operation, and was going to be taken immediately to be prepped. No time to call my mom, let alone wait for her to fly the fourteen hours to get to me. No time to transfer to an international (English-speaking) hospital.

I was confused, scared, nervous, and didn't know what my options were except to put full faith in whoever was performing the operation. I have never stayed overnight in a hospital in the U.S., so this was completely unfamiliar territory.

When I woke up I was surrounded by my supervisor, fellow ALTs, and at least one principal from the schools I had been visiting earlier in the week. I was greeted with an intense pain in my side and quickly learned where the button was to ask the nurse for more morphine. My appendix was gone, and I had been stapled across the incision, I had one week of IV antibiotics, and had to remain in the hospital for that long.



The first couple days I had a private room, although when the doctors doing rounds realized that I was a *gaijin* they all wanted to "practice" their English, and embarrass their colleagues into practicing as well. Eventually, I was moved to a shared room (a tiny space of a bed surrounded only by a curtain – I think there were six to eight of us in each room). I'm sure my roommates will forever remember the *gaijin* whose friends pushed the limit of the visiting hours and chattered in English as they were trying to rest.

-Shannan Spisak, Kanagawa-ken, 1996-98

I was driving down a long stretch of of lonely *inaka* road with some friends. it was late at night. I wasn't going very fast, as the road (as they are when you are in *inaka*) was fairly narrow. In the opposite direction comes a little Nissan Starlet. My friends and I heard a loud "crack!" I looked around, and nothing was amiss and the other car had driven off, so we kept on going.

About 20 minutes later a car pulls up behind me flashing its lights and honking its horn. I pulled over and a guy comes up to my window saying (in Japanese) "you broke my side mirror off!" We argued for about five minutes. I thought I had been in my lane. He thought otherwise. We ended up deciding that I would pay for part of the cost of re-attaching his side mirror. My board of education never found out.

-Elizabeth Gordon, Iwate-ken 2003-05

I liked doing elementary school visits because they were a nice break from the more formal junior high schools. One elementary school I went to in the early spring seemed to be the norm: enthusiastic kids and teachers but little common language. I taught colors and then we all played Red Light, Green Light. No problem, until at lunch a teacher invited me to eat at her desk with her instead of a class. That was unusual, but I couldn't think of the Japanese to say the kids liked it when I ate with them. So we got our trays in the almost-empty staff room.

I had rice in my mouth when the teacher asked in perfect English if my parents were worried about me being so far from home. I almost choked. Then I said, "No, because they know Japan is safe."

"How old are you?" she asked.

"Twenty-two."

"My son is twenty-two."

"Oh, that's nice." I wasn't sure how to respond. "What's his name?"

She got this faraway look in her eyes. "He's dead."

Oh, good God.

"I'm very sorry." I said.

"He's in heaven."

"Yes."

"I need a new child."

"Uh."

She opened up her desk drawer. On top was a worn Japanese-English dictionary.

"It is," she said, running her finger down a page, "fate that we met."

"Uh...maybe."

"You are far from your parents so you can be my daughter."

I'll be honest, I don't remember how I answered. I know that when lunch ended I had in my possession a multicolored-marker set in the shape of pigs and her phone number, which I never called. I wondered often if I should check up on the teacher, but the lunch bombardment left me frightened of her. She picked me; I owed her nothing. Yet I felt guilty. I told the other ALTs and the CIR about the incident, and they agreed that it was best not to call her. She needed therapy, not a substitute child.

At the last minute a couple months later I was back at the same elementary school. The same teacher was there. She stared at me but said nothing. This time I ate with the

same woman behind.

-Alexei Esikoff, Fukushima-ken, 2001-02

School lunch. Daily.

-Randall David Cook, Fukui-ken, 1991-93

Late one mid-*tsuyuu* night after conducting a cooking class for city hall employees (Let's tacos make!), I was riding my blue *mama-chari* home in the rain across a crosswalk and was hit by one of those little things that the Japanese consider to be a work truck, but is actually smaller than a Ford F-150.

It had just started from a complete stop and had barely gathered any speed at all. I fell over but was completely unhurt. It was scary for me, and even scarier for the driver and passenger who got out in the rain with their matching seafoam green work coveralls and hard hats, freezing in terror when they saw my *gaijin* face. "*Daijobu desu ka?*" "*Daijobu desu.*" I replied. They bowed profusely and *moshiwakegozaimasen'd* as I walked my bike to the other side shakily.

All I could think at that moment was that I wanted to go home where it was warm and dry and I could have a little nervous breakdown in private.

-Carol Elk, Akita-ken, 2000-02

When I first moved to Japan as a JET, I was given a ground floor flat directly beside a small alley. I heard from my predecessor about her underwear being stolen once when she hung clothes out to dry, but beside that all had gone well with her living conditions. I thought nothing of it. Anyways, all is safe in Japan, right?!

About one month after moving in I was hanging out in the living room with the glass door open (the one beside the alley), trying to breathe in a little fresh air on a warm muggy night. I left my flat for only a moment to knock on my neighbor's door and let him know I was ready to watch a movie. When I walked back into my flat, there was an intruder inside! If the man would have come at me my actions may have been different, but because he started to run away, my first instinct was to chase after him. Thinking about it now, the scene was actually quite comical; me running after this guy down the street as I shouted a bunch of English profanities at him. I gave up after a few blocks; the little bugger was fast!

After that episode, I couldn't sleep well in my apartment for a week, thinking

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every little noise outside was that horrible man. Then, after two weeks (when my nerves finally started to calm) I got a knock on the door one early evening. There was some weirdo outside asking to use my toilet. Even though I explained that the train station and its restrooms were only two minutes away he still wouldn't leave, demanding that I open my door. Confused about what to do, I ended up grabbing a kitchen knife and swung open the door, but by that time he was gone.

Subsequently, I was completely freaked out about my apartment, and after a long talk with the landlord I was moved into a flat on the second floor. I realized from early on that ground floor apartments in Japan are nothing but trouble!

-Meredith Wutz, Saitama-ken, 2000-02

I would only sign up for the half-marathon if, one, the course was flat, and two, it was a big race. Why? Well, I refuse to take part in any combination of mountains and running. And having a big pack of runners helps me find a group at my pace. My teacher (who helped me fill out the forms) assured me that, to the best of her knowledge, I'd be OK.

It was a chilly morning the Saturday of the race. Driving to the course through dense, forested valleys and hillsides, I kept waiting for the land to flatten. It never did. The race entrance was at the foot of an endless serpentine road. It got steadily steeper as it made its way up the mountain. Oh great. I was jittery with pre-race nervousness. To make my condition worse, I was the only foreigner there, and I knew about ten words in Japanese (it was soon after I arrived). I could count no more than 60 runners. All looked experienced. I wanted to go back home.

Soon, we were off. Uphill, for 13 miles. I stuck with the laughably small pack for the first 10 minutes. Then, the road hit the foothills—so steep it wasn't bikeable. I fell back from the rest and soon blew up. I was alone. On the side of the mountain, in the middle of nowhere. My legs wouldn't work and knees cracked with pain. My lungs burned, struggling to pull oxygen from the thin air. I still had ten miles to go. Where the heck were the race volunteers? Or the water stands? Or the slow runners? I finished. And that's all that matters.

-Patrick Burns, Saga-ken, 2006-07

Being an Asian-American in Japan can be a trying experience as a JET. Moreover, being a Japanese-American JET can place a heavy burden on one's life in Japan. While many JETs bicker about the process to switch over to a Japanese driver's license, I personally endured racial discrimination because I was Asian.

While trying to obtain my Japanese driver's license, there were two other people that were with me going through the process. There was a Caucasian-American, Korean student and myself. The Caucasian-American took the same driver's education class as me and passed the road test in two tries (without any comments from the examiners). While in the case of myself and the Korean student, we were consistently talked down to and peppered with disparaging remarks on how we were horrible drivers and that we were a liability to other Japanese drivers on the road.

Discussion with other American JETs brought me to the conclusion that the vast majority (non-Asian) of test takers were simply failed with an explanation for points taken off. Simply and cut and dry. Instead, I had the "pleasure" of being talked to like a little child. I will not go into my own reasoning as to why I was given this treatment, but I will say that being a non-Caucasian minority in Japan still poses unique challenges

for the JET participant.

-Lance Kimura, Oita-ken, CIR, 2002-04

The trek was made. The bags were delivered. The host family met, and the school introduced. Ready to finally settle into my new "home" and catch up on some much-needed rest, I was informed that the gas man would come to my *kousha* and teach me how to turn on the water.

"Excuse me!?", thinking in my jet-lagged-mind, "Since when does one need directions to turn on water?" To my humble surprise, I did.

The gas man arrived with tools in hand and my heart sunk with stomach in hand. Giving me a play-by-play of his actions, he proceeded to "turn this red knob; push down, turn, and hold this lever, while cranking this arm so that it clicks three times...and then you should look in this window for the blue flame." It was at that precise moment that I vowed to go shower-less for one whole year. Obviously a mind reader, the gas man escorted me into the kitchen to assure me "the water here is much easier to use." Thinking to myself, "nod and smile and it will all go away," I obliged. After more red

knobs, pushing of buttons while waiting for clicks and blue flames and pulling pins to drain water after every use, I was assured I was qualified to use the water.

With tears pooled in my eyes, weak knees and a queasy stomach, I saw the gas man to the door, while bowing and thanking him profusely. Not feeling so good, I thought I'd make a trip to the toilet where I could "relieve" my anxiety. When I opened the door, there it was: a faded green wooden step with an off-white plastic seat loosely resting on top. "They have got to be kidding me" was my theme song for the night. Inching closer and leaning in, I looked down a six-foot long, dark well which revealed to me the business of ALTs and Japanese past. Yes, in all of its outhouse-like glory: my pit toilet.

Turning around to run away, my wonderful predecessor left the instructions pinned to the door: "call the sewage people once every three months to have it emptied" ...oh yeah, welcome to Japan!

-Renay Loper, Iwate-ken, 2006-07

One night, just after my friend left my apartment, I went into my bathroom to take a big shot of cherry flavored Nyquil to deal with a nasty cold. Down the hatch in one big shot, or so was my intention.

Next thing I know I'm choking on the syrup, and just as I seemingly coughed through the red goop, more kept flowing and blocking my windpipe. After the initial panic and coughing (15 seconds? 30 seconds? I had no idea), logic kicked in enough to permit me an internal conflict about whether I should be more concerned with suffocation or vanity, as I continued trying to cough and breathe, unsuccessfully for the most part. (45 seconds?) I could call my friend who had just left, but he was probably still biking home, and besides, I was kind of at a loss for words. (60 seconds?)

Finally, I struck upon a counterintuitive solution, quickly scooped water into my mouth, swished it around and spit it out, after which I was able to cough out the remaining syrup and collapsed exhausted and terrified, but relieved, onto the bathroom floor. I surveyed the red Nyquil flecks dotting sink, mirror, walls, toilet and floor and all I could think about was what this would've looked like to someone who walked in and found me.

-Steven Horowitz, Aichi-ken, 1992-94

"I looked down a six-foot long, dark well which revealed to me the business of ALTs and Japanese past. Yes, in all of its outhouse-like glory: my pit toilet."

Japanese Theatre Review

RAIBU FROM NEW YORK! Kabuki and Rakugo Hit the Big Apple

Reviewed by Justin Tedaldi

At first glance, they appear to have nothing in common. But look closer, and the traditional Japanese performance arts of *kabuki* and *rakugo* have much to offer even the most jaded Broadway vet. This summer, four distinct works came to New York, each one offering something new in both ambition and presentation.

Back in 2004, the **Heisei Nakamura-za**, one of Japan's most respected *kabuki* companies, made its debut at Lincoln Center. This July, the company returned for two distinct performance runs. While Avery Fisher Hall is more suited for music instead of theater, patrons were treated to an atmosphere festooned with glowing red lanterns and a *hanamichi* (walkway) which later came into play.

Led by **Nakamura Kanzaburo XVIII**, the first show was **Renjishi**, or "The Three Lions," a simple tale with no dialogue adapted from Chinese legend, about a father lion teaching his cubs survival. The start of the show treats the audience to the familiar striped *kabuki* curtain, which opens revealing thirteen musicians. After a brief introduction, a door opens and the father emerges with his sons. Art once again imitates life here as the two cubs are played by Nakamura's own kin. They perform a dance with plenty of *sumo*-style stomps, the father gliding into a fan dance as his sons stand at attention.

As a lone cherry blossom drifts down, the cubs dance and the their lesson begins. They stroll down the *hanamichi*, which for this performance suggests the depths of the ravine through which they have tread. The cubs later scale the walls of the ravine determined to reach their father. After a harsh trial, they finally emerge from the pit, sporting dazzling gold-on-green trimmed kimonos. Wildly whipping their hair in a frenzy, their father (clad in gold-on-blue) joins in a hypnotic finale.

Heisei Nakamura-za's performance of **Hokaibo** later in the week was an entirely different affair. A nearly three-hour comedy, the performance is packed with action, pathos, supernatural activity, and, of course, 18th century sex jokes.

Nakamura's performance as Hokaibo takes the Western sinful priest concept to another level. For one, Hokaibo doesn't even *pretend* to be good. Whether it's pantomiming a trouser tent, peeking up a proper lady's pleats, or delivering numerous caustic asides to the crowd in English (even going so far as to address an anonymous patron as a "metrosexual" or for another to be a sport and shell out more yen for an upgraded seat), it's an exhilarating performance that continues even after Hokaibo leaves the mortal plain, cresting with a spectacular climax that might explain once and for all where KISS got the idea for all the makeup, pyro and levitating drum risers.

Equally as fun but a couple notches more subtle is *rakugo*, which has been around roughly as long as *kabuki* and has enjoyed popular success since the 19th century. In August, New Yorkers were treated to master **Katsura**

Koharudanji's "Raku-Go in New York" at Florence Gould Hall on 59th Street, which was performed entirely in Japanese with PowerPoint-projected translations and trivia, some of which was so detailed as to include sarcastic commentary, wringing additional laughs out of the audience. (Raise your hand if you knew that a *shamisen's* banjo-like body is traditionally made from female virgin cat skins!)



The crowd was treated to two stories, "**The Valuable Cow**" and "**Plates Mansion**." In certain ways, *rakugo* resembles American stand-up in that the performer begins with several quips and then shifts into a longer story joke. *Rakugo's* twist is that the comedian is seated the entire time on a pillow, and different characters in the narrative are identified by a turn of the head or a change in body language. A *rakugo* performer's only props are a folding fan and handkerchief, which can be used to simulate almost anything, be it a writing brush, clay pipe, fishing rod or chopsticks. In both stories, Koharudanji pulled off the task of selling the audience his transformation into a little boy, a cow and a female ghost. This made the punchlines stick, despite being flashed up on a wall.



Photo by Kishin Shinoyama

A different kind of *rakugo* made its debut at the Sage Theater just off Broadway in September. Billing itself as "a real Japanese variety hall," the **New York Hanjotei Troupe from Osaka** asks if Japanese comics can make New Yorkers laugh by performing entirely in English.

Hosted by Brooklyn-born master of ceremonies **Michael Naishtut**, a familiar face on Japanese entertainment programs, New York Hanjotei had a busy lineup with a *shishimai* lion dance featuring *taiko* drumming; a *rakugo* tutorial; a total of four *rakugo* stories from different performers (including the venerable **Katsura**

Kaishi); *shamisen mandan* musical storytelling; and *daikagura* traditional clowning, a vintage street art combining acrobatics, juggling, magic and dance. Picture wooden boxes and steel hoops racing on a high-speed rotating umbrella for full effect.

Hyped as New York's first-ever performance of *rakugo* in English, all of the performers spoke clearly to the audience and showcased a wry sense of humor even if some of them were admittedly reciting a script meticulously committed to memory. Katsura Kaishi in particular has performed in 12 countries at venues including Canada's Just for Laughs comedy festival and the renowned Sydney Opera House.

Kabuki and *rakugo* have been around for hundreds of years, yet they are only now making inroads into the American theater scene. And what better place to put on a show than New York City, the live capital of the world? Here's to more variety and even more innovation next season.



DVD Review

THE LITTLE TRAVELERS A JET Alum's Unique Approach to Children's Videos

Reviewed by Lyle Sylvander & Steven Horowitz

Looking for a video that's *natukashii* for JET alums, educational for kids and *omoshiroi* for all ages?

Well, a member of the JET alum community may have just what you need. And no, it's not called *Barney's Japanese Campfire Sing-Along*.

Little Travelers Productions (www.thelittletravelers.com) was formed by the husband and wife team of **Mike Hart (Mie-ken, CIR 1994-1995)** and **Angelina Hart**. After JET, Mike worked for Kirin Trading Company in California and spent several years leading customized culinary, garden and art tours of Japan. He met Angelina, now a child development specialist, while in a psychology master's program. Realizing that the vast majority of children's videos were either mind-numbingly oversimplified or woefully inadequate in educating children about foreign cultures, the couple embarked on an ambitious plan to fill the gap: They decided to produce videos that introduced young children to foreign cultures through deep immersion and daily living. Using their own two gregarious and inquisitive children as narrators and guides, the company launched its first DVD, *Little Travelers: Japan*, earlier this year.

Little Travelers adopts the single-camera point-of-view perspective of the ubiquitous cable show *Globe Trekker*. Unlike that series, however, *Little Travelers* does not confine itself to the impressions of the passive tourist. Rather, there is a serious attempt to explore the deep cultural experiences of living within another culture. Mr. Hart's experiences living in Japan have no doubt inspired the narrative. Indeed, if there were a JET program for toddlers, this would be an ideal initiation video.

The video begins with the two girls, named Chantelle and Nakia, anxiously leaving the familiarity of California for their new home in the Kansai area. Getting acquainted with their new home involves such cultural adjustments as sleeping on a futon, hang drying the laundry and



We are so excited to share our new travel series with you. Join us as we meet many new friends from around the world and learn about their customs and cultures.

Follow our adventures and see how friendship becomes our common language.



using a rice cooker. Soon, the children visit the local grocery and department stores, observing how different shopping habits fulfill familiar shopping needs. They are introduced to such uniquely Japanese food items as *sushi*, *mochi*, *onigiri* and *bento* boxes.

Once acclimated to their surroundings, the children explore the divergent cultural aspects of Japan. They attend nursery school, make friends, learn some *hiragana*,

katakana and *kanji*, write calligraphy, bang *taiko* drums, visit a mask maker and a pottery maker and have tea with a Shinto priest. Throughout all of this, we are shown gorgeously shot postcard images of old Kyoto, complete with cherry blossoms. The video ends with a visit to a ninja exhibit. While ninjas may not be Japan's most lasting contribution to world heritage, they are no doubt of great interest to young male viewers. In short, this video has something for everyone.

Little Travelers also has one other video on the market — *Little Travelers: Bali* — and is currently shooting an episode in Ireland and Scotland. If all goes to plan, the company will shoot yet another in Iran (of all places) sometime next year.

In addition to increasing cultural awareness, Mike hopes that this series will inspire children to travel and see the world, something that he himself did not do as a child. While growing up, he laments, his parents only took him on one long distance trip — to Disney World — and nixed his plan to live in Spain as a high school exchange student. With numerous trips to Japan and elsewhere under his belt since then, he has certainly made up for lost ground and his children will be unlikely to lodge similar complaints towards him. *Little Travelers: Japan* is a fine introduction to this series and is a harbinger of much success and travels to come.

(“Society” continued from page 6)

formerly of NY Newsletter fame and now the e-mail Coordinator for **JETAA Minnesota**, represented all 10,000 lakes at the conference, commenting, “The southern food buffet was definitely a highlight of the conference. Fried green tomatoes, chicken and dumplings, sweet tea...” *Oishi-sou deshou, Alexei-sama!* And notably, volunteering at the conference was former JETAA NY member and current JETAA SE Happy Hour Coordinator **Nicole Hebert**, who had moved back to New Orleans but relocated to Atlanta after **Hurricane Katrina**. *O-tsukare sama deshita* to Shannan, co-organizer **Millie Linville** and the whole JETAA SE crew for a great National Conference... Meanwhile, Atlanta recently hosted **JapanFest** on the last weekend of September, featuring **Karin Muller**, author of the book *Japanland*... And, in the what-you-learn-

when-you-read-other-chapters'-newsletters department, there's now a Yahoo group called **GeorgiJapan Connection** for people in the Southeast who want to communicate about things Japanese, started by JET alum **Liz Bigler**. For example, you'd be sure not to miss the **Atlanta Koi Club Koi Show** in **Tucker, GA** September 14-16. (Folks say they're as purdy as a catfish with lipstick.) For more info contact Liz at **bigmura@juno.com**... Seeking a more up-close Southern cultural experience? In case you haven't been following the news about **New Orleans** (or you're a U.S. President and you're just not that interested), there's still plenty of work to do, and **Emily Winckler**, President of the **JETAA Mid-South Conference**, is organizing a JETAA volunteer trip to New Orleans in November for anyone who wants to go down and help out. For more info contact her at **pres-**

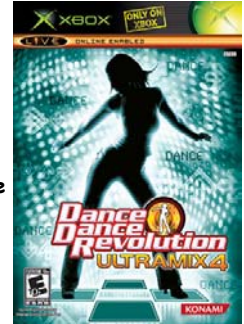
(“Society” continued on page 15)

The "TRAUMA" Issue TOP 14!

A lot of crazy stuff went down while we were on JET. Stuff that really did a number on your head. But hey, it could've been worse. And that's why we are pleased to present you with...

THE TOP 14 TRAUMATIC THINGS THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN...BUT COULD HAVE

14. In a bizarre mishap totaling 800 billion yen worth of damage known as the Shibuya Earthquake, over 10,000 Japanese youths in the Shinjuku *Eki* vicinity simultaneously select — and execute — the exact same Dance Revolution move.
13. "Please bow deeply as I will now introduce you to your *oya-bun* — ah, I mean *kocho-sensei*."
12. In attempting to practice your *keigo*, not only did you inadvertently propose to your host father, but under local law his acceptance is binding, meaning you are now legally responsible for the care of his incontinent parents.
11. Severe national rice famine causes JETs across the country to endure long-lasting, grueling commentary on merits of Japanese rice.
10. Female JETs hounded relentlessly for new all-*gajin* version of Morning Musume, leading to nationwide catfights, backbites and broken nails.
9. All JET contract renewals conditioned upon karaoke rendition of "My Way" in school auditorium pending vote of student body via text messaging.
8. Out: Sports Day. In: *Battle Royale* Day.
7. Smiles at McDonald's raised to 5 yen.
6. NSA wiretapping of foreign surveillance reveals plot to overpay Americans.
5. You are assigned to same school attended by Sailor Moon; endless monster attacks ensue.
4. NHK collection outsourced to Yakuza; "*Nihongo wakaranai*" excuse no longer effective.
3. All CIRs rendered obsolete by overturned broom with bucket for a head (wait a minute...).
2. "*Ano... ex-cuzu me tee-cha, would-o you puruezu jadge o-wa Pig Latin contesto?*"
1. Who said doing this for three years was optional???



(Continued from page 14)

dent.no@jetalumni.org... And now, back to NYC-style navel-gazing... **Japanese Invasion:** There's a new magazine called **ChopsticksNYC** (www.chopsticksnyc.com) circulating in hardcopy for free in various Japanese establishments. Published by **Japion** (which bills itself as "**No. 1 Japanese Free Paper in NY**"), it's a collection of feature articles, reviews and review-promos (i.e., technically not an ad but might as well be) along with possibly the most comprehensive listing of Japanese restaurants and other establishments in New York. If I were fresh-off-the-boat from Japan in NYC and I was fluent in English (i.e., a recent JET returnee) this would be a good pickup. The question is, do they know as much about **Yoku Shitteiru** as Yoku knows about them!... And if you thought having an *okonomiyaki* stand in NY was cool, get a wad of **Oms/b** (pronounced "o-musubi," though in the graphic the slash is a stalk of rice which doesn't quite make sense, but like other Japanglish, just kind of works). It turns out *o-musubi* are rice balls (not *onigiri*, which Yoku did not previously *shitteiru*) flavored with ingredients like *umeboshi*, *ikura* or even pastrami with *wasabi* mayo. So these *hito* have adapted a creative and healthy Japanese fast food in a small lunch cafe on **45th St.**, just west



Jenn teaches Pedro Martinez key phrases for talking with Ichiro.

of Lexington Avenue, that somehow still maintains an austere Zen-like elegance. (Ed. note: No remuneration was provided for the previous sentence.) And best of all, according to Oms/b's marketing materials, "It is non-cholesterol!"... First it was toilet seats, and now simple, functional design. Both **Slate.com** and the **New York Observer** have reported on the opening of a **Muji** store in **SoHo** with a **Times Square** location to follow... Now, Yoku Shitteiru doesn't generally make mistakes when it comes to CIR jokes, but for those who tilted their heads quizzically after last issue's CIR joke, Yoku admits that the line was blown. The correct retort was, "I work as a CIR" followed by the punchline, "Me neither." There, much funnier...And lastly, an e-mail received by Yoku Shitteiru seems to confirm the continuing need for ESL teaching in Japan. The sender declared herself a London-based Japanese lawyer named Barr Mrs. Reiko Fukami, "the personal solicitor to Late Mr. Suzuki, a Japan successful business man who died in March 2007" and explained that she "desperately" needed Yoku Shitteiru's assistance to get some money out of a bank account, helpfully explaining that "these funds was kept in a bank in Cayman Island which i am ready to give you the bank informations in cayman Island to contact them." This plainly reflects poorly on the work of the JET Program, and so I implore the JET alumni community to reach out and help this woman. Yoku Shitteiru promises to give you 20% of the fees earned for helping her as soon as you email your bank account number... Well, that's all for now. Stay tuned for future episodes where your hero, Yoku Shitteiru, does it again. "*Yatta!!!*"





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