

THE GO EAST ISSUE

**BOBBY
VALENTINE**

**TALKS
BASEBALL
AT
JAPAN
SOCIETY**

JQ
JETAO NY QUARTERLY
MAGAZINE
jetaany.org/magazine



**ANDREW W.K.
INTERVIEW**

**YOU WON'T
BELIEVE WHAT
HIS FAVORITE
THING IN THE
WORLD IS**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

UTADA IN THE FLESH, JET
ARTIST DAVID NAMISATO,
THE VIRTUES OF TOKYO
VICE, AND MORE

BRINGING JAPAN A
LITTLE CLOSER TO YOU

Mar/Apr 2010 Vol. 19 Issue No. 2



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JET Wants You!



Pam Kavalam, Ann Chow, Kirsten Phillips, Alexis Hall and Carleen Ben (behind the camera) *genki*-ly promote the JET Program at the CUNY International Opportunities Fair on Mar. 5.

We Swear It's Real



For elites only? At the JETAANY Shinnenkai at Naniwa, Jan. 30. (Photo by Nicole Bongiorno)

JETaaNY

JQ Magazine

Editor

Justin Tedaldi
magazine@jetaany.org

President

Megan Miller Yoo
president@jetaany.org

Vice President

Monica Yuki
vicepres@jetaany.org

Secretary

Amber Liang
secretary@jetaany.org

Treasurer

Kelly Nixon
treasurer@jetaany.org

Professional Outreach & Development

Steven Horowitz
professional@jetaany.org

Community Relations

Chau Lam
community@jetaany.org

New Jersey Representative

Jenny Jung
njrep@jetaany.org
www.jetaany.org/nj

Philadelphia Representatives

Renay Loper, Natasha Robinson
phillyrep@jetaany.org
www.jetaany.org/philly

Pittsburgh Representative

Patrick Tracy
pittsburghrep@jetaany.org
www.jetaany.org/pitt

Webmaster

Lee-Sean Huang
webmaster@jetaany.org

Database Coordinator

Shannan Spisak
database@jetaany.org

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Letter From the Editor

Last fall we ran a review of *The Cove*, a film about a seaside Japanese town and the controversy sparked by the American filmmakers over its annual dolphin hunt. I missed it in theaters, but after it won this year's Academy Award for best documentary, it became required viewing. While the film is critical of certain Japanese policies, JETs are the ideal audience for it, since we've all experienced the emotional tug of war that characterized life in our second home abroad. Maybe this gives us a greater understanding in the end, and a chance to educate others about something important affecting the world. That's what these brave filmmakers and their supporters did. See it.

Editorially yours,

Justin Tedaldi (Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)
magazine@jetaany.org



Letter From the President

Dear JETAANY Members and Friends,

Did you know that the JET Alumni Association boasts an extensive global network? With 21,000 members represented by 50 chapters in 15 countries, we have a geographic footprint and headcount that rival some of the world's largest multinational corporations. We have something even more powerful as well—the shared experience of living and working in Japan and the tremendous impact it had on our lives. Regrettably, the 21,000 registered JETAA members represent less than half of the over 50,000 alumni who have gone through the program. One of our major challenges is to engage these people and bring them into our network, and we are constantly looking for ways to appeal to the varying interests and needs of our hugely diverse constituency.

This August, JETAANY will host representatives from the 19 JETAA USA chapters at the annual National Conference. One of our goals is to bridge the distance between chapters and members around the world, enabling our alumni to leverage this talented pool of people and impressing upon society the value of the JET experience and the prestige of the program. Through the execution of quality events, the showcasing of our members' talents, and the impact we make on society, JET and JETAA can become household names recognized by all. As a result, having JET on your résumé would be an immediate signal to any employer of your work caliber and potential.

To be successful in these efforts, we need all of our alumni and stakeholders to work together to “put JET on the map.” As an alumnus, you are a walking advertisement for the JET program and a cultural ambassador for Japan. JET is not just something you have done, but rather it is a part of who you are. By sharing what you have experienced with other alumni and with the public at large, you are making the world a smaller place. Bridging these distances allows for cultural understanding and empathy, and helps all of us realize the extent to which we are interconnected.

As an executive officer of JETAANY for the past three years, I have had the privilege of overseeing the activities of one of the most talented and dedicated groups of people with whom I have ever worked. I am ceaselessly amazed at what these individuals are collectively able to accomplish on a part-time, volunteer basis. I have grown both personally and professionally as a result of these experiences, and have learned a great deal about what it means—and does not mean—to be a leader. Naturally, I cannot advocate our alumni association enough, and I hope I can inspire all members to get involved—to take the time to reflect on what the JET experience meant to you and to share it with everyone around you, to create a space in people's minds for exchange and understanding, and to create a place in your own lives for the experience to continue to live and flourish.

Sincerely,

Megan Miller Yoo (Hyogo-ken, 2000-02)
president@jetaany.org



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Send your story ideas to magazine@jetaany.org.



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Nippon News Blotter

2/2/10: The United States stepped up pressure on Japan to protect the rights of foreign parents deprived of access to their children, warning the emotive issue could put further strain on their alliance. Washington believes that U.S. parents are being denied contact with more than 100 children in Japan, either because of Japanese courts' one-sided custody rulings or because the children were abducted. Courts in Japan routinely award custody to only one parent, usually the mother, and almost never to foreign parents. (AFP)

2/5/10: The U.S. government launched an investigation into reported braking problems with Toyota's high-profile hybrid, the Prius. Toyota denied reports by the Nikkei news organization in Tokyo that the company is poised to recall 160,000 Priuses—100,000 in the United States—related to the braking issue. The 2004-09 Prius models are part of a separate recall of 3.8 million vehicles launched in October to correct a problem with the driver's-side floor mat trapping the gas pedal. (Washington Post)

2/9/10: Japan will propose scaling down its troubled annual whale hunt in Antarctica on the condition that it is allowed to whale commercially in its own coastal waters, a fisheries official said. Tokyo will present its proposal to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) at its annual meeting in Morocco in June, the official said, even though a similar plan was rejected by the 85-nation body last year. (AFP)

2/10/10: Panasonic Corp., the world's largest maker of plasma televisions, aims to win half of Japan's market for 3D televisions next fiscal year, executive Shiro Nishiguchi said. "About 10 percent of large-screen TVs, measuring 37 inches or bigger, will probably be 3D TVs in 2010, so that's about 500,000 units to be sold here," he said in an interview. (Bloomberg)

2/16/10: Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said personal and ruling-party money scandals helped trigger his plunging popularity in Japan five months after sweeping to power. The Cabinet's approval rating dropped to 35.7 percent from 47.1 percent last month and its disapproval score rose to 44.7 percent from 32.4 percent, according to Jiji Press. "One reason for this is the issue of politics and money," Hatoyama told reporters in Tokyo. "We must sincerely accept public sentiment." (Bloomberg)

2/24/10: Akio Toyoda, the president of Toyota Motor Corp., told the U.S. Congress that "we never run away from our problems" and apologized for accidents in his company's vehicles. He added he was "absolutely confident" there was no design flaw in the company's electronic throttle-control system. Scores of reporters from the U.S. and Japan, along with hundreds of members of the public, lined up hours in advance of the 11 a.m. hearing, one of three congressional sessions scheduled on Toyota's recalls. (Wall Street Journal)

2/24/10: According to a senior government researcher studying Japan's economic decline, child poverty in Japan is increasing at a surprising rate. Aya Abe says 15 percent of Japanese children live in poverty, and the government is not doing enough to help them, citing changing demographics and social security premiums. (Voice of America)

2/27/10: An earthquake measuring 6.9 magnitude on the Richter scale rocked Okinawa Prefecture and its vicinity in southern Japan, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. The focus of the quake—Okinawa's biggest since 1909—was located some 10 km under the sea 50 km east off the capital Naha, said the agency. Two people were reportedly slightly injured in the earthquake. (Xinhua)



2/28/10: More than half a million people in Japan were ordered to higher ground, as coastal areas across the vast Pacific region braced for lethal tsunami waves. But only small waves appeared in Japan, which reported minor damage. (New York Times)

3/1/10: The closing ceremony of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games brought an end to competition in a record 86 events that saw Japan win five medals (three silver, two bronze). Altogether, 26 Japanese athletes placed within the top eight in their events, five more than during the 2006 Games in Turin, Italy. (Mainichi Japan)

3/8/10: The Japanese fishing village of Taiji featured in *The Cove*, which recently won an Oscar for best documentary, defended its practice of hunting dolphins as a part of a long tradition. The movie also claims that dolphin meat is laden with toxic mercury. (AP)

3/10/10: Japan may have one of the lowest birthrates in the world, but researchers at a Japanese university are hoping that a new bionic baby will help change all of that. The robotic infant is known as Yotaro and was developed by the robotics and behavior sciences laboratory of Tokyo's University of Tsukuba to simulate the behavior of a real human child. (RedOrbit)



Farewell From NY Consul Ono-san

I finished my tour of duty in New York and will start a new job in the Philippines (Embassy of Japan). I was really happy to meet many JETs and to work with JETAANY for four years. Ms. Kumi Matsumoto takes my place in April. I want to ask for your continued support and guidance to my successor.
Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.

I look forward to seeing you again.
Arigatou gozaimashita.

Hiroataka Ono

JETlog
By Lisa Birzen
(Kanagawa-ken,
2004-05)

By this point, most JQ readers should be familiar with the featured comic strip Life After the B.O.E. For this issue, we caught up with the comic's creator and illustrator David Namisato (Aomori-ken CIR, 2002-04) to bring you the stories, the inspiration and the process behind this JET alumni illustrator favorite.

Ever since he was young, David knew that he wanted to be an illustrator. After graduating from Toronto University in 1999, he enrolled in an animation school to enhance his artistic abilities and further his professional goals. Despite the creative aspects and artistic fulfillment of a career in the arts, David was also fully aware of its harsh realities.

"Any career in the arts might mean that you'll hang onto a gig at Starbucks longer," he said. As an illustrator, one might experience alternating periods of heavy workloads and sparse assignments and "as fun as it is, it can be quite difficult; the person working at McDonald's might be making more than you!"

With those grim realities in mind, David reached a turning point in his life and, ultimately, in his career: "I came to a point where I didn't even want to look at a pencil," he remarked on that time in his life. Having extensively immersed himself in the arts up to that point, David felt he needed to break away from that path and try something different.

His artistic pursuits put aside for the moment, David tried to find work that would provide him with stability, benefits and a regular paycheck. Having grown up in a Japanese-speaking household, David was well-versed in the language and considered the JET Program, among other professional options available to him. David said he felt the JET Program seemed like "a good way to facilitate the change in career," and ultimately applied for a position.

He chose the CIR position over the ALT role for two reasons: "I could speak Japanese, and at that time, I hated kids." His decision would have been a sensible one, given his language abilities and work preference, had it not been for the fact that, after David arrived in Japan and began working, he discovered

that there was "a growing trend for contracting organizations to use CIRs as elementary school teachers."

"I was terrified!" David recalled. "When I got to Japan and had my first class, I wanted to run away!" Every day, he remembered plotting "when could I sneak out in the middle of the night and get back home." His geographical location within Japan surprised him just

away...I like kids now, and it made me a better person, a better human being," David says.

For anyone who knows any of David's various illustrations, you know that children are now one of his prevalent subjects. In fact, his illustrations are featured in a children's book, *Fly Catcher Boy*, that came out last December.

We can all be grateful that David's

"As the *B.O.E.* comic deadline approaches, I think back to when I was a JET, and when I enter that mindset, ideas just start flowing," such as being left out of the *enkai* invitation or being confused for an American. For the most part, David gets his ideas from stories heard from friends.

"I've never had my bum grabbed by someone at the office," he said, "but we all know someone who has. We all like to share our stories of what we went through in Japan. Hanging around other JETs is a treasure trove for stories." No matter how much the JET mantra emphasizes that "everybody's situation is different," David's comic brings out all of those experiences and scenarios that JET alums have in common. We can all relate to the topics featured in his strip and can often see ourselves in his main characters.

Currently, all of his illustrations are created digitally: "I start off with a quick thumbnail on paper and move to the computer." His illustration tools are Photoshop, a tablet, and a stylus (digital pen) with eraser. David prefers the modern media form: "The cleaning-up aspect of using traditional media is a chore. Not having to get paint from under my nail is great, [and] the Undo command is fantastic!"

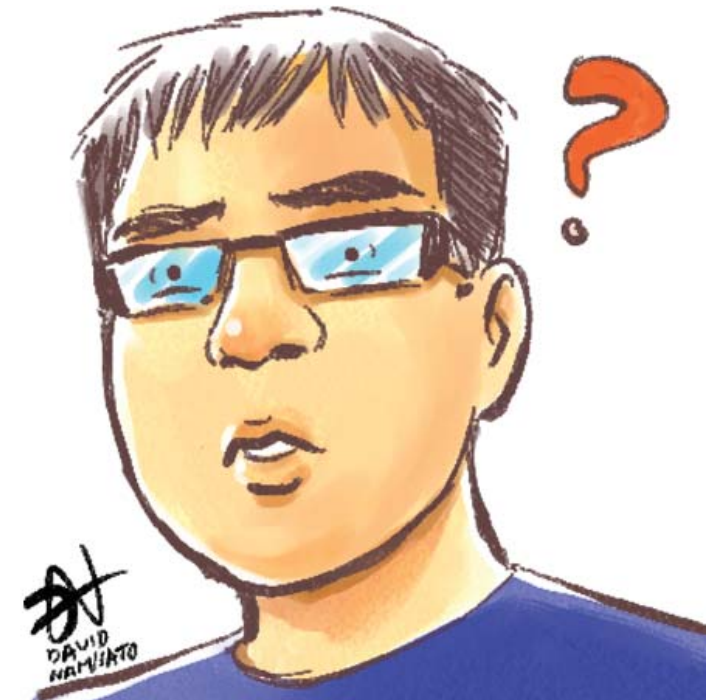
By having a tablet that lets him draw right on the screen, sometimes when going back and forth between pencil and digital drawing, "I find myself trying to hit Control-Z on my desk!", David explained.

Reflecting back on his winding career path to date, David said, "I never thought that running away would have brought me back to the same place." He left animation school for the JET Program in the hopes of exploring other career paths, but in the end returned to his heart's true calling with a broader outlook on life.

There is no running away now, and David said he's "in it for the long haul." Looking ahead, he'd like to illustrate more picture books, create more comics, and adds, "if any alum in New York City is in publishing, I'd be delighted to come out and meet them."

For some JET alumni, the experience on the JET Program is a collection of past memories. For others, like David Namisato, it serves as a source of inspiration.

For more creations, visit www.namisato.org and www.lifeaftertheboe.com.



Self-portrait of the artist.

as much as his unexpected job duties. "Aomori wasn't even remotely close to the places I requested. The only reasons I can think of me being placed in Aomori are a) God has a very strange sense of humor, or b) The guys at CLAIR throw darts on a map to decide placements," David mused.

Despite his initial reservations, David never did manage to successfully defect from the JET Program and ended up staying in Japan for the next two years. Over that time, David experienced a transformation and a change of heart.

"I was fortunate that all the kids in the town were great kids; even the bad kids were very nice kids," he said. The difference between the good and the bad kids turned out to be that "the bad kids preferred to be at the river fishing" as opposed to being in school and doing homework.

David would draw in class to explain concepts to the children and noticed that they enjoyed his lessons. "My dislike for children faded

experiences in Japan had this positive effect; otherwise, we would be denied his creative illustrations of children, many of which can be seen on his bilingual Japanese and English blog and online portfolio.

His current drawing style is a "hybrid style that incorporates both [Japanese and American] styles," David explained. "Some say it looks like anime, and I wouldn't disagree with them. At the same time, being Canadian and growing up with North American comics as well, that's also a part of me."

To any JET alum with professional artistic aspirations, David shares the following nuggets of wisdom gleaned from his first-hand experience: "As fun as it is, it can be difficult. You have to start getting used to rejection and be able to pitch your work and pitch your ideas."

David finds inspiration in "mundane things." When preparing to create, David said, "I look at a blank screen and think, 'What do I want to draw? What do I want to be doing?' I just start drawing."

Andrew W.K.: The JQ Interview
By Justin Tedaldi
(Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)
Cover Photo by Andrew Strasser

Musician, author, TV host, motivational speaker, nightclub co-owner and entertainer Andrew W.K. is prepping the release of a new two-disc set, the "lost third album" (previously available only in Japan and Korea) Close Calls with Brick Walls and Mother of Mankind, billed as "21 rare and unreleased songs from 1999-2010." JQ spoke with Andrew, whose interest in Japan runs deep in fascinating ways.

What can we expect from the new album?

Well, the second disc for me is, of course, what I'm most excited about because there's a lot of material that people have never heard. This was supposed to be a definitive version of all the bonus tracks over the years put together. It's a collection of rare and unreleased music spanning my whole career, [and] brand new stuff that I just finished, including stuff written before my very first album, *I Get Wet*. All the odd ones out that didn't fit together, now they all have a home together on this album. I really do hope it's an entertaining experience.

I was reading about this album of yours that I haven't heard, 2008's import-only *The Japan Covers*. You did covers of Japanese pop and rock songs...

For variety, yeah. It was sort of 30 years of different pop hits.

Were there any other songs or artists that you had to leave out?

No, I was very pleased with that selection; I thought it was pretty diverse. Of course, there's always more music and, if anything, it encourages me to make another collection. But one thing I would say is, this collection was very pop/rock oriented, so there's some songs on there that some people might consider punk songs, but they're excellent songs. There's a song "Linda Linda" by the Blue Hearts, which is just a terrific, terrific song, and they're kind of punky. When I was in high school, I was a real, real big fan of Japanese hardcore and grindcore, the beginning of death metal. And there's some classic, classic bands from Japan—some of the bigger ones are S.O.B., there's a band called G.I.S.M., also written after the acronym, among many other even more obscure, noisier bands I really like. So it would be fun for me to have a chance to play some more of those hardcore punk songs.

Were those all songs that you were familiar with, or did someone turn you on to them?

I've loved Japanese culture since I first went over to Japan, but I would never consider myself an expert, just because I have some friends who are experts on Japanese pop culture and music, and J-pop, specifically, is a very vast world of entertainment all unto itself...I really relied on my excellent label, Universal in Japan, to help pick the best songs and, I guess, guide me, but at the same time we also put out a request to my fans and anyone in Japan as to what songs they

would like to hear me cover, so between the fans and my label and my own taste, I think we created a good selection.

How did your initial contact with Japanese culture get you into listening to Japanese hardcore and other groups?

That's a very good question. I'm trying to remember really how it all began. I think, um... because I visited Japan with my family for two weeks, when I was 13. My father is a law pro-



"Japan is a wonderful, wonderful place to be successful, and I'm very grateful to the fans." (Mike Lum)

fessor, and he was invited to teach in Kyoto, actually. We stayed in Kyoto and Tokyo and we may have visited Osaka very briefly. And it was a life-changing trip, because I don't think I had ever been abroad at that point at all; I'd never been to another country, besides Canada. And to just go out of the country was exciting, but to go to a culture that's—they're Westernized, but the foundation is truly unique onto itself and also very old—was just mind-blowing, and [the country] is just overflowing with culture and excitement. And a lot of the aesthetics that I appreciate myself, like energy, excitement, color... an excitement about life, that seems to be part of the cultural tone of Japan in general. And so I was just in love with everything I was coming across, from very mainstream culture to more obscure culture. It was all very passionately delivered, and I could enjoy it, even though I couldn't understand it.

Which groups were your favorites at the time?

In earlier years, I was really into this band called the Boredoms, who, many years later, made my dream come true when I actually got to perform with them in [Brooklyn], at a special concert they did featuring 77 different drummers. Yamantaka Ai, the singer Ai, who sometimes just goes by Eye, he has other groups, specifically another group called Hanatarash—like a snotty nosed kid—and that group was probably the most inspiring for me, because that was him working by himself and it's just really free. He makes original visual art, all the album artwork,

and all his releases and the Boredoms' releases were always so inspiring. And so vibrant.

Was your initial success in Japan something that you sought out for yourself, or did it happen more naturally with your image and what the music was like?

When I started to be Andrew W.K., it was a worldwide approach, and it all happened so quickly. I didn't really think about the idea of doing well in Japan or any other countries; I just wanted to do well everywhere. Once I started traveling around and the record started coming out worldwide, [and] I could see which countries were responding the most, it was always pretty obvious. And Japan, from the very beginning, they just really, really, really responded, and I didn't really think of it this way at the time, but now looking back, I think that was a very specific manifestation—loving Japan so much for so long—that my subconscious probably helped form what I did so that it would be appropriate for Japan. I never thought, "Oh, I'm going to be high energy because they like that in Japan," but all of the things that make me what I am or the music the way it is tend to be qualities that worked well in Japan by default. You couldn't ask for a better place to be accepted, just the nicest people and the highest level of quality in every single thing that you do, from professionalism and work and the infrastructure of the country to the kindness of the fan base. It's a wonderful, wonderful place to be successful, and I'm very grateful to the Japanese fan base for allowing me to be so.

They really latch onto it more than they do in the U.S., where it's more concerned with pop or singing, not necessarily carrying on the tradition of being a musician.

That's true. I will say the first country and possibly still the only country that's ever actually asked me questions about music in interviews has been in Japan...I think of myself as an entertainer and a performer more, so I understand about talking about the chords or the notes or the rhythm, but to have someone ask you about the key of a song and about the intervals and about why did you choose these chords, that's so incredible. It's great in Japan that people there actually do care about the notes, because those are the kinds of questions I always wanted to ask bands: How did you come up with that chord change, how did it make you feel? When you wrote that melody, was it perfect the first time you wrote it, or did you fine-tune it? Do you realize how amazing that melody is? All those kinds of questions. And it's so funny that, oftentimes, they're not asked...there is no good question or bad question, they're all worthwhile, but it sure is nice to talk about the music when it makes sense.

Your song "Party Hard" was chosen for Konami's music video game *Drummania 8th Mix*. How does something like that happen?

It can work a variety of ways, from my experience. When they were making that game, I wasn't aware that they were making it and that they were looking for music, but had I known, I certainly would have asked to have my song included, just like I want to have my song included in *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero*, [*Cont. on 7*]

**Valentine's Day
By Tristan Child
(Wakayama-ken,
2006-08)
Photos by George Hirose**

"It is better to have a teahouse where they can reflect than being in a schoolhouse where they are forced to learn something they don't want to learn." With this line, Bobby Valentine, the celebrated former manager of the New York Mets and Chiba Lotte Marines, ended his two-hour talk to a crowd of over 300 at Japan Society on January 21.

The event paired Valentine with *New York Times* sportswriter Ken Belson, who has known Valentine for over 30 years as a journalist in both New York and in Tokyo, where he was writing for the *Times*' Tokyo bureau. After a short introduction by Japan Society president Motoatsu Sakurai, Valentine stepped up to the podium. Wearing a dark gray suit, crisp white shirt and striped yellow tie, he immediately had the spectators under his thumb with the opening line: "I am the only person ever to manage in the American League, National League and professionally in Japan, but I am also the only person ever to get fired in all three."

Valentine was in a reflective mood, recalling how he developed an interest in Japanese culture in high school. At 16 years old, he was told by his favorite teacher to get off the sports field and onto the stage. His foray into drama landed him the part of Sakini, a Japanese translator, in the play *The Teahouse of the August Moon*—a role, he said with a proud aside, that was played by Marlon Brando on Broadway.

He couldn't stay away from sports for long, and in 1970 as a 20-year-old Minor League Baseball star playing in Hawaii, he had his second encounter with Japan. Valentine was hit by a pitch in the face one game, and was rushed to an ill-staffed Oahu hospital. Attending the game, coincidentally, was a baseball fan and plastic surgeon from Japan, who had fallen in love with the game when the Brooklyn Dodgers played some exhibitions there in 1956 on their Goodwill Tour to Japan. This anonymous savior helped to perform world-class plastic surgery on Valentine, but never left his name. Years later in 2005, Valentine would meet the son of the plastic surgeon, and finally got to say thanks and ask why his father was so secretive. "Mother

didn't know dad was at the game," was the reply.

Valentine turned to managing after an injury shortened his promising career as a player. In his first full season coaching in 1986, working under George W. Bush with the Texas Rangers, he showed a lot of promise as a young manager. At the end of that same season, Valentine was invited to give a summit talk at a baseball conference in Japan with his friend Tatsuhiro Hirooka, who he worked with to develop the modern day pitch count. His ties with Hirooka-san would remain strong for years after.

"A lot of my life," Valentine said, "has had a Japanese piece of silk intertwined with it." After being fired from the Rangers in 1992, this Japanese piece of silk didn't take long to wind its way back to Valentine.

Hirooka-san was sent to America to study baseball coaches to bring one back to head the Chiba Lotte Marines, and Bobby-san was his first choice. For one glorious season in 1995, Valentine and Hirooka put together a team that finished second in its division with a 69-58-3 record. It seemed like the team they built would develop into a championship contender, but unfortunately it was never given time to mature: Valentine was let go after his successful first campaign, being terminated a year early from his two-year contract.

"I had a yearning to come back to America and coach again," explained Valentine. Perhaps this wasn't the entire picture, however, as Valentine also mentioned a minor "philosophical rift" that seemed to have grown between the two stubborn and talented coaches. Building on his success in Japan, Valentine took a job with the New York Mets' Triple-A affiliate in Norfolk, Virginia, and soon got called to run the show late in the 1996 season. He became a household name during his six seasons with the Mets, leading them to several playoffs and most notably a World Series berth against the New York Yankees in 2000.

After his stint with the Mets, Valentine was lured back to the Chiba Lotte Marines for a second go-round; he quickly picked up where he left off, leading the Marines to the Pacific Coast title in 2005, and then the team's first Japan Series Championship since 1974. The management's distaste for Valentine reared its ugly head again in 2009, and despite a public outcry to keep Valentine aboard as coach



Former NY Mets/Chiba Marines skipper Bobby Valentine Speaking at Japan Society.

of the Marines, he was fired at the end of the season.

Following his tale, Valentine fielded questions from the audience. When asked to compare baseball in America to baseball in Japan, he did not sugarcoat what he believed to be the harsh reality of Nippon Professional Baseball. When asked if he could see himself returning to coach again in Japan someday, Valentine said, "I don't know. The level of baseball is very good, but the business and management is very bad." He continued, "Japan has the second greatest economy in the world, and their number one sport is baseball and number two is far behind, but they are wasting one of their greatest national resources."

When asked if he thought Japanese teams could compete with American teams, he said, "My 2005 team could have competed with anyone in the world." He proposed that both teams meet in Hawaii—similar to the NFL's Pro Bowl prior to 2010—and that the beneficiaries of the proceeds from the game be the future generations of baseball players, both Japanese and American.

The final question was about his future. It was asked with a hopeful tone, perhaps attempting to persuade him to come back to his former club, the Mets. His answer: "I'd consider it, but it depends who's asking!"

This capped a night of reminiscences from the Connecticut-born baseball star destined to have an indelible impact on Japanese baseball. While the 59-year-old Valentine is done with coaching for now, it is impossible to believe that the piece of Japanese silk he spoke so fondly of won't pass through his life again.

For upcoming lectures at Japan Society, visit www.japansociety.org/lectures.

[Con't. from 6] games like that. But in that specific instance, they just approached us. I guess the difference is, I say "yes" right away. Because I just want this music to be heard in as many places as it can be, and it's meant to be played and it's meant to be played along with. I mean, getting to play drums, even air drums, to a song, is just the most fun thing. So to actually have a brilliant game like that where you are making sound and playing along to it, that's just a great concept. But to have your song included, to me, is just a great, great privilege, a great pleasure. I never turn down opportunities...I think of this music as kind of invincible; I don't think it can get ruined by being in a video game, or an ad, or a movie or something like that, so the more, the better.

Do you get any final say in how the song turns out?

You can. I did not ask to have final approval, but you can certainly ask to have that. Especially in Japan, I have a lot of faith in the accuracy and the quality of all transcriptions and renditions and covers. And they've always been really good; all the karaoke versions I've heard have been just fantastic [and] amazingly faithful, to the point where I don't even know how they could hear those details and recreate them so well. I mean, they're really listening carefully.

Must be some guy in an attic somewhere just listening to it over and over and over again.

I hope it doesn't drive him crazy, but it really is true. I've heard karaoke versions where it took me a long time to be able to tell if the actual instrumental recording of it was a recreation, and it's almost always been a recreation...when they can fool the [original] artist who recorded it, that's amazing.

[Con't. on 8]

[Con't. from 7] Speaking of being faithful to originals, I was listening to the *Gundam Rock* album that you put out last year. How does the author of “Party Til You Puke” and “Slam John Against a Brick Wall” get to record an album like this?

Well, again, I was just very fortunate that I was approached. I mean, had I been aware that [animation studio] Sunrise and Gundam were looking for a rock musician to make a 30th anniversary tribute, I would have certainly thrown my name in the hat, because I had already covered one of the Gundam songs, the song “Ai Senshi,” on my *Japan Covers* album a year earlier.

So I'm familiar with the songs, and that's actually one of my favorite songs on that whole covers album...fortunately, my A&R guy, the guy I've worked with at Universal in Japan since my first album, he's moved up in the company, and now he's the president of his division, and with a lot of power, so he kind of brings these opportunities right to me. And after the success of the *Japan Covers* album, Gundam and Sunrise actually approached us directly and said, we would like you to do an album like that, but all Gundam songs to celebrate the anniversary. And it was a huge project and extremely challenging, but hugely rewarding.

Did you do all the music yourself for that album?

I played everything on that one. I really did my very best, because I love the original songs so much. I mean, I haven't done a lot of covers. The *Japan Covers* album, that was the first time I've ever covered that many songs in my life.

That must have been a lot of work to put together.

It's a huge, huge, huge, huge legacy, and that's again what's so intimidating about a lot of the great Japanese culture. It's vast—it's not like there's one book, and you read it and understand it; it's endless. It's like someone trying to introduce you to *The Simpsons* or trying to teach you about *Peanuts* or something, it just goes on and on and on and on...you can spend your whole life being a fan...I don't know how old Astro Boy and Ultraman are—I think those are earlier—but Gundam, to me, is the be-all end-all of giant robots.

Were all the songs that you sang on the album newly translated?

We did the translations the same way we did translations for the covers album, where an excellent translator that I've worked with many times in Japan wrote out the literal translation, so I had the true understanding of what the Japanese lyrics were explaining. And then, my goal with all the songs was to be as true to the original as possible in every way. So, I tried to use English words: keep the same meaning, but fit the words into the phrase, so a lot of the words are different; it's not a literal translation anymore. And that was very fun for me, because I almost felt like it was a collaboration; I feel like I'm collaborating with the songwriter. Because if I get to make up the English words, that's a real creative input. And that's what, again, made it so rewarding for me—I had some kind of artistic involvement, and when you get to sing your own words, it really bonds you with the song.

A project like this is very rare.

It's really rare, and I can't imagine it happening anywhere else except Japan. These are the kinds of things that Japan makes possible.

Are there any other Japanese things that you really love?

Pachinko. It's probably my favorite thing in the world...all that I wanted to do on my first trip to Japan when I was 13 was go to pachinko parlors. [Later on] I bought a reconditioned, fixed up, older pachinko machine, and kept it in my basement and decorated it and played with it for hours and hours. It was probably the most excited I ever was about getting anything in my life. It was the first time I ever saved up all my money to get it; it was about 250 bucks, which is a great price.

[As an adult] I have had all my pachinko dreams come true—getting to play the game, winning, actually having a fever and getting mountains of balls and then going and trading those in for the plastic cards and then taking those plastic cards around the corner and getting cash illegally. And even the biggest dream of all, I just finished recording a song for a pachinko game... it's a song written with [guitarist] Marty Friedman, and he invited me to do it. When he told me it was for a pachinko game, I said, “This is a dream coming true.” I always try to be aware when a dream is coming true, so I can pay respect to it.

The funny thing is, the song is being released as a single and there's also actually a video on YouTube, it's called “Kiba,” and I'm singing in Japanese on this one, which was extremely challenging—I had a Japanese language coach come over and literally recorded it syllable by syllable; I mean, it was the most painstaking recording I've ever done for any vocal...because of the excellent coaching I got, it sounds Japanese. The only way to get this song is to get the super jackpot fever, so the number of people who actually hear this song in the game will be very few, because it's so hard to get to, it's like the big grand finale.

Congratulations, that sounds like a true honor.

Thank you, yeah. I'm just blown away. I can look back in time at the childhood me and I can see myself being blown away. If someone told me back then that I'd be able to make the song for a pachinko game with the guitarist from Megadeth who lives in Japan, I mean, that would just be mind-bending stuff. So that's the kind of stuff that makes me very happy to be alive and very grateful.

What are some of the other non-musical endeavors that you're most proud of?

Well, the biggest project in the last three years was opening up a nightclub and music venue in Manhattan [Santos Party House, on Lafayette Street]...it's a brand new building that we built. I mean, it's an old building, but there's never been a club in there before, they've never had a liquor license, [and] it's never been zoned.

Everyone's excited any time a new place opens in the city, but I'm just one of many people that made this place possible, one of many owners and investors and a huge team that runs it every

day, and it's absolutely in every way the biggest thing I've ever been a part of, in terms of the size, the scale; I mean, it holds 800 people, it's 8,000 square feet, it has the best sound system in the city, and to say that we built this, but to give it back to the city, is really one of the greatest privileges I have: to give a stage to New York City, which has given so much to me.

What do you like best about New York City, since you live here now?

Probably just all the people...to me, I feel like I'm living on Planet Earth, and not in any one country or any one part of the world, even. I do think it's the best city in the world, and it takes a lot for me to say that. It is what America's all about: possibilities.

What do you want to do the next time you visit Japan?

I want to just continue to travel around the cities I haven't been to...I want to see the really small cities. Also, one thing I love, maybe even more than pachinko, are coin pushers, or medal games. The scale of the coin pusher games that I saw in Japan on YouTube videos were the most over-the-top, huge coin pusher games you've ever seen, and the jackpot, and the way that they had hiked up the concept of a coin pusher, is just the most exciting thing I'd ever seen; it's just like a dream.

It's like someone reached into the deepest fantasies of my brain and created this thing. Next time I get to Japan, that's my focus...it's just so inspiring. And to think that there's people—huge, huge teams of people—whose entire job in life is to develop these games, I mean, that, to me, is heaven. If I wasn't doing what I'm doing now, I would be very happy to go and work for a coin pusher company.

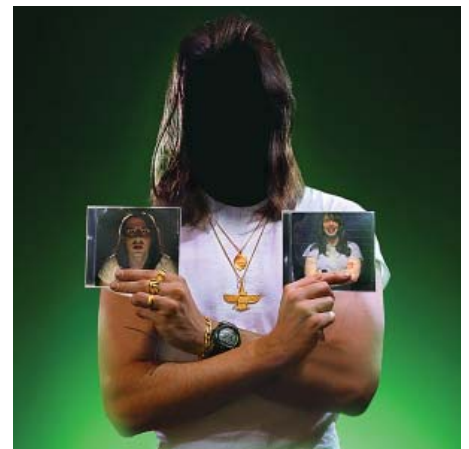
You can always do a song for them sometime down the line, right?

Yeah! Good thinking.

Finally, what makes a great party?

Doing whatever you want to do, and letting everyone else do the same.

Close Calls with Brick Walls/Mother of Man-kind is available now. Special thanks to Lauren Sachs of Big Machine Media for interview assistance. Visit Andrew's homepage at www.andrewwk.com. Watch the video for “Kiba” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdvUwk8jw54.



Gearing Up for Grad School
By Aly Woolfrey
(Aomori-ken, 2005-08)

Did you learn lots of *Nihongo* while on JET, and are now looking for an opportunity to use your new skills? Why not become a Japanese teacher? **Waseda University's Graduate School of Japanese Applied Linguistics** describes itself as "the first independent graduate school in Japan at which a teacher training program has been systematically designed based on principles of teaching Japanese as a second language." Especially if you took the correspondence course in Japanese linguistics and pedagogy from CLAIR, this program should be right up your alley. www.waseda.jp/gsjal/english.html.

Those of us considering a return to the Land of the Rising Sun with a corporate job might try the "weekend MBA" program through **McGill University in Montreal, Canada**. Hosted on location at Sophia University in Tokyo, it's a two-year program that meets on weekends, giving its full-time corporate demographic ample opportunity to give their attentions to both work and school. Summer intensive study back in Montreal and study tours in China and other countries are also possible, embedded right into the weekend MBA if you want it! www.mcgillmbajapan.com.

This issue's feature institution is the **Teaching East Asia (TEA)** program at the Center for Asian Studies of the University of Colorado in Boulder. You don't have to be an East Asian Studies scholar or any other specific program participant to take part in it. The Japan Project and others are said to be "designed to enhance

and expand teaching and learning about East Asia at the elementary and secondary school levels," and offer a variety of opportunities for involvement.

There's an annual summer institute centered on Japanese history that features Japan specialists from all over the country, and a constantly changing series of workshops for educators on all sorts of topics, from generalized ones outlining postwar Japan to more maverick-sounding perspectives such as "Why Matsuo Basho Did Not Write Haiku."



The University of Colorado's Teaching East Asia program offers an "Elementary School Life" lesson plan.

The Japan Resource Center is one of the program's main components, a collection of curriculum resources for Colorado teachers. With basics like lesson plans, books and videos, it also boasts unique and creative resources such as a collection of Edo era woodblock prints that can be lent to teachers for a special unit on art or history, and a series of "artifact trunks" for students to explore.

My favorite is called "Elementary School Life." It consists of a Japanese-style red *randoseru*,

stuffed with a bento box, pencil case, workbooks, and all sorts of other things that our municipal and elementary school ALT alumni would recognize in an instant.

How does this all apply to JET vets looking for ways to stay connected to Japan through graduate school? These projects are geared toward education professionals, but that doesn't mean you can't get involved! Going to the University of Colorado for graduate school in any subject would mean volunteer opportunities at the summer institute or workshops, or even simply attendance at the workshops.

Events are presented by some of the most accomplished Japan experts in the country, which means surefire networking opportunities for the aspiring academic. The project maintains a homepage and a monthly newsletter, creating an opportunity for folks wanting to test their Web design or journalistic talents. In addition, there are graduate research assistants working constantly on various aspects of the projects, giving you the chance not only to get involved, but to get paid for it as well!

To find out more about the TEA Projects and graduate school opportunities in Boulder, visit their homepage at www.colorado.edu/cas/TEA/index.html, or the University of Colorado's main site at www.colorado.edu.

Keep your eyes peeled the next edition of "Gearing Up for Grad School." We've got something new in the works for you—themes! Next time: Online resources for finding schools and scholarships.

Got the perfect place for a graduate program, study abroad opportunity, or financial aid prospect for this column? Tell us all about it! Contact Aly at mnjetter@gmail.com.

Book Corner
Tokyo Vice Grips
By David Kowalsky
(Hiroshima-ken
ALT/CIR, 1991-93)

Books in the last 10 years about the "dark side" of Japan are nothing new. Examples include *Dogs and Demons* by Alex Kerr in 2002 and *Shutting out the Sun* by Michael Zielenziger in 2007 (reviewed by this writer in the [spring 2009](#) issue of **JQ**).

A real "dark side" page-turner published just last year is *Tokyo Vice: An American Reporter on the Police Beat in Japan* by Jake Adelstein. Adelstein is currently a writer and consultant in Japan and the United States. He was a reporter for the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's largest newspaper, from 1993 to 2005, and has the distinction as being the only American journalist ever to have been admitted to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police press club.

I was afraid the book was going to be one of those bad memoirs where an American goes to [insert country name] to [find himself/herself.] Luckily, those fears did not materialize. After a great prelude that fast forwards in time to grab your interest at a spot designed to have you asking yourself "how did he ever end up in this situation?", *Vice* goes back to the early nineties, when Adelstein was interviewing for a job at the *Yomiuri*. He lands the job and starts working as a police beat reporter.

As Adelstein talks about his work, the book provides a real first-hand "education" on how journalism, the police and the Yakuza (Japanese Mafia) all work in Japan. If that isn't enough, the book will also appeal to fans of true crime, as Adelstein investigates things like a serial murderer and a British national living in Japan who went missing.

In the second half of the book, things really get interesting. Adelstein clearly graduates from being the naïve reporter. There is the

heartbreaking story of an outspoken female work colleague, and then we get into the nasty side of the Japanese sex industry, including two men behind a human trafficking operation.

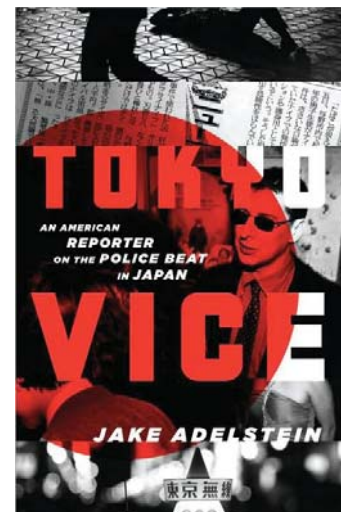
The biggest story of the book concerns Tadamasu Goto, the legendary Yakuza boss of the Yamaguchi-gumi, getting a rush liver transplant in the United States. There is also yet *another* heartbreaking story involving a friend of Adelstein's.

I can't forget to mention the way we meet the super-likable cop Sekiguchi, who teaches Adelstein more than anyone else about reporting, interrogation, honor and trust. And there is the takeaway lesson that "what matters is the purity of the information, not the person providing it."

As reported in the *Japan Times* in early 2010, discussions are underway about a film, and the silence in Japan over the book has been "deafening." If (or when?) Adelstein finds a publisher in Japan for

the eventual release of a Japanese-language version of the book, there may indeed be a whole new wave of publicity with plenty of controversy.

Watch a 60 Minutes piece on the Yakuza [here](#) and an interview with Jake Adelstein on The Daily Show [here](#).



**Concert Review
Hikki's Back
By Justin Tedaldi
(Kobe-shi CIR,
2001-02)**

**Monday, February 08, 2010
11:42 p.m.**

"Kon~ban~wa~"

"Oh, hi!!! ♪ Did you just get home??"

"Yep, the train was s-l-o-w tonight."

"I see. So, how was it??"

"Great! There were so many things I was wondering about since getting the tickets last year, so I'm glad I didn't read any spoilers from the earlier shows on the fan sites."

"Yeahhh, it's good to be surprised, I think."

"My first surprise was how early her diehard fans showed up. Would you believe that some lined up as early as 2:00 a.m.? Hikki said her staff brought them hot chocolate later in the afternoon to help warm them up."

"That's nice. Did you get any hot chocolate?"

"Nope, I got there at 1:00 p.m. and was still all the way around the block. It was COLD out there!"

"I believe it. But it must have been very nice inside, right?"

"Absolutely. We were packed in shoulder to shoulder, very close to the front. DJ Mike Rizzo opened the show playing remixes of recent dance pop hits, but the only time he got any applause was when he said, 'New York City! Utada's coming on in 10 minutes!' The lights were so low that you couldn't even see his face."

"Probably, everyone must have been there for Hikki."

"You bet. So then the lights dimmed, the first track from her *Exodus* album played over the PA, and then—there she was, looking something like early '80s Madonna (she has long tinted hair now!), singing 'On and On.' The crowd went nuts!"

"Were they singing along?"

"Yes, to every word. She followed that with three more songs from *This is the One*, then said that she was going to do some Japanese songs."

"Ahh, so she decided to sing those songs for the American tour?"

"Yep, and I'm glad she did, since those ones are much more her style, I think. She started with 'Passion,' then moved on to 'Sakura Drops' and 'Stay Gold' on the keyboard. These songs were more recent, but even though most of the crowd didn't sing along to them, they were still giving her their full

attention."

"Instead of taking pictures? ^ _ ^"

"NO! There was actually a camera ban at all the shows, and there were security guys at both sides of the stage ready to jump in if they saw so much as a red light go off. I didn't even see any press photographers at the front, although it did look like there was a video crew filming the show from the stage."

"So you didn't get to take any pic-



Songstress Hikaru Utada performing at the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza.

tures?" T_T

"Well...a few. But I had to be very careful."

"Great! It's impossible to see Hikki from so close at her concerts in Japan, so it's a good thing for you. Did you notice a lot of Japanese people at the show?"

"Actually, there were very few. It was mostly teens and young people, all very excited to be there, judging from all the screams. I stood next to this one Caucasian girl who must have been very young, since she was there with her *mom*, who seemed to be overwhelmed by it all since she had her fingers jammed in her ears the whole time."

"But her daughter was happy to be there, right?"

"She sang along to everything—even the Japanese songs!"

"Wowww, that's too cool. Did Hikki do any other songs from *Exodus*?"

"Those were the next three, just like on her last Japanese tour: 'Devil Inside,' 'Kremlin Dusk' and 'You Make Me Want to Be a Man.' She was really headbanging on 'Kremlin' and even slammed on a drum to close out the set. Her Brazilian guitarist really cut loose on that song, giving it more of a rock feel."

"Yeah, that album really had a lot of electronics-type stuff. How was the rest of her group?"

"It was fine. The percussionist was the only person with a Japanese name. She had two keyboardists and there were a lot of vocal samples to match the albums. Maybe her voice could have carried over

a little better over all the instruments, but what she sang was definitely clear."

"So what happened after all that *hageshii* rock?"

"She kept the energy up with a cover of a song from this British group, Placebo. Then it was two of the more mellow tracks from the last album, 'Apple and Cinnamon' and then 'Come Back to Me.'" That was the one song where she actu-

ally broke loose from the album

version. It was a nice surprise."

"I see."

"And then there was so much screaming in the other spots. She would say something like, 'OK, I'm going to have a sip of water now,' and people would shout at the top of their lungs, 'WE LOVE YOU!!' At one point she actually told a guy in the front to be quiet!"

"Crazy! How about the 'classics'?"

"I thought you'd never ask. Three in a row—'First Love,' 'Can You Keep a Secret?' and 'Automatic.'"

"Now, those are special songs. Do you remember who sang 'First Love' to you on your birthday?"

"Like I could forget! I wonder if you would have had the courage to sing that in front of everyone if it wasn't for that pineapple *chuuhai* we stashed under the table."

"Mmm...maybee." ;)

"Hikki's version was great and lots of people were on the verge of tears hearing it live, but I think your version was better, haha. How about the time we were driving up to your family's house in the country and we were listening to 'Eternally'?"

"Ohh, I remember that. There was that one driver on the mountain road late at night in front of us, and he was driving so slow and also... ahhh.."

"Swerving all over the place?"

"Yes, that's it! 'Swerving.' It's good to learn to spell these words by typing this way, isn't it?"

"As long as it helps you practice for your test. You have just one month

to go, right?"

"Of course! I'm gonna do my best. How did you like hearing 'Automatic'?"

"You know how—and this only seems to happen with music—when you've been listening to someone for a long time and you're reminded of a certain song, you can still remember exactly where you were and what you were doing the first time you heard them?"

"Yes..."

"It was just like that."

"*Natsukashii, ne*. So was that the end of the show?"

"There were a few more. 'Dirty Desire' is probably the complete opposite of a song like 'Automatic,' but for the one line when Hikki sang, 'And you can't wait to see me/ To see me in the flesh,' this one girl shrieked so loud it was impossible not to hear her."

"Wow, she has some passionate American fans."

"Definitely. Then after some time to cool off came the encores of 'Simple and Clean' and 'Me Muero.' She threw autographed foam baseballs to the crowd with drawings of her bear Kuma Chang posing like the Statue of Liberty and King Kong."

"How did you know this? Did you catch one??"

"Unfortunately, no, but two of the people around me did. One of them bounced off my finger."

"So close! It sounds like you had a great time."

"Yes, it was worth all the waiting and standing. I was thrilled to sit down after it was over. Oh, I wanted to get you a souvenir of the show after it was over, but there was *no* merchandise for sale."

"Oh, that's OK. Maybe we'll just have to go see Hikki together in Japan one day."

"I'd like that. Actually, while we're on the subject of gifts, I had something waiting for me when I got home..."

"Really?? It came early, didn't it?"

"Yes. Why did you decide to bake heart-shaped chocolates that spell out my name? It's so sweet of you."

"WHY??? I just wanted to do so."

"Well, thank you for doing so. I'll have to thank you the next time I visit Japan."

"OK, haha. Remember, Fuji-san is waiting for you. It's best to climb it in the summer, you know." w^()^w

"That's right. Well, I'd better get some sleep, and you have to help your sister at the store. We'll chat again soon. Miss you."

"I miss you, too. *Oyasumi*." ♥

Visit Hikki's homepage at www.utada.com. Read JQ's interview with the artist from our spring 2009 issue at www.jetaany.org/magazine/utada.

THE FUNNY PAGE

February was interview season for new JET Program applicants, and some of JETAA's members got to help out on the other side of the desk. To lighten the anxiety that all candidates face, JQ presents these completely fictional...

Top 14 Things You'd Rather Not Hear at a JET Interview

14. "How did your blood type spark your interest in this position?"

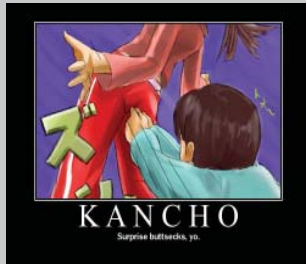
13. "If you were a desk, would you be messy, or unrecognizable?"



12. "Give us the depth, rounded to the nearest centimeter, of a typical inaka drop toilet."

11. "Which of the Three Great Unifiers of Japan would you most like to have a beer with, and why?"

10. "Any reservations about having to hear 'Auld Lang Syne' in the subways every weekend at 1:00 a.m.?"



9. "You said that you're adventurous and like discovering new things about Japan. Are you familiar with kancho?"

8. "What are your thoughts about working at a school built over a fault line?"



7. "I notice you're wearing a colored shirt under that suit. Do you consider yourself a troublemaker?"

6. "If someone tells you that your Japanese is good, what would you do to sincerely prove them otherwise in order to save face?"

5. "Describe in detail the last time you used janken to resolve a professional dispute."

4. "Pretend we're elementary school students. Tell us why Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all time."

3. "Oohana-san, do you smell weed?"



2. "Are you now, or have you ever been a Prius owner?"

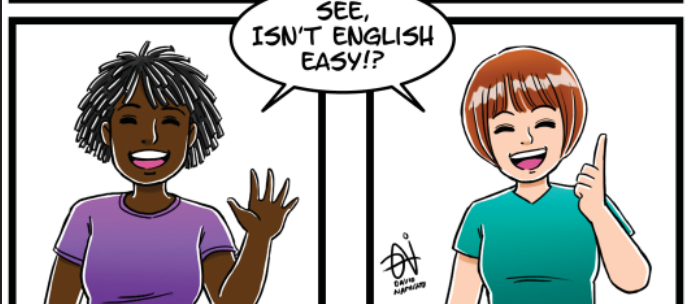
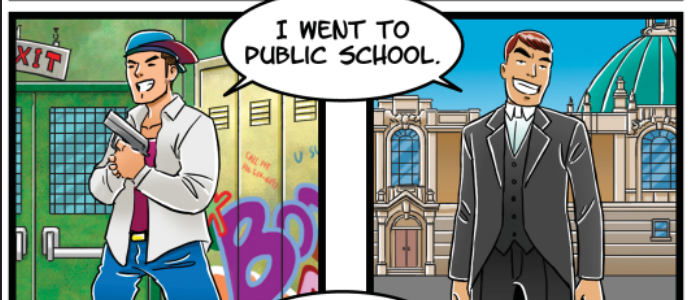
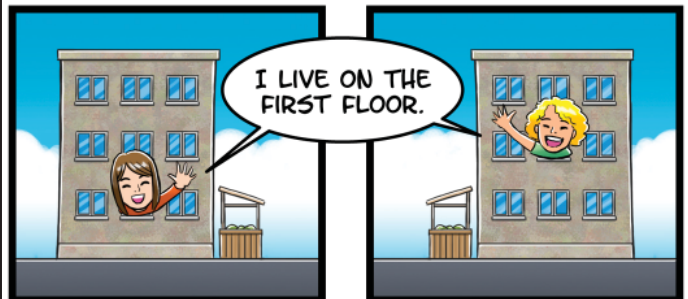
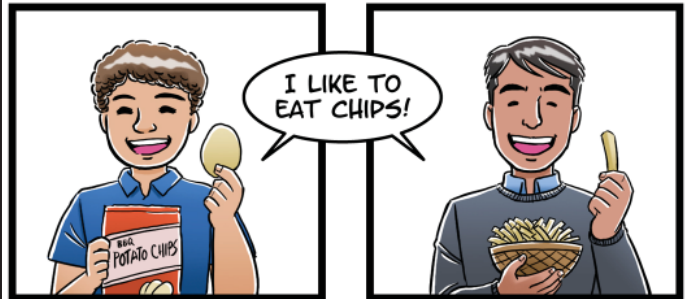
1. "Can you use chopsticks?"

Life After the B.O.E.

BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN CIR, 2002-04)

American ALT

British ALT



And we wonder why our students think English is confusing?

For more *Life After the B.O.E.*, visit lifaftertheboe.com.

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