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CONNECT
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WELCOME TO CONNECT

The monthly e-zine produced for JETs, by JETs, featuring the best news and articles from all over Japan. We are currently looking for writers, editors, photographers, and artists who want to create content for this national publication!

We need YOU, the JET community, to get involved.

Send us your short stories, news articles, photographs, comics... whatever it is that you do best...to communications@ajet.net.

**We're waiting to see what you've got!
Make your voice heard!**



CEO Matthew Cook **PR/MEDIA** Cailin Arena **ART DIRECTOR** Rob Maxwell **EDITORIAL** Sarah Blenkhorn
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Cailin Arena (*News*) Annabella Massey (*Fashion & Beauty*) Amelia Hagen (*Travel*)
Simon Daly (*Food*) Anna Engle (*Entertainment*) Adam Chludzinski (*Sports*) Lisa Cross & Sarah Blenkhorn
(*Events*) Bryan Darr & Sarah Blenkhorn (*Education*) Sarah Blenkhorn (*Culture*) Simon Bender (*Short Stories*)
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ACCOUNTING Mark Noizumi **IT** Kevin Mitchell

www.ajet.net

communications@ajet.net

WELCOME TO THE OCTOBER EDITION OF AJET CONNECT!

It's been a significant month in the world of the JET Programme.

On September 8th, the ministries hosted a commemorative symposium at the University of Tokyo to discuss 25 years of the JET Programme; what it has accomplished, and what challenges it faces today. The symposium featured many notable speakers, such as United States ambassador to Japan, John Roos, and Ms. Yoko Kimura, the Chair of the Board of Directors of CLAIR.

On behalf of AJET, myself and AJET council members Mark Noizumi (treasurer) and Amelia Hagen (Block 10 rep) attended. After brief opening statements by the ministry heads,

many speakers were given the chance to spotlight JETs' achievements, and voice issues pertinent to the program.

We ARE the future of JET. Current JETs lay the groundwork for our successors who come next to fill our shoes.

One issue, for Japan as a country, that repeatedly came up was the fact that the number of Japanese students who study abroad or attend universities in foreign countries has been on a steady decline for years. This is particularly troubling in light of Japan's efforts to globalize as more and more businesses are enforcing English as a required standard.

A highlighted concern for the JET Programme itself was the increasing number of Boards of Education who hire ALTs privately, or through recruiting companies other than JET. One of the many challenges the programme faces is how to best promote the value of what we do, and the return on investment that we can provide to the communities we serve.

As the Chair of AJET, I am fortunate enough to work with many people who have done amazing things with their time on JET. As such, I am aware of the many benefits of the JET programme that

are sometimes overlooked. However, this made me question.... is everyone else?

How do we as JETs promote the value of what we do and the return on investment that we provide to the communities we serve?

For example, did you know that over 20 of the employees at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo are former JETs? Did you know that after the March 11th disasters, current JETs raised an estimated ¥140,000,000 yen towards the relief efforts? These are only two examples of ways that JETs have given back to Japan. The benefits of JET are vast, and the elimination of the program would have far reaching consequences.

Toward the end of the day, the governor of Kyoto made an interesting point that stuck in my mind. He said that he believes the competition of privately hired JETs and the decrease of requests for JETs is actually a good thing! He reasoned that this competition would serve as a stimulus for positive change in our programme to become better and to show more quality than it ever has in the past.

That's when I realized.... We ARE the positive change in the system now. As we speak, AJET has been working on more ways to provide resources to make JETs better teachers. Ways to learn Japanese more fluently. Opportunities to develop ourselves professionally in the field of education.

Not only that, but we're finding better ways to connect to each other online and in person via social media and larger scale, better planned volunteer efforts! We're finding better ways to let JETs VOICE their opinions and concerns to the not only the ministries, but to the people we interact with in our communities and workplaces everyday!

So, do we need to wait for the ministries to "save JET"? Should we wait for JET Alumni to prove that the Programme is a world-renowned program, that should be held in the highest regard so that we have luck with future employers?

No.

We need look no farther than to ourselves for this. We ARE the future of JET. Current JETs lay the ground-



SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

- 1. Jim Gannon**
Former JET and Executive Director of the U.S. based Japan Center for International Exchange.
- 2. Keiji Yamada**
Governor of Kyoto Prefecture, President of the National Governors Association
- 3. Masao Niisato**
Professor at Tokyo International University
- 4. Angus Lockyer**
Chair of Japan's Research Centre, University of London
- 5. Jin Ah Kim**
Director of International Cooperation Department, Governors Association of Korea
- 6. Yoko Kimura**
The Chair of the Board of Directors, CLAIR
- 7. Akira Nakamura**
Emeritus Professor at Meiji University.



work for our successors who come next to fill our shoes.

I feel honored to have attended a symposium of so many people who have made amazing contributions to the JET Programme, and who all have a stake in its survival. I think we should take this symposium as a reminder that now is the time for us to make more of this experience. The time is now for us to work together to be something MORE.

I personally can't wait to get started making that happen. I hope you'll join us.

Connect with you next month,

Matthew Cook
National AJET Chair



CONNECT 2011 IN OGUNI, YAMAGATA

"Walk on a 150 year old pavement in forest, wake up in the air of the earth. Move your body with Taiko Rhythm, dance in a circle around the fire.

We bless the nature in Oguni town, people get connected from all around."

CONNECT 2011, which is not affiliated with CONNECT magazine, is a grassroots local festival taking place in Yamagata prefecture. This great ALT-friendly event has been growing in size for the past four years and last year, JETs from as far away as Gunma and

Sendai attended. The great thing about this event is the community feeling you get from it. It's about people coming together and enjoying being with nature.

The mix of music is very eclectic and there's something for everyone. This year, there are artists coming from all over Japan and even the United Kingdom. Like all festivals, there will be a variety of food and drink avail-

able. Tickets are 3,000 yen per person, 8,000 yen for a party of three and 12,000 yen for a party of five. Camping spots are available for 1,000 yen a tent.

For more information, check the blog and map provided:

Blog: <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/connectoguni> (Japanese only)

Map: <http://g.co/maps/y2p4>



AJET EVENTS

Hot Days, Cool Nights – Kyushu in October

Even as the days get cooler, Kyushu is heating up! AJET is hosting two big events in Kyushu this month.

The Ichi Kyu Bee! Mixed Kyushu Beach Frisbee Tournament is taking place over two days, on October 1-2nd, 2011, in Otachimisaki Park, Ashikita. Ichi Kyu Bee is the First (Ichi) Annual All-Kyushu (Kyu) Mixed Beach (Bee) Ultimate Tournament.

Ichi Kyu Bee is the first ALT-hosted co-ed Ultimate Frisbee tournament in Kyushu. ALTs and their friends, all Ultimate Frisbee lovers, are gathering from all over Kyushu and beyond. In the generous spirit of Ultimate Frisbee, beginners are welcome to play. The first day will be a Hat tournament of randomized teams, while the second will follow a regular format. An evening barbeque will be hosted by KumAJET on the first night, and accommodations have been booked at nearby cabins, so come prepared to have a great time and meet a lot of new people.

As event coordinator Adam Chludzinski says, "This is happening! Planning for Ichi Kyu Bee has been a lot of work, but thanks to the help of KumAJET and our sponsors, the event is coming together nicely. T-shirts have been ordered, field and cabin reservations made, and the game schedule is nearing completion! I can't wait!"

It's always a huge team effort to organize an event like this, and problems are bound to occur, Adam acknowledged, "A lot of the logistical problems that we

ran into were because this is the first time an event like this has ever been done." He continued on an optimistic note, "It's our sincere hope that this can become an annual event, as it will be a lot easier to get support and plan for an event that has been done in the past. Also, we will get to call future events things like Ni Kyu Bee, which sounds like 'niku', and San Kyu, or 'Thank you' bee!"

On Saturday there will be about 65 people for the hat tournament and barbecue. There are about 135 people confirmed for the Sunday games. All expectations are for a fully filled, Frisbee-fingering day of fun. Fingers crossed that it won't rain!

After the Frisbee Tournament, you have about two weeks to recover for the Block 10 Fukuoka Day Out on October 15th and 16th. This will be the first Block 10 event in at least four years. Block 10 consists of Fukuoka, Oita, Saga, and Nagasaki.

Fukuoka Day Out begins with baseball at the Yahoo! Dome! The Fukuoka Softbank Hawks are playing Chiba Lotte. 106 JETs and their friends are attending from seven prefectures and miraculously sitting in the same section together! Cheering for the home team is expected, of course...

After the game, organizers are expecting around 120-150 people for the Asahi Beer Garden event. Beer garden goers will be chowing down on all-you-can-eat Genghis Khan yakiniku and gulping Asahi beer.

A night out at clubs along Tenjin's Oyafuko-dori in Fukuoka will wrap up the day out. Clubbing begins with a single 1,000 yen

fee to two clubs, including one drink at each place. FUBAR is owned and run by a former Fukuoka JET and is a popular club playing primarily hip-hop music on the weekends. Dark Room is just down the road from FUBAR and plays more alternative music. Dark Room has a pool table and foosball table in addition to the regular dance floor.

Unfortunately, reservations for the game and the beer garden are no longer being accepted, but RSVPs will be taken for the clubbing event until Oct 10th.

Amelia Hagen, the event organizer, gives her predictions and hopes for Fukuoka Day Out: "First off, I'm predicting a Softbank Hawks victory over the Chiba Lotte! Second, I hope JETs from various prefectures will leave with many new friends and an appreciation for Fukuoka City. We wanted to provide some variety in terms of events for people coming from outside of Fukuoka prefecture, so we came up with several activities so that people could pick and choose what they wanted to partake in, and explore Fukuoka during the rest of the weekend. My goal is to get JETs excited about all that Block 10 has to offer. Hopefully this will lead to future block events around northern Kyushu."

Amelia has some props, too, for the prefectural AJET chapters. "We've received some awesome support from organizers in Saga, Fukuoka, Oita, and Miyazaki. I really appreciate everyone being on board and helping to organize the event – we couldn't have done it without them!"

Kyushu has something for everyone in October, so make a visit part of your plans!

EVENTS BY REGION

Hokkaido	
Hokkaido	Hokkaido JETs are going to Hike Mount Rausu on October 1st!
Tohoku Region	
Iwate	Iwate AJET will be climbing Mt. Iwate on October 8th on the Umagaeshi trail.
Yamagata	Connect 2011 is happening October 8th-10th at Kurosawa in Oguni, Yamagata.
Fukushima	Halloween SHINE is October 22nd in Aizu Wakamatsu City.
	The 2011 International Festival Aizu is October 29th!
	Fukushima ALTs are doing a Home Visit Program in Aizu on November 5th.
Kantou Region	
Chiba	Chiba AJET Baseball Game trip goes to see the Chiba Marines on October 1st.
	Chiba JETs go Camping in Otaki October 8th-9th!
	Chiba JETs are prepping for the Tokyo Yamathon 2011.
Gunma	Gunma JETs join the football tourney in Nagano on October 1st.
Chubu Region	
Shizuoka	Shizuoka JETs go to Costume Karaoke on October 1st!
	Shizuoka AJET makes an excursion to Fuji-Q Highland on October 15th.
	Shizuoka JETs are invited to the 2011 Halloween Party on October 30th.
Nagano	Nagano will host the all-Japan JET soccer tournament on October 1st and 2nd at Sugadaira Sania Park.
	Nagano JETs are going camping October 8th-10th in Kamikouchi.
	Cricket Game: Nagano vs. Hakuba, October 19th.
	October 16th, the Ina English Guide Club will present Zazen Meditation.
Toyama	Toyama JETs are going on a Kyoto Trip, October 7th-10th.
	Toyama AJET is holding a Cheesecake Bakeoff on Sunday, October 16th, in Nanto city.
Kansai Region	
Kyoto	Kyoto AJET takes part in the Mikoshi Challenge, October 9th.
Nara	Nara JETs will make a trip to Hiroshima's Sake Festival, October 7th-10th.
	The Nara AJET Halloween Party will be at the Wormwood Café on October 29th.
Hyogo	Hyogo JETs Rant and Rave at the Lock Up in Kobe, September 30th.
	There will be an art event (dance, music, theater, visual arts, performance art, sculpture, installation, etc.) in the Fukuchiyama abandoned train tunnel on October 1st.
	Akashi Disc Summit, featuring Beach Ultimate, will be October 2nd at Okura Beach in Akashi.
	Hyogo JETs go rafting and canyoning in Shikoku, October 9th and 10th.
	The Tajima Halloween Party will be October 29th in Yabu.

Osaka	Language Exchange Meetup is October 1st in Namba.
	Osaka (Block6/7) Halloween Event on October 29th
	Osaka AJET will have its fourth meeting on October 12th.
Wakayama	Lots of Wakayama JETs are attending a birthday dinner party on October 1st.
	Wakayama JETs are going camping on Friend Island, October 15th.
Shikoku Region	
	Shikoku Field Day will be held in Shikoku Saburo no Sato, in Mima City, Tokushima on November 26th and 27th.
Ehime	October 1st-2nd is the Niihama Welcome Party, held on the beach in Niihama.
	October 15th Ehime JETs will climb Mt. Ishizuchi, tallest mountain on Shikoku.
	Ehime JETs assist with the Yoshida International Association's Halloween party for the local elementary and junior high school students on October 15th.
	October 23rd is the Matsuyama Orphanage Visit.
Kochi	Kochi JETs will make an excursion to Nahari Hotel Beer Garden on Friday 30th September.
	October 8th-10th is Surf Camp in Kuroshio-cho for Kochi JETs.
	Kochi JETs are getting artsy at Mouth to Mouth: a meeting of makings on October 23rd in Kochi City.
	Kochi-JETs are helping with Halloween Party in an abandoned school building on October 28th.
Kyushu Region	
Oita	The Notsu City's annual Halloween Party will be October 8th, and Oita JETs are helping out!
Fukuoka	October 15th 'Block 10 Fukuoka Day Out'
Kumamoto	KumAJET and DiscSports Japan present Ichi Kyuu Bee on October 1st, featuring 4 ALT Teams (Saga, Oita, Miyazaki, and Kumamoto) and 9 Japanese Teams (Shakaijin and college students from all over Kyushu).
	Kumamoto JETs will be rafting down the Kuma River on Saturday, 15th October with LandEarth.

**DON'T SEE YOUR EVENT HERE?
LET US KNOW ABOUT YOUR
UPCOMING EVENTS! SEND YOUR INFO
TO COMMUNICATIONS@AJET.NET**

Jet Effect



HARUKO RHOADS

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

Her legal name is Carol Ann Rhoads. However, now she introduces herself as Haruko Rhoads. She lives in Tondabayashi, Osaka, which she proudly describes as "home of the Perfect Liberty Fireworks Display, the biggest of Japan's displays boasting 120,000 rockets fired, and Jinaimachi, which is a preserved Edo-style neighborhood known for being a religious sanctuary as well as home to a few successful sake breweries." She is in her fifth and last year on JET.

Haruko loves the history of Japan, and the fact that you can experience it no more than a train or bus ride away. She has been to 22 of 47 prefectures, extending her feet as far northeast as Niigata and as far west as Nagasaki. Haruko's current focus is the Edo Period (1603-1868) and the Bakumatsu Period, which ended the Edo Period and continued into the Meiji Restoration. She focuses mostly on revolutionary samurai such as Ryoma Sakamoto, and key characters from the domains of Tosa (Kochi),

Choshu (Yamaguchi), and Satsuma (Nagasaki). "I share my enthusiasm by going to these places, learning the history, and then finally reporting on what I learned. I did have to strengthen my Japanese proficiency in order to get the information I needed from Japanese descriptions at museums."

Haruko's reports started as notes on her Facebook page. She also told her students about her travels, and they started gaining an interest in the places she went and the pictures that she took. "This year I started 'Ms. Rhoads's Travel Diary'. Each diary entry is a page long on B4 paper posted in the English room, and gives highlights of my trip in English, including a couple of pictures. My students have learned about swordsmithing in Nara, a fun day in Kyoto wearing kimono, historical landmarks in Fushimi, Kyoto, climbing Mt. Konpira in Kagawa Prefecture, and of many historical landmarks in Kochi Prefecture. I hope that this lights that spark that the students may pounce on later in their life. While presently my introductions are just a paper on a wall written up in a strange language, I believe it takes just that, just a little push on one domino to get the others going. It takes just one child to look at the wall and be totally inspired."

Haruko realized that she could only understand Japanese culture up to a certain point from museums. She couldn't literally put her hands on most things relating to the past, nor could she see with her own eyes what life really must have been like. So she decided to take up traditional arts that have survived into the modern day, starting with the Japanese sword. This February, she joined a small iaido group in Osaka; the next step into a more

interactive approach to culture, history, and how present customs derived from the customs of old. "Japan's culture evolved around the sword, so it was only natural to go in that direction. Ever since then, completely new doors have opened up. I had direct access that gave me more perspective on how Japanese live their daily lives." It was further exposure for the members of her group to learn about a foreigner who really loved their country and could get into meaningful conversations about history, culture, and the sword, Haruko also exposed a relatively unknown martial art with a 500-year history overseas as well as to other Japanese here in Japan, showing her audience what samurai of old might have looked like through pictures and video of iaido at practices, demonstrations, festivals, and competitions.

History, culture, and swords is only one aspect of what Haruko does. The second traditional art she practices is kimono kitsuke (kimono dressing). She took a 10-day course, and now she wears kimono with confidence. "I share this skill mostly with Japanese friends and coworkers as well as students. I think Japanese people are interested in kimono kitsuke, but are not quite sure how to get involved or think it is too difficult. I have dressed my friends in kimono and we go out for a walk through historical Kyoto or to go watch fireworks or enjoy small festivals. I have also inspired Japanese members of my iaido group to take kitsuke classes, so that they can wear kimono themselves and go out with me for a day. I also dress in kimono for formal events such as my school's formal drinking parties and my students' graduation ceremony."

Through her pictures, video, diaries, and reports, Haruko hopes to generate more understanding about this mysterious but extremely interesting country to others. Her scope does not stop with those living overseas, but with coworkers and students at school, and with the community, both with the members of her iaido group and the population that sees her perform or sees her wearing traditional clothing.

To JETs, Haruko says, "Traveling is so easy in Japan. Even in just a weekend, there is so much ground that could be covered. I normally travel by night bus or by overnight ferry. They are the cheapest forms of transportation here and you can spend an extra whole day at your destination rather than wasting the waking hours traveling and being exhausted when you get there. Big trips can be quite expensive, especially if you are like me and only stay at Japanese Inns. If you're not picky, Japanese websites such as jalan.net and Rakuten provide excellent deals on hotel fares."

"As far as getting into martial arts, for me it was who I knew that got me introduced. Your fellow JETs may have ways to get you connected, while other venues such as work and community have theirs. There is really a lot of opportunity for martial arts around your community or your prefecture. The point is all you have to do is ask, and that is just what I did. It changed my life."

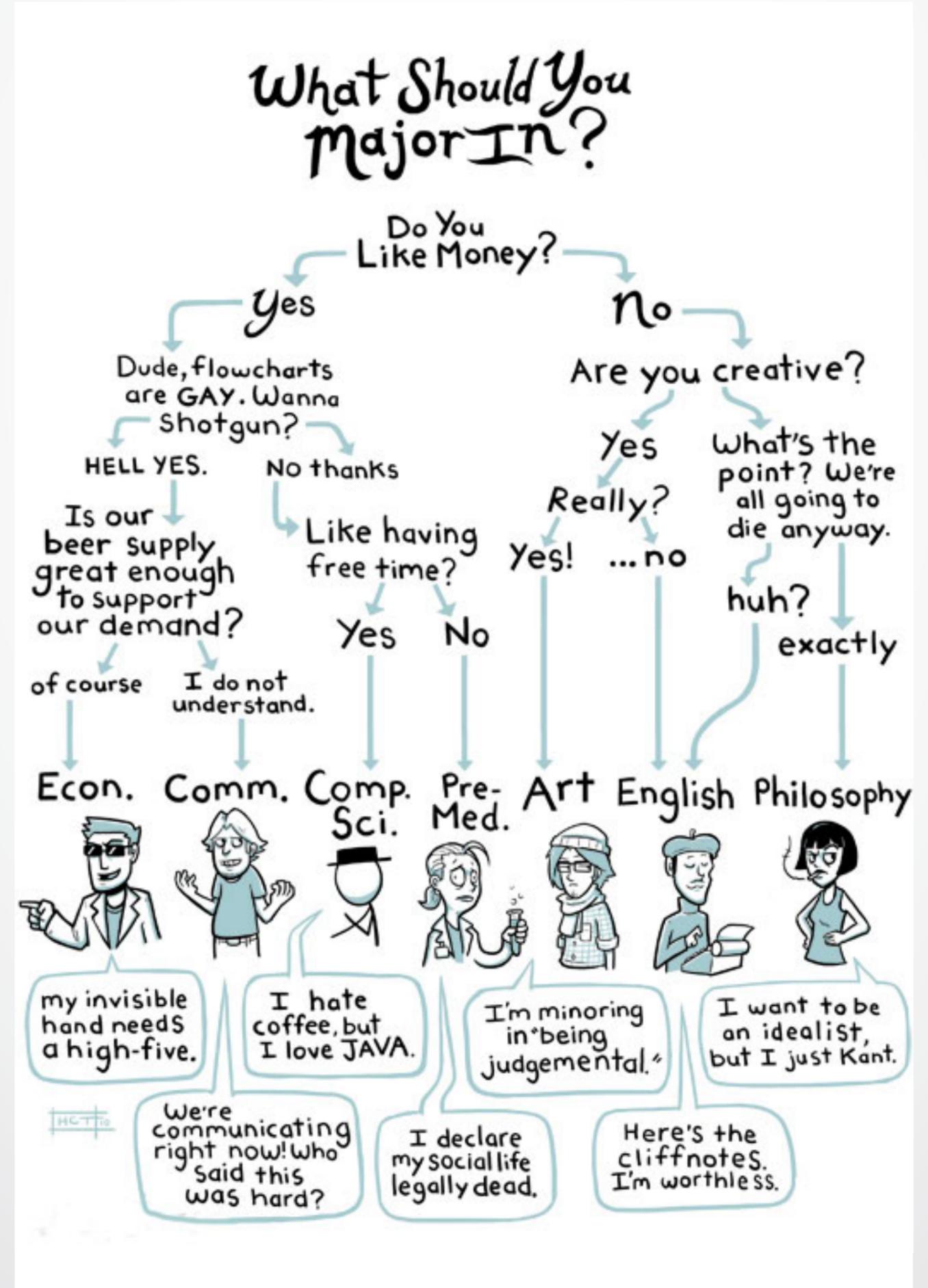
"For those interested in kimono kitsuke, I got involved through a local kimono shop. After I bought an obi from them, they asked me if I could put it on, and that's when they introduced me to a class that they offer to their customers. I encourage JETs to at

least try it so that you can share this with your coworkers and build better relations with them.

"Finally, knowing the Japanese language is a big part of what I do. With this skill under my belt, I have learned more things than I have ever read from any English text. The stories that come straight from those who live here are priceless. I can say that the Japanese language was not something I learned overnight. I started it with 4 years of college and 8 years of off and on self-study after that, with 5 of those years here in Japan. It's hard, but it is so worth it if you manage to get a workable communication going. The bond between you and your community will become stronger should you choose to meet the challenge."

Haruko is making the most, and then some, of her experience here in Japan, and pursuing a life-long dream. Here's hoping you will be inspired by her example, and take the plunge yourself!

Who will be the next JET featured in JET Effect? We're looking for outstanding JETs who are making a positive impact in their communities. Send us the name of a JET you think is making a difference, and include a short explanation why. jeteffect@ajet.net.



LIFE AFTER JET



photo from shutterstock.com



THIS MONTH WE TALK TO STEVEN HOROWITZ

Steven Horowitz is a notable JET alumni who is the creator of JETWit (a resource and news site for both current and past JETs) as well as the founder of the Writers Interpreters Translators Group. In addition to the JetWit site, Steven has initiated a number of creative approaches to strengthening and connecting the JET alumni community worldwide, including the first-ever JET Alumni Author Showcase in March 2009, the JetWit Jobs Google Group and the JET ROI series intended to demonstrate the "return on investment" that JET alumni have provided to Japan in response to potential budget cuts to JET and JETAA

Can you tell us about your time on JET, placement, etc?

I was in Aichi-ken, Kariya-shi from 1992-94. I and another JET both worked for the town and rotated among 6 junior high schools on a weekly basis. I remem-

ber Kariya being 17 minutes away from Nagoya by express train and right next to Toyota-shi. I was in the heart of the auto industry, kind of the Detroit of Japan (but Detroit in the 1940s and 50s :-). And apparently Toyota was founded in Kariya. It was home to two large Toyota subsidiaries--Nippon Denso and Toyota Aishin--and lots of smaller auto manufacturers and suppliers. I lived

right across the street from the Nippon Denso factory which was huge, like a city unto itself. Kariya's sister city is Mississauga, Ontario and one of the two JETs always had a Mississauga connection.

How did JET-wit come about?

JETwit evolved from my 6 years as JETAA New York's Newsletter Editor. I grew the Newsletter into more of an alumni magazine and a sort of de facto national publication for JETAA USA. I wanted to be able to gather more writers from other chapters, to generate content that all chapter newsletters could use as a way to engage and strengthen the JET alum community. I created an email list called the Writers Interpreters Translators (WIT) Group that became a way to identify and gather good writers as well as established authors like Roland Kelts who wrote Japamerica.

I rolled translators and interpreters in as well because I realized



there was a need to occasionally reach out and identify alums with good Japanese skills. I remember that George Rose, former JETAANY President and former interpreter for Hideki Iragu, had contacted me and a few other JETAANY officers because the Yankees were searching for an interpreter for Kei Igawa and George thought there might be a good candidate in the JET alum community. Because of my Newsletter work, I had a sort of mental rolodex I could tap. But I saw the need for a central email list that could quickly disseminate opportunities that would be helpful to work-seeking alums as well as demonstrate the value of the JET alum community to others.

At a certain point, I realized it would make sense for the WIT Group to have a public presence and I turned it into the JETwit blog. I uploaded a lot of the content from the Newsletters I'd published and tried to make it a useful central source of information for the JET alum community in the U.S. and worldwide since there was no central information channel at the time other than an email list for chapter presidents. JETwit was my attempt to sort of fill a need without being asked.

One other component or motivation behind JETwit was to help JETs find jobs. I was working in bankruptcy law where we were just waiting for downturn to come, and it occurred to me that JETs would soon be facing a tougher employment market and that there was a more proactive role the JET alum

community could be playing. So I started gathering and posting relevant job listings based on what I knew JETs tended to look for: translation, writing, international education, etc. And I've done what I can to try and connect JETs with other alums who might be able to be helpful. I also regularly encourage alums to write posts that will be engaging for readers but also professionally beneficial in some way to them.

What is the JET ROI initiative?

JET ROI, aka "Return on JET-vestment," is a direct response to the threat to the future of the JET Program posed by jigyo shiwake last year. I realized there were misguided and misinformed criticisms of the JET Program floating around. And no one was making the case for all of the ways that the JET Program was providing benefits to Japan. Through JETwit and the Newsletter, I'd essentially been the only one tracking and documenting the activities and accomplishments of JET alums in an organized way, though my intended audience had been primarily the alumni community. The JET ROI initiative is intended in a sense for the Japanese government, media and taxpayers. It's a way to give JET alumni as well as Japanese government agencies and media an archive of examples they can point to do demonstrate the return on investment that JETs have provided for Japan.

What is the goal for JETwit in the future?

My goal for JETwit is to keep using it as a way for connecting, strengthening and tapping the alumni community and make it something that we all want to be connected to. Our community is a pretty amazing resource and array of people. And we're the next generation of Japan hands, so to speak. There was the World War II generation followed by the 1980s economic boom generation. By helping people stay connected, by helping alums with career paths and finding work opportunities, by keeping people connected to what's going on, we will have a stronger community. And that means you can go anywhere in the world, track down the local JETAA chapter and find community.

My other goal is to just keep helping JETs find work opportunities. The more JETs working and doing interesting things, the more benefit to the community as a whole. Also, I think helping alums find jobs helps build loyalty and connection. In this economy there's a need for more creative and proactive approaches to finding work, and that's one way I can help.

What would you tell a JET who just arrived in Japan?

Well, I was in Japan before email and the Internet were available, so I don't have too much practical advice. But I would want to convey to a newly arrived JET how they're part of something bigger and something that will be part of them for the rest of their lives to the extent they want it to be. But for the time being, just absorb the culture and the experience. Because that experience is what will connect you with other alums the rest of your life in a way very different from university or other shared experiences.

What are you hoping to see come from JETs in the future?

More authors, more translators, more JETs in leadership positions in both the Japan-related world as well as areas that have nothing to do with Japan. Three JET alums ran for Congress this past year in the U.S. It's only a matter of time before JET alums become even more prevalent and prominent in politics, academia, business and other fields.

Steven can be contacted at jetwit@jetwit.com, and also has a LinkedIn profile at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/stevenwaseda>. He currently lives in Brooklyn with his family, and is a bankruptcy lawyer in training.

Life After the B.O.E.

by David Namikato



What did your predecessor leave behind in the closet?



culture corner

KAMI AND KANNAZUKI

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

In the Shinto tradition, it is believed that kami inhabit natural phenomena, and are present in such objects as trees, stones, water, mountains, and the heavenly bodies. Kami is a word which is difficult to translate, but roughly means 'gods', 'spirits' or 'spiritual force'. These kami have divine power and can assist or thwart human fortunes. Some places, too, have spiritual energy and are worshipped like kami. People, when they die, also become kami of varying power.

In the old calendar of Japan, the tenth month of the year was called Kannazuki, or Kaminatsuki; "the month of no gods." In that month, the sacred trees, encircled with rice-straw ropes and girded with fluttering white paper, sat hollow for a time, their spirits frown. The sea-bound islands, marked by lonely torii, were abandoned by their keepers. The humble, moss-wrapped stone monuments deep in the forests were left empty, and prayers would be made in vain to empty boxes. Every shrine in Japan, whether it was the grand red-striped passages of Itsukushima or the broad cobbled walkways of holy Ise, could offer no consolation or aid to the pilgrims who came there.

Every shrine but one.

Shimane, which long ago was Izumo Province, is home to many of the oldest myths of Japan, including the creation myths. Izumo Taisha, over a thousand years old and considered one of the three most important shrines in Japan, is the mythic centre of Shimane, and home to Okuninushi, the god of marriage. (According to local superstition,

it is bad luck for a couple to go to Izumo Taisha together before they are married.)

The eight million gods of Japan, in the Shinto tradition, meet in council in this month, 'the month of no gods', which in Shimane prefecture is called Kamiaritsuki, or 'the month when gods are present'. The gods convene at Izumo Taisha Shrine to discuss the fortunes of mortals in the coming year, particularly marriages, births and deaths. The priests at Izumo Taisha welcome the gods and perform rites over seven days during the council of the gods before finally seeing them off with great ceremony. During that time, Izumo Taisha is believed to have great spiritual energy.

There are, in fact, at least two gods who do not attend the council at Izumo Taisha. One of these gods is Ebisu, the mirthful god of fishermen, luck and labourers. Legends conflict as to why he does not attend the council. Some legends say he doesn't hear or ignores the summons, choosing to attend his own festival. Others say he acts as a self-appointed guardian, protecting Japan while the other gods are absent.

The other notable god not in attendance is Namazu, the god of earthquakes. In the shape of a giant catfish, he thrashes through the earth, causing it to shake. He is unable to attend the meeting because the other gods have pinned his head in place to prevent his destructive movements.

If you are thinking of visiting a shrine soon, I'd advise you to wait until November. Unless, that is, you live in Shimane, in which case your wishes are sure to be heard!



Buddha Statue - Chiba - photo from shutterstock.com

CALENDAR OF CULTURAL EVENTS IN OCTOBER 2011

<p>Marimo Matsuri (Spherical Algae Festival), Akan-cho, Kushiro City, Hokkaido For 3 days in early October</p>	<p>This is an event which began with activities to conserve the endangered marimo algae of Lake Akanko. This unique festival featuring marimo has developed into a major event of Hokkaido.</p>
<p>Nagasaki Kunchi Festival, Nagasaki City, Nagasaki October 7th-8th</p>	<p>This is an autumn festival held at Suwa Shrine which has a history of 370 years. The greatest highlight is the Hono-Odori in which the towns in charge, called Odori-cho, take turns every year to perform dances. Each Odori-cho takes charge once every 7 years.</p>
<p>Formula One Grand Prix, Suzuka, Mie October 9th</p>	<p>Suzuka Circuit is a race circuit in Mie Prefecture 0 kilometers south of Nagoya, and one of the two venues, which staged the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix in recent years. The other is Fuji Speedway in Shizuoka Prefecture.</p>
<p>Takayama Matsuri Autumn Festival, Sakurayama Hachiman Shrine, Takayama City, Gifu October 9th-10th</p>	<p>The Autumn Hachiman Matsuri, prompts the local inhabitants to start their winter preparations. The greatest attractions are the eleven yatai floats which are designated as significant intangible folk cultural assets.</p>
<p>Ikegami Honmonji O-Eshiki, Ikegami Honmon Temple, Ota-ku, Tokyo: October 11th-13th</p>	<p>O-eshiki refers to a Buddhist service commemorating a death, which is conducted on October 13th, the anniversary of Nichiren's death. Although similar O-eshiki rituals are held at temples throughout the country, the memorial service held at the Ikegami Honmon Temple over three days is of the grandest scale.</p>
<p>Nada no Kenka Matsuri (Nada Fighting Festival), Matsubara Hachiman Shrine, Himeji City, Hyogo October 14th and 15th</p>	<p>This festival was called by the name, Kenka Matsuri or 'Fighting Festival' because the mikoshi (portable shrines) are jolted against one another when carried on the shoulders of the men in the parade.</p>
<p>Shuki Taisai Grand Autumn Festival, Nikko Toshogu Shrine, Nikko City, Tochigi October 17th</p>	<p>This is the autumn festival of Nikko Toshogu, a registered World Heritage Site. The Grand Autumn Festival is the grand procession of men dressed in samurai costumes (known as Hyakumono-Zoroe Sennin Gyoretsu or the Parade of 1,000 Samurai Warriors).</p>
<p>Jidai Matsuri (Festival of the Ages), Heian Jingu Shrine, Kyoto City, Kyoto October 22nd</p>	<p>The highlight of the festival is the Jidai Gyoretsu (Historic Pageant): a mikoshi (a portable shrine) and a suite of some 2,000 people dressed in costumes representing various eras of Kyoto's 1,200-year history parade through the city.</p>
<p>Kurama no Hi-Matsuri (Kurama Fire Festival), Yuki-jinja Shrine and the town of Kurama, Kyoto City, Kyoto October 22nd</p>	<p>This festival held at Yuki-jinja Shrine reproduces the scene of receiving the deity in Kurama. The Kurama Fire Festival is known as one of the three most eccentric festivals in Kyoto.</p>



WHY BIG, BADASS ROBOTS & MECHA RULE JAPAN

By Brian Ashcraft via Kotaku.com

The heat was unbearable. A group of kids scurried to find shade, but they didn't find it under trees.

A 59-foot robot statue towered over the people and shops below. Made of steel, it's far larger than the inflatable 26-foot Gigantor erected in Tokyo's Shinjuku earlier this month. That Gigantor, née Tetsujin-28, might be filled with hot air, but its brethren are made of steel. Both types join a laundry list of giant robots that tower over Japan.

Japan is crazy about robots and mecha—the bigger, the better. If there's another thing Japan's gaga for, it's actually building them. And not just to look at, but actual, operational giant mechas—for children, even!

The statues of these robots and mechas are the landmarks that proudly scream, this is what we dreamed, this is what we did, and this is what we can do.

In Japan, it's important to note that the words "robot" and "mecha" are sometimes used interchangeably by fans and creators as well.

In English, there's a clear distinction. "In a Western sense at least, robots are normally artificially intelligent machines," doublesix game designer Ollie Barder, currently working on Strike Suit Zero, told me. "Whereas mecha, as a term at least, is broader and normally encompasses vehicles piloted by people." In Japanese, "robot" is often used for both machines that move and also humanoid machines, which is why it's not uncommon to see the word "robot" slapped on mecha toys.

The 1950s saw the rise in popularity of robots in comics,

thanks in large part to Astro Boy in 1952. While Astro Boy wasn't a giant robot, 1956's Tetsujin-28 was. The manga was inspired by the U.S. firebombing of Kobe and the notion of top secret super weapons. Tetsujin-28 was a modern take on the Frankenstein monster, with a little boy able to control the enormous robot's every move. It was, in a way, a fantasy version of a real Metal Gear.

The robot, with its round curves, looks different from the origami folded-paper mecha designs made popular in the late 70s and throughout the 1980s. Yet, it remains an iconic Post War robot, today inspiring a whole new generation of kids, like my son who visited a 1/1 scale version after it was erected two years ago.

My son and his grandfather packed a lunch and took the train out to Hyogo Prefecture to see the 59-foot statue that cost over a million and half dollars to build. The money was raised

by local shopkeepers, and the end result was not-for-profit, but rather, as a monument to the power of the imagination. Seeing the huge life-sized robot made my son an instant fan.

The infamous life-sized Gundam, which was first erected in 2009 in Tokyo's Odaiba, was for profit, backed by corporate Gundam interests, and it wasn't the first life-sized Gundam Mobile Suit (a few years earlier, a reclining 1/1 scale Gundam was built at a Japanese theme park).

The standing Gundam was moved to the Bandai Namco toy factory in Shizuoka where Gundam plastic models and figures are made, but returned to Tokyo this month in pieces (possibly as a result of being damaged during the March 11 earthquake). For ¥500 (US\$6.50), visitors could view the enormous 1/1 scale mecha up close and sit in the Mobile Suit's hand

and pose for photos.

The life-sized Gundam is the stuff of dreams, and the stuff of reality. Gundam figures and models were originally created so that fans could own and build the Mobile Suits; they were at an attainable scale. You could hold these mechas in your hands. Holding them in your hands did allow them to populate bookshelves, but didn't provide a concrete representation of their true scale.

By making the mecha figures life-sized, that took them out of the bedroom and put them in the real world. These life-sized mecha statues are not true mechas—are don't walk around and swing their weapons. But they are real representations of the Mobile Suits' immensity, bringing them one planted step closer to reality.

These are not the first huge robot statues in Japan. The first include fan-made creations. Most notably, there is an unofficial 1/3 scale, MSZ-006 Zeta Gundam inspired "Giant Mobile Suit" that was designed and created in 1999 by a Gundam maniac. The robot, located in the sleepy town of Tsuyama, even appears on the city's website as a local tourist attraction. These, among other



large mechas, exist across the country.

There is a religious connection too; though it is an abstract one, and even a somewhat superficial one. Japan has a handful of extremely large Buddhist statues across the country as well as large scale Nio guardians at Buddhist temples. These do provide an artist tradition for sculpting and figure making, but also fascination with sheer size. The big Buddhas are overwhelming and remain a marvel even today.

Likewise, the huge robot and mecha statues, while devoid of the same religious meaning, do intrinsically carrying that same sense of enormity. And like the huge Buddhas, they do beckon followers (here, fans) to come and visit from far and wide, people like my brother-in-law, who grew up building Gundam models. He drove half a day to Tokyo, visited the giant Gundam, and them promptly returned home. "I just had to see it," he told me. This wasn't merely paying one's respects, but wrapping your head around the idea of something that existed only in pictures and small statues making the leap to life-sized reality.

Large monsters, large superheroes, and large robots became huge in the years following the



war. Godzilla was, yes, influenced by King Kong, but its size became a metaphor for the enormity and destructive power of nuclear war. When the character captured the public's imagination, you started to see big for the sake of being big.

Robots have a long history in Japan, with the karakuri mechanized puppets from the 17th century onward. The Japanese-ness, or "wafuu" as it's called here, of mechas resides in their design. "What with the dissolution of the samurai during the Meiji Restoration, mecha were partly birthed from that cultural vacuum," said game designer Barder, who also writes the mecha blog Mecha Damashii. "I think this is also why for Japanese mecha they are often ciphers for the human pilots, like armor, and a means to help them attain a form of spiritual redemption." Not to mention, continued Barder, the huge swords they carry. "To me at least, there's definitely a strong element of bushido when it comes to mecha in Japan."

These life-sized statues become a physical embodiment of that bushido manifestation, and also a monument to what can be achieved and what might be possible, which is why there are always geeks talking about and trying to calculate the cost of building a real, working 60-foot mecha. Even the guy who made the Gundam inspired statue in Okayama Prefecture is keen to have it eventually move.

Building life-sized working mechas are not cost effective right now—maybe they will be in the future when we're all wearing groovy space pants and floating in the cosmos. But that isn't stopping one Japa-

nese company from not only making working mechas, but selling them.

"I grew up reading robot comics and watching robot anime," 38-year-old Masaaki Nagumo told Kotaku. Nagumo heads up the Landwalker project at Japan's Sakakibara Machinery Works Co. "Why make a working mecha?" said Nagumo. "Why not?" The Landwalker is a 12-foot high, gasoline powered mecha, controlled by pedals that is able to fire rubber balls from its air cannon. You can buy this. For ¥36 million or US\$467,000 (without tax).

It will take about a year and ten months for Sakakibara Machinery Works to make one for you. And Sakakibara Machinery Works has sold Landwalkers, two of them to be exact. If you can't afford the half a million bucks required for your own rubber-ball-shooting and stomping-about real mecha, then you can always inquire with Sakakibara Kikai about renting one.

There's something about these large robots and mechas. They touch a nerve in the deep recesses of the mind, sparking an immediate emotional response (usually a "holy shit"), but also showing both what is possible and what is not. While Japan hasn't developed real 59-foot mechas that can run, fly, and attack, these statues are more than dreams, they're pick me ups for the human spirit.



Earlier this summer, a group of young people in Mibu, what was formerly Japan's toy capital—a capital since diminished by increased toy production in China—decided that the one thing it needed to energize its town was a life-sized Gundam Zaku. Can you really blame them? These life-sized robots and these life-sized mechas, with their feet on the ground and their heads in the sky, are metaphors for more than the desire to dream, but also the desire to make those dreams reality.

Top photo: Koji Sasahara | AP, Idzuhiko Ueda, Katsumi Kasahara | AP, Shuji Kajiyama | AP
A large Gundam model poses with a female model. (Bandai Namco)
A life-sized Gundam towers over Tokyo trees. (Koji Sasahara | AP)
The Landwalker. (Katsumi Kasahara | AP)

The Write Way: 8 Commonly Misused Words!

Unless you want a visit from this guy, you'd better familiarize yourself with some of the most common violations below!

Compliment / Complement
Compliment = an admiring remark
Complement = goes well together
The sauce complemented the steak.
Yum!
The sauce complimented the steak.

Accept / Except
Accept = to receive, except = not including
The orange juice factory excepted you.
Excuse you!
The orange juice factory accepted you.

Emigrate / Immigrate
Emigrate = leaving, immigrate = coming
She emigrated to the US.
She immigrated from the US.

Flair / Flare
Flair = skill, talent, or style
Flare = a sudden blaze
Julie has artistic flair.
The car flared.
Jessie has artistic flare.

Fewer / Less
Fewer = measure that can be counted
Less = noun that cannot
My aunt has fewer hair than my uncle.
My uncle has less work than my aunt.

It's / Its
It's = contraction of "it is"
Its = possessive pronoun of adjective
"It's a filthy animal!"
WOOF!
"Its name is Bob!"

Flammable / Inflammable
...yeah, that's going to catch on fire
DON'T WORRY, it isn't "inflammable"
Yay!

Lie / Lay
Lie = intransitive verb (I lie on object)
Lay = transitive verb (I lay on object) and past tense of "lie"
There lies a dog.
How does he lie when I jazz my dog?

ONLINE SCHOOLING

A WORD TO THE WISE

Rosie

Dear readers of Connect,

Let's bring back the neglected and long-forgotten "ADVICE COLUMN!"

If you have a goal, a dream, a question, a problem, - anything at all -and you need some advice, please send it to communications@ajet.net by the 15th of the month. I will try to address 2 or 3 questions each month. Check for the answer to your questions in the next issue of Connect.

Dear Rosie,

Every morning at work the teachers serve me tea even though I have asked them not to. What do I do? ><

Signed,
Sick of cultural barriers

Dear Sick of cultural barriers,

It can definitely be difficult at times to get thoughts and feelings accurately expressed across language and cultural barriers. In Japanese, there is a "rule of three." One is expected to politely refuse something once or twice before accepting it. Therefore, the host will offer three times. After the three times, they should stop. Perhaps the teachers simply think you are trying to be polite in refusing the tea?

Also, have you tried speaking to the tea pourer directly? You should first thank him or her for the trouble, but politely explain that you won't need any tea in the morning. If this doesn't work, simply let them give you tea and just leave the tea untouched. It is polite for a host to give you tea or food even if you say no. If you continue to leave your tea untouched, they will hopefully get the idea eventually. In the case that they don't, just continue to leave it there. No harm no foul.

Best,
Rosie



LETTERS TO CANADA

Notes From an ALT's Journal

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn is beginning her second year as an ALT in Matsue, Shimane Prefecture. She formerly worked for three years in an English language school in the same city.

Excerpt from October 2011

My new home

I've been back in Japan for two months – it's hard to believe. I've been getting settled into my new apartment in Ishibashi-cho. It's pretty big for a Japanese apartment – so far, I've been very lucky in my living quarters in Japan size-wise. The building, Kopo Ishibashi, is a rather unattractive, sand-coloured, boxy building, maybe about twenty-five or thirty years old. My apartment is on the first floor, opposite a thick bush of brownish ajisai (hydrangea) blooms well past their prime. When I first got here, the bush was occupied by a shrinking congregation of aged cicadas, who worshipped loudly at sunrise, again at sundown and sporadically throughout the day. But their time is past. Every day on the road in early September, I saw their thick, moth-like brown bodies scattered under the trees in which they sang their lives out. I've been told that they live for seven years underground, but for only a week once they emerge and start to sing.

The apartment itself is darker than my old one, and I miss waking up in a warm wash of morning sunshine. However, I have a bed instead of a futon, with a thick mattress instead of two inches of

compressed cotton. Except for the front door, all of the doors are sliding doors, either of stippled, translucent glass (between the kitchen and living room) or paper over wood (the bedroom and closet doors). My predecessor Nicola left me well supplied with furniture, bedding and cooking instruments. She also left evidence of her penchant for cartoon characters – the shower room was partly decorated in Spongebob Squarepants paraphernalia, including a sponge (naturally) and Spongebob slippers grinning goofily up at me. The bathroom, separate from the shower, has a Winnie the Pooh and Tigger theme. "Not

your style," my friend Seiji pronounced on his visit to my place. He was right. Also, there were way too many scented things in the apartment when I got here – room fresheners in every room, scented sprays, candles, foaming soaps... I spent the first week fighting allergies. Spongebob and his smelly friends had to go. Pooh Bear and Piglet still brighten up the bathroom, though.

The kitchen walls are a little the worse for wear, and pockmarked with holes where former tenants – JETs like me – hung posters, shelves, hooks, et cetera. The kitchen is big, though, and so is the fridge. I have a rice cooker that Seiji dropped off (it belonged to a long-gone friend – what goes around comes around), the standard two-burner range with broiler and a microwave. Nicola also sold me her oven, as she was quite the dedicated baker. I'm looking forward to using it in cooler days. There is no way I'm turning it on in the present heat!

The living room and bedroom have tatami mats on the floor. I coveted these long before I moved in. A tatami mat is a straw mat, roughly 6 feet by three feet, with the long edges lined with embroidered cloth in various patterns (mine are blue with a gold flower-and-diamond pattern). They are about one or two inches thick and fit together like a simple puzzle. These are always a uniform size, so room sizes are measured by how many tatami mats are in them. My rooms are 6 tatami mats each (there's some math for you to do!). New mats have a fresh smell of sun-lit summer fields, but mine are rather

old and have no smell. They are soft and slightly giving underfoot, and feel good. You never, ever wear shoes or even slippers on a tatami mat floor.

With the exception of the stool and table I'm sitting at, all of my furniture is very low, suited to people who are used to sitting or kneeling on the floor. The bedroom closet is very deep, since it's designed to hold the futon and all of the bedding during the day, so there is lots of storage. I'm pondering cheap ways to decorate my place and make it my own. I reclaimed my lamps from my old apartment.

I knew, or knew of, the last four people who lived in this apartment – Nicola, and Tiffany (another Nova Scotian), Anton, and Nigel (whom I never met, but who was a close friend of Seiji's). But JETs have been living here for at least fourteen years (I base my evidence on the old coffee mug I'm using, which reads 'In Memory of Your High School Life – Matsue Higashi '96'). That explains some of the wear-and-tear.

The neighbourhood

One of the pluses of returning to Matsue is my new neighbourhood, Ishibashi-cho. Ishibashi means 'stone bridge.' It does have a number of small bridges, but most of them are wooden. (My old neighbourhood was Gakuen-minami, or 'University Park South.') Walking or cycling home on a quiet night after sunset, as I did tonight, it's not hard to imagine these streets looking much the same a hundred years ago or more. Pale yellow light brightened the paper windows on the second floor, and age-pocked glass doors set into dark wooden frames rattled as a man, likewise bent and weathered, stepped out onto the street on some errand. An impossibly old woman sat on the stoop in front of her house, enjoying the cool of the evening and waiting for a neighbour to chat with. The narrow streets and dark alleys leading to peaceful night gardens where evening insects sing seemed ageless.

Someone else might look at this neighbourhood and see just a lot of old, run-down buildings, but I see history and tradition. I see real wood, darkened and weathered by time and

the wind, heat and cold. The older houses here are made of natural things – wood, stone, paper, glass. I see families that have lived here for centuries. Ishibashi is fenced in to the north by a bank of hills covered with graceful bamboo forests. Nestled in the woods on one of those hills is Senjuin, one of my favorite temples because of the aged and honoured weeping cherry tree there. To the east Ishibashi fades into the slightly more modern neighbourhood of Dairin-cho. The south and west boundaries are marked by the curving line of the castle moat, and stepping out onto the street from my parking lot, I can see the glowering eaves of the castle standing watchful guard over us. This is the original castle town, and three hundred and fifty or four hundred years ago, this was the bustling heart of Matsue.

Walking or cycling along the streets is an adventure, in that they are very narrow, with unevenly covered gutters along them, and organized in a – what's the word... higgledy-piggledy manner. Someone once told me the streets were deliberately designed to curve and confuse, at a time when castles might be attacked by enemies. Well, Ishibashi's streets haven't changed much since then. Three vehicles, or two vehicles and a pedestrian, or – Oh my God! a bus and a truck! – constitutes a traffic jam. We also have the homeliest Mishimaya grocery store in the city, in any sense of the word, a minute from my home. Even closer is the newly renovated bakery, Pain et Beurre. With its buttery yellow walls, it



stands out on the street, and it has beautiful, soft, fresh French bread. Just past the bakery is the little family vegetable market, Watanabe-ya. I just caught the end of peach season – they were unbelievably juicy and fragrant. The other way, towards the castle, in probably the oldest building on the street, is Ishikawa-ya's fish market. The family there – the Kano's, not the Ishikawa's, who no longer have the shop - has been very warm and friendly to me, and the son and his wife, speak English quite well and are very welcoming. I have passed many other shops, their goods or services not quite clear to me from their old, worn signs lettered in faded Chinese characters. You might see some English on signs near the station, but not here. There are a few barbershops, a drycleaners, a futon store and an ancient and tiny stationery shop (this last owned by my neighbours, the Tadano's), among others.

I think one of the things I like is the humbleness of this neighbourhood. It is a very Japanese place. Looking through windows, I see cubbyholes at the entryways housing the family shoes. There are tools, (rakes, brooms), bicycles, aprons hanging on hooks. The plain homes and storefronts, with their bamboo screens and tiny high-walled gardens over which gnarled pine boughs droop, hide warm, bright kitchens smelling of fresh-steamed rice, earthy miso soup and sharp, leafy green tea. They hide families watching TV in the evening, drinking beer, or doing laundry. The home is a very private place here.

Today, as I drove home through the back streets of northern Matsue just after watching a spectacular purple and orange sunset cutting warm, hazy rays through cookie-cutter clouds, I realized that these streets remind me also of the fifties. Just as we tend to look back at the fifties in North America with rose-tinted lenses (especially those who weren't there the first time around), Japan remembers the post-war years with nostalgia for simpler

times that may or may not have been. That was the Showa period, or the period when Hirohito was emperor. When Hirohito died, he was given a new name – Showa – as is the tradition in Japan, and his reign is called the Showa period. Although technically the Showa period covers the forties to the eighties, when people here think of the Showa period, they tend to picture the family stores, music and styles of the fifties and sixties. And the candy! Just as I think of penny candies and Popeye candy cigarettes as retro candy, the Showa period had scads of brightly-coloured, distinctive candies.

And me? How do I fit in here, in Ishibashi? I don't know yet. I'll be making an effort to take part in local events, but communication is difficult. The

neighbours are generally older, and that usually means an older form of the Japanese language, which I don't understand.

Younger people, under fifty, speak in a way I'm more familiar with, and honestly will make more of an effort to be understood. I spoke with my elderly neighbour, Mrs.

Tadano, at twilight two nights ago, and I believe we chatted briefly about me, about Nicola and about Mrs. Tadano's family. Mrs. Tadano knew Nicola quite well, and said Nicola brought her mother to visit the Tadano's when she came to Japan, but then again Nicola was fluent in Japanese, and had taught Japanese in New Zealand before she joined the JET Programme. I couldn't help feeling that I was a disappointment to dear Mrs. Tadano. So we'll see what the year brings.



ajet PEER SUPPORT (APS)

050-5534-5566, is an English listening & referral service which operates on the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. We are open to all JET Programme participants every night of the year, from 8PM to 7AM. Our volunteers are all current JET Programme participants, trained for APS.



Regardless of what's troubling you - whether you've had a bad day at work, need to see a doctor at 3AM or just want to speak English with someone - the volunteers at APS are available to listen.





Volunteering Japan



IDEA TO SUCCESS, \$8,500 LATER

Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, two JETs in Shiga Prefecture started a project to raise money for the Tohoku Kids Project. Using their creativity and engineering skills, they designed a boat out of PET bottles and created a fundraiser centered around paddling this small craft across Lake Biwako. This is their story. To find out more about the JETs, Dusty Wittman and Roxane Borowska and their project, visit <http://ilovenihon.com>

It's been nearly seven months since the great earthquake and tsunami hit the Tohoku area, but no one can forget that tragic day. On that day, and the days following, hundreds of children lost their mothers and fathers. In an effort to ease their mental and physical stress, we created a fundraising event like no other. All the money raised would be sent to the Tohoku Kids Project whose sole purpose is caring for orphans by providing orphanages with all things necessary to give children a comfortable life. We knew we needed to do something big,

something unique; so we set out to build a boat using only 500ml PET bottles and plastic rope and then paddle it across Japan's largest lake, Biwako. The Biwa Bottle Boat Challenge was borne and we asked our closest friends and families to sponsor us in our challenge. Word of our event spread quickly and soon we had nearly all of our \$5,000 goal raised by the day of the event. On July 16th, a crowd was gathered to see if we could fulfill our end of our challenge. With perfect weather and an endless supply of determination, we set off on our voyage. One hour and twenty minutes later, we arrived safely on the opposite side of the lake. Our course took us from PIERI Mall in Moriyama City to Mano Beach in Otsu City. We landed with the smiles and cheers of many; also there were the Kyoto, Yomiuri, and Asahi newspapers as well as an NHK News team. We were overwhelmed and forever grateful for the amount of support from our friends, families, and complete strangers. What started as an idea in two people's heads transformed through many hours of planning into an intercultural success. To date, the BBBC has raised \$8,500 thanks to all



the wonderful people who donated. We will continue to accept donations and continue to raise awareness for the tsunami orphans. We ask everyone to never forget the people of Tohoku; please continue to support them and keep them in your thoughts. がんばろう東北、がんばろう日本!

Life After the B.O.E.

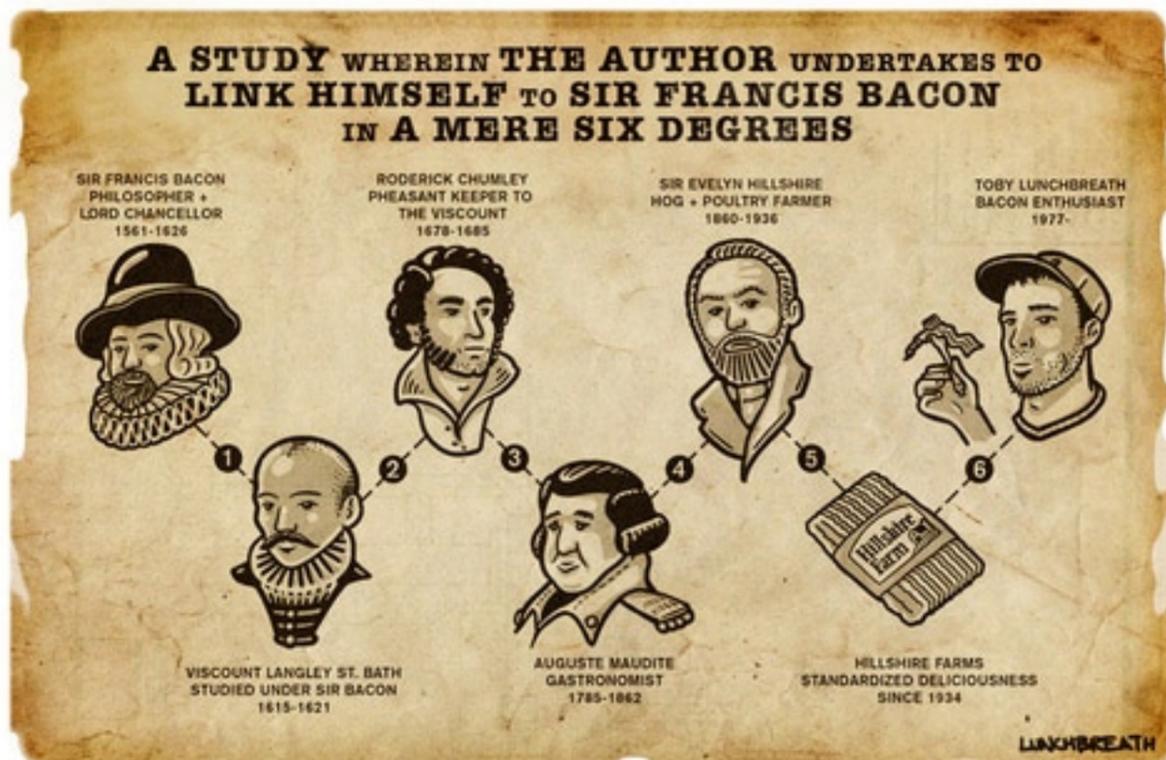
BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN, CIR, 2002-04)

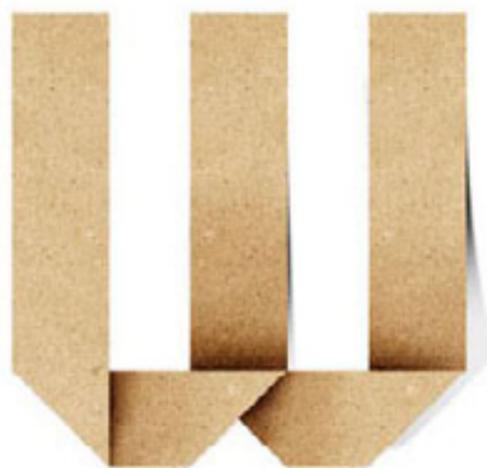


Why you wanted to go to Japan.



Why you stayed.





Volunteering



BUILDING HOUSES, BUILDING COMMUNITIES: A JET IN INDIA

Late in December, 2010, 11 Longitude JET volunteers were rumbling down a winding road in the southern Indian countryside on their way to a tiny village called Chevuru. This was the first day of the 2010 Winter work camp, and most of the volunteers were doing everything for the first time. Everyone was equal parts excitement, nervousness, and anticipation—we were about to start! Of course, if you had asked us how to start, we would have each given different answers: you start by taking the hands of the children waiting for you as everyone arrives in the village on the first day; you start by teaming up with the masons and learning the Telegu words for “cement” and “water” and “bricks”; you start by being showered with love from the villagers in the form of tea, bananas, smiles, and hugs to; you start by realizing that the people you’re meeting are the faces of what

have stopped being an abstract place and issue and tugged at your heart strings more than you thought humanly possible.

Where Longitude starts, however, is with survival. In India, discrimination based on the caste system has been legally abolished, but the reality is that millions of people every day are denied basic human rights such as food, clean water, and employment because they were born as Dalits, formerly known as Untouchables. For this reason they are forced into the most menial of jobs such as cleaning streets, latrines, or bonded labor. They are also systematically denied access to the basics of education, medicine, and housing. In fact, many Dalits in villages like Chevuru, getting by on subsistence wages, live in thatch houses that have little resistance to storms and monsoons that frequent southern India. Taking a day off to repair their makeshift homes means losing a day’s wages and going hungry. By moving into houses of brick and cement, they focus on more permanent livelihoods while gaining the self-confidence needed to break free of the bonds of the caste system.

JET volunteers play no minor role in this effort. In joining hands with the villagers, they not only help to build the homes of these beautiful villagers but also raise awareness of Dalit issues in the wider global community. JET volunteer's very presence in places like Chevuru shows the Dalits who live there—people who have been told by wider society that they deserve no respect from the world around them—that their presence and existence is valued. In return, volunteers gain an amazing experience. Throughout the duration of the work camp, something else happens: the distance between everyone that at first seemed so great instead grows smaller. The steps may be small, but brick by brick, hand-shake by handshake, a spirit born of teamwork and camaraderie forms to bring change to the ideas that create divisions between people.

This December, another JET group is scheduled to go to Chevuru to continue the house-building project and volunteers are wanted! The camp begins December 25, 2011 and continues through January 3, 2012. Volunteers must pay for their transportation to and from India, and the volunteer fee (about ¥55,000, or USD\$700) includes the fee to

ARV and covers all food, water, and transportation in the country. This winter's group leader is Denise Schlickbernd, a 4th-year Jet in Saitama and volunteer from the Winter 2010 group; to find out more, send an email to: volunteer@golongitude.org. You can also learn more about Longitude and other volunteer trips during Spring Break and Golden Week at: <http://golongitude.org>.

We hope to hear from you! In the Telugu language of words of the people of Chevuru, wandanamuru—thank you!



VOLUNTEER IN THAILAND WITH GO M.A.D.

It's about that time of the year when you start asking yourself, "What am I going to do this winter"? If you can't answer that question then this email is for you. How about spending your winter vacation doing something AMAZING; volunteering at an orphanage in rural Thailand.

This year Go M.A.D. (Go Make A Difference, an AJET affiliated NGO), is offering you a wonderful opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of many children. We have been working with two orphanages near the Thai/Burma border and they have asked for our help over the Christmas holiday.

Two teams of volunteers will travel together from Bangkok to the rural border town of Sangkhlaburi. Upon arrival, the teams will separate to their respective destinations, joining up again after a week to return to Bangkok.

Baan Unrak Children's Home is located in Sangkhlaburi. It is home to about 130 children from Burma, Thailand and the neighboring Mon and Karen States. It also operates a primary school. The home is located on a hill overlooking the village and volunteers will be staying on their property in share houses. Dusty Wittman from Shiga prefecture will lead this team.

Baan Dada Children's Home is a smaller and more remote orphanage and community economic development center in the village of Huay Ma Lai, about 13 km northwest of Baan Unrak. It is home to over 60 Karen and Mon children. Volunteers will also stay on their property in share houses. Dave Revere

from Hiroshima prefecture will head up this team.

Both orphanages are projects of the Neo Humanist Foundation. Neo Humanist philosophy, simply stated, is "love for all created beings in this world." Part of this belief is living as vegetarians and all meals will be 100% vegetarian and truly some of the best food you will ever eat!

Activities at each of the orphanages will be slightly different, but both will include:

- > Teaching (English as well as other skills)
- > Painting
- > Building/decoration/maintenance projects
- > Christmas party (non-religious themed)
- > LOTS of playing time with the children

At Baan Unrak, other activities include:

- > Environment Day and/or town clean-up
- > Yoga and meditation sessions with the kids
- > Sports Day

At Baan Dada, other activities include:

- > Local market visit and craft selling with the kids
- > An outing visiting local attractions
- > Technical projects (video editing, song recording, engine/bicycle repair)

Dates and Costs

- > Tentative dates are December 19 - 26, 2011.
- > You will need to arrange your own flight to Bangkok.
- > Trip fee will range from approximately 35,000 - 40,000 yen for the entire week (including round-trip van/bus transport to/from

Bangkok, 7 days lodging, 3 meals per day, and a volunteer contribution to the homes).
> Enrollment is open for 30-40 people.

All trip-goers are expected to pay a trip deposit of 15,000 yen (will be included in trip fee) as well as raise an additional 15,000 yen as a donation to the children's homes by whatever means you wish, be creative!

Interested?

Send an email to baanunrak11@gmail.com with the following, by October 22nd:

- 1_ Your name and current location
- 2_ Why are you interested in this trip?
- 3_ Have you ever volunteered before? Where? For how long?
- 4_ How serious are you about being able to join this trip?
- 5_ Will you be participating with a friend/partner?
- 6_ Do you have vocational, technical or any other skills to share? (this is not necessary to volunteer, but we encourage you to think creatively about how you can uniquely contribute.)
- 7_ Do you have a volunteer team preference or may we place you?

--Your dedicated leaders--

Dusty Wittman and Dave Revere
baanunrak11@gmail.com

If you can't attend the trip, but would still like to help fundraise, please contact the trip coordinator or visit the following websites:

Baan Unrak: <http://baanunrak.org/>
Baan Dada: <http://baandada.org/>



TRAVEL

photo from shutterstock.com



ONSEN

Annabella Massey

I was freezing when I woke up this morning, for the first time since I arrived in Japan. I was delighted: no humidity and sun to make me feel sluggish and dull anymore. Over here in Yamashiro, oranges are now starting to appear on the branches and we're getting a new kind of red grape: much paler and lighter than what was growing before. The heaviness of the summer is starting to slide away, leaving the senses much more alert and acute.

I don't know about you but I'm already planning on spending the vast majority of winter in an onsen. In fact, I went to the Misaka Rose Garden hot springs just this afternoon, where the outdoor pools are churning with petals collected from the bushes at the front – mauve, cream, yellow, pink; petals the size of a fingernail.

I live in a spa town where there's a huge variety of onsen available, from elaborate, oasis-like hotels with quality products to pools which the general public can just drop in and use for forty minutes or so with their own towels and shampoo. But most JETs will be within striking distance of a hot spring cluster: there are about 3000 onsen in Japan, all busy, all with their minor (or otherwise) claims to fame, and all exquisite in their own way. Onsen are a mainstay of Japanese culture and tradition: Soseki Natsume's famous novel *Botchan* was centered around a depiction of Dogo Onsen and hot springs also provide the backdrop to various pieces of art and film (for example, *Spirited Away* and *Yoshishige* Yoshida's *Akitsu Springs*).

It's not hard to realise why they've been a such cultural draw. An onsen is a zone where you can find some very real and rich headspace. They don't inadvertently stress the user out by



and mull in the charged water. Try all the different temperatures, the steam rooms and saunas. Take time conditioning your hair and bring all your favourite products from home: you don't have to use what they've put out if you have a particular beauty routine.

Chances are, you'll come back feeling rejuvenated, your lungs newly clear, and your skin coated with a fine, natural layer of minerals which leave it uniquely moisturised, silk-like and even.

Each onsen has its own particular mineral content (a certificate should be on display in the bath house), aroma and style: doryu (mud water), suna-yu (here, you're packed in the pressure of hot, wet sand) and taki-yu (centered around a steaming waterfall and especially good for massage). You can even drink the waters in certain hot springs – look out for the cups on the side. It's easy to be skeptical about the reputed properties and ailments the waters are meant to cure, but there's no denying the therapeutic benefits that just reflecting and soaking in the

pools can bring to a potentially homesick and wandering mind. This kind of treatment would be expensive back home and JETs should take advantage of it while they're here.

The fact that you have to be naked to enjoy an onsen may seem a little daunting to some. Admittedly, this wasn't an entirely new experience for me – I used the locals hammans when I visited Morocco (initially, out of sheer desperation when I discovered that the showers in my cheap guesthouse weren't working). But being in a foreign country is a perfect opportunity to get past those reservations, and really, the atmosphere isn't juvenile or awkward if you relax and focus on the hot spring itself. ...besides, if you're truly adamant about not stripping in public, you can buy some little mineral sachets from any local drugstore to use in your bath back home. Personally though, I wouldn't go for this cheat's option: the fact that you've portioned time aside just to sit and contemplate in hot, potent water is everything.

constantly reminding you that you've paid a lot of money to be there, unlike the majority of Western spas where, whatever you do, you have to make sure you relax, despite the time limit set on your treatment and the (so you suspect) overhyped products, etcetera etcetera. In an onsen, you can take just as long as you like, soaking in the blend of minerals and letting your skin take on the kind of glow which no man-made toner or lotion can truly replicate. With the onset of autumn, many new JETs will be shaking off the feeling that this whole experience is just an extended holiday and start really registering that they're in Japan for good. So: if coming back from work in the dark and sitting in a empty apartment without any insulation doesn't exactly appeal to you this winter, leave your house, go to the local onsen



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OGRES, MUMMIES AND HUNDREDS OF BOWLS OF SOBA

Fay Sandford

Aside from the tragedies of March 11th, I did not know much about Tohoku until a trip this summer. I knew they got a decent bit of snow in winter, but somewhat embarrassingly, that was pretty much it. Keen to improve our knowledge and see more of Japan, a friend and I set off on a 9-day trip around Tohoku, visiting friends, sightseeing and volunteering. Five prefectures later and with a new fondness for Northeastern Japan, here is my short guide to some of the region's highlights.

A good starting point for a tour of Tohoku is Morioka – a small, sleepy city in Iwate Prefecture. While Morioka is hardly bursting at the seams with tourist sights, it still boasts some interesting attractions. The legendary rock-splitting cherry tree is a worth a look, though I'm sure it's more spectacular in sakura season. One thing I absolutely recommend in Morioka is the 100 bowl wanko soba challenge. The rules are simple; when you start eating, you cannot stop. The server will continue to refill your bowl with soba



until you utter a specific phrase in Japanese and replace the lid. "Are you scared?" our waitress asked after she'd explained the rules. We admitted we were. I managed a mere 74 bowls, my friend 81; both put to shame by the standing record of 540.

Approximately three hours away by highway bus is Hiroaki, Aomori. Set against the impressive backdrop of Mt. Iwaki, the city is famous for its beautiful castle, magnificent cherry blossoms, and er, fine apples. A JET friend in the region kindly took us around in her car, though you can borrow bikes from the tourist office for free and reach most sites too. Our first stop was Hiroaki Apple Park where you can pick your own apple for 100yen (bargain!), wander through the hundreds of apple trees or try some delicious ringo soft cream. Just outside of Hiroaki is the 'tanbo art', or rice field art, of Inakadate. Every year careful planning ensues that a detailed mural is grown in the rice paddies using different kinds of coloured rice to create a stunning effect. Back in the city, Yoshitomo Nara's (HUGE!) A to Z Memorial Dog is worth a visit too.

Our next stop was Akita City. All over the city are depictions of 'namahage' (ogres) to whom several local matsuri are dedi-

cated to. At these festivals, the local men dress as namahage and essentially terrify the local children into agreeing to do their homework and chores for the following year. There's even a museum where you can learn more of the folklore surrounding namahage further north in Oga. At Akita Citizens' Market, you can marvel at the freshest local produce and fish and exchange banter with the friendly stall-owners. The market also doubles as one of the many filming locations for 'Iris', the popular Korean soap-opera that was partly filmed in Akita City.

From there, we ventured just across the prefectural border into Yamagata Prefecture to Sakata, best known for being the location of Oscar-winning movie, 'Departures'. Perhaps less well-known is that a Sakata temple is home to two self-mummified Buddhist monks of the 18th and 19th centuries. Some prior reading about the mummification process will make your visit here even more morbidly fascinating. Farther south and only a short train ride from Yamagata City is the magnificent Yamadera, or 'mountain temple'. Precariously perched on a mountain top, it is well worth the 1,100 step ascent for the breath-taking views across the valley.

Sendai, Miyagi, 70 minutes by bus or train from Yamagata City, is the biggest city in Tohoku. A lively and vibrant city, it has a good shopping and even better restaurants. Matsushima, one of 'The Three Great Views' is within easy reach of Sendai. The 200+ pine tree covered islands in the bay fortunately protected the town from the worst of the damage of the tsunami. Interesting and beautiful, you can currently cross vermilion bridges to two of the islands. Sendai is well-connected to the rest of Japan through its sea, air, rail and bus links so from here we made our trek home, though you may wish to continue exploring further!

Remote, relaxed yet fascinating, Tohoku is markedly different to the rest of Japan and certainly a change of pace from my stomping grounds of Western Japan. The kind people, the original food, and stunning countryside all helped to make this one of my favourite trips to date. I hope that many more JETs will be able to make the trek to this distant corner and enjoy as much I did. Several Tohoku residents warmly greeted us in their shops and asked us to return soon. I have already begun thinking about my return trip.





LONESOME WARMTH

Wenson Tsai

Preface

In August of 2011, I traveled to Mongolia to understand the heart of the Mongolian people. In doing so, I ended up eating, drinking, resting, playing, laughing, working, listening and learning with the nomads on the vast steppes. I herded yaks, helped build a ger (nomad tent), and almost got trampled by a baby horse. I was surprised by how stable their lives were despite having no reliable address. Their days were not ruled by minutes or appointments but instead were repeated in a decided routine. This allowed much free time, but simultaneously, lulled one into a comfortable yet seamless sense of floating existence. At the end of my experience, my image of the cold, wandering and placeless nomad would be replaced forever by my encounters with the warmth and very tangible humanity of the nomads I met in Mongolia.

Lonesome Warmth

Once you leave the capital Ulaanbaatar, the carpet of rolling green unfolds endlessly. You may be

shocked to see so unimaginably far across the grasslands. Then you notice that wherever your eye grasps, there are no people in sight.

Mongolia is the least densely populated country on the entire planet, but it is not desolate. The people you do meet are the famously hospitable nomads living in their sporadic white gers. Almost half of Mongolia's population may live in the capital, but the nation's traditions and values remain steadfast with these pastoral nomads – a homeless people.

Or so I thought.



The stove, the same one in every ger, crackled friendly with horse dung. Even for heat, the nomads depend on their animals. They move locations so their animals can graze in lush grass, and the

days revolve around milking them for drink and food. Their lives were centered despite no permanent address.

I laid there in a felt cocoon reminded of my grandmother's house, the one that no longer exists. There was nothing different in the sense of nurture, but this was not her house. It was not even a house. I was lying in a tent on a field surrounded by beasts. The only separation between the grass below was a thin vinyl sheet. In the warmth of the stove, the carpet and the blankets, I fell into memories.

There was a time where I rarely returned anymore to my mother's house, but when I did, I found the plushiest paper towels waiting for my hands. These were much better than the bargain brand I purchased for my own house. Enveloping and decorated with art, the words "Home is where the heart is" stood center. In those years, we constantly fought, but I understood her message. For my mother, my home would always be somewhere within reach of her love.

A house is not the same as a home.

Wenson Tsai wanders the streets like the homeless man you've always wanted to know, and wanders the world for the finest in potentially bubonically-plagued hot-stone-cooked marmot cuisine. Presently, he is dealing with his own aging, and pondering the irony of how aware he is that one day he will get hit by a car because he's too busy checking out beautiful women, all while he continues on blindly almost getting hit by cars checking out beautiful women. It's very existential.



AJET PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST!

ENTRIES CLOSE 25 OCTOBER 2011

Welcome to AJET Connect's monthly photography contest! Submissions relevant to the JET experience are welcomed from current JET Programme participants. Your submission will be featured in the NEXT issue where our readers can vote on their choice for the best photograph. The winning entries will be entered in the yearly AJET Photography Contest.

TO ENTER

- 1_ your name**
- 2_ your mailing address**
(this will not be published)
- 3_ your JET number**
(this will not be published)
- 4_ a title and brief caption**
describing the scene

Submissions should be original, high quality JPG files. Contestants may submit one photo each month. This contest is for JET participants only. Send your entries to contest@ajet.net. Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter. In the case that you submit photographs where people are clearly featured, you must get permission from those featured before you submit their image.

Ownership/ Use Rights

Photographers retain the rights to their photograph. By entering the contest, photographers agree to have their submitted photograph published in the AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Photos will be credited to the author named in the entry form.

FOOD



THE FLAVOURS OF FALL

Simon Daly

The harvest of autumn has been a point in the year for celebration since time immemorial. For the second year in a row my family and I have tended a very successful garden and it has made me acutely aware of the passing seasons. It was with baited breathe that we awaited the first shoots of spring after the snow melt and now it is nearly upon us again. Winter is coming. I should add a note here that I live in what is just about the coldest region of Japan where it is already getting cool overnight and we usually have our first snow before November. Thus, my experiences will not line up with those of you in Kyushu for instance, but perhaps what I write now will be more pertinent to you in a month or so.

Reflecting on the abundance of summer and making use of the end of this period of profuse produce was a necessity before it was possible to source ingredients from the far side of the world all year around. True to form our garden grown bell peppers and cucumbers are on their last legs, the zucchinis have slowed their once exponential growth and the tomatoes still on the vine are taking longer to ripen. The pumpkins are the one thing thriving in our garden now, but this is nature of nature.

Your great grandparents knew it all too well and probably would have spent the month of October pickling and preserving everything they could find while hoping that their late harvesting vegetables grew as big as possible before the daylight hours become shorter than the oncoming darkness. In the twenty-first century salted or vinegared pickles are often thought to taste the way they do to act as a condiment, where in fact their strong and sharp flavours come from being pickled and preserved so that there was something

to eat when it was too cold for anything new to grow. While preservation is usually no longer a necessity the flavours of our pasts still permeate our lives subconsciously.

That may seem like a strange statement, but this month's cooking sections is a good example of exactly the point I was trying to make. I gave very little direction to the contributors whatsoever and for the most part what they sent me is what you see printed here. Collectively on the food front we came up with a quick way to use the end of your summer tomatoes, traditional dry-cured fish and a novel yet traditionally favoured sweet potato recipe, while the drinks are warming and fortifying. We may all come from different backgrounds and live modern lives where disconnectedness can feel like the only thing we have in common. Yet here we are on the same page both literally and metaphorically.

If you have not yet done so yet, go out and see what locals in your area of Japan are doing with their autumn harvests; at the same time endeavour to share with them your ideas. There will undoubtedly be favour combinations and methods of preparation you would never considered, but there will be similarities too. A balanced outlook will help you find joy in both the commonalities and divergences in the world we live in and in my experience there is no easier inroad to insight than through the stomach.

About the Editor:

Simon Daly is a third year ALT in Engaru, near the Okhotsk coast of Hokkaido where he lives with his wife and children. Simon attended culinary school and has worked in award winning hotels and restaurants in his home country of New Zealand as well as in the UK. He is the former president of the Hokkaido chapter of AJET.



IVY LEAGUE DAIGAKU IMO

Simon Daly

Serves?
(snack food = irrelevant)

Sweet potatoes are a food I love. New Zealand has its own variety called a kumara of which I have the fondest memories. It is so commonplace that you can in fact buy kumara chips as a substitute for regular fries at most Fish and Chip shops. An interesting health benefit I came across a couple of years ago is that, despite my assumptions to the contrary, sweet potatoes are considered better for you than regular potatoes for many diets. In terms of GI (Glycemic Index) sweet potatoes are considered low GI, whereas potatoes fall into the medium range. Without too much quackery this means that the carbohydrates and sugars in a sweet potatoes are absorbed more slowly into the

bloodstream and that in theory the energy they provide should last you longer. The health benefits end there however, as in this recipe I am suggesting deep-frying and sugar coating them, which would undoubtedly more than outweigh any positive dietary attributes.

The story that I have heard from multiple sources is that Daigaku Imo or University Sweet Potatoes probably came into existence as a cheap fast food for students. I myself have mainly come across them at festivals. I tried a similar dish in Korea but never bothered to ask what they were called. This is the downside of street food being so easy to point at. Either way they are something I have enjoyed in the past and which I decided to try to update. With Thanksgiving in the air I hit on the idea of adding the warming aromatic spices of a classic American sweet potato pie to give this Asian snack a new and novel twist.

The only ingredient in this recipe that you may not have come across before is mizuame 水飴 which is a form of thick sugar syrup. I have to be honest I am not quite sure of its composition. The internet reports that it is a syrup made through the conversion of starch to sugar, but how that is achieved is still a mystery to me. Whatever it is, it should be available at any decent size local supermarket. At one festival I attended it was being given out simply as a viscous lump on a popsicle stick. The resulting sticky fingers, faces and clothing of the children that ate it made me wary of it. After a trial run making the potatoes using a conventional formula for toffee, for time and the sake of simplicity see if you can find it

Ingredients

- > 2 medium sweet potatoes
- > Water for boiling
- > Oil for frying
- > 2 tablespoons sugar
- > 2 tablespoons mizuame 水飴
- > 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- > 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- > 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- > ½ teaspoon ginger
- > 1 teaspoon of black sesame seeds
- > pinch of sea salt
- > chopped red chilli (optional)

Wash your sweet potatoes well in cold water. By all means peel the sweet potatoes at this point if you so desire, but I for one quite like the colour and texture variation they add. Cut them into 2-3cm cubes. You do not have to be too exact, but keeping pieces roughly uniform will ensure that all pieces have a similar cooking time. As a general rule larger things take longer to cook so if you choose you cut your chips bigger then remember to adjust your cooking times accordingly.



Place the sweet potatoes into a large pot and cover with cold water. Place over a high heat and bring to the boil. Once at the boil turn the pot off and immediately drain the potatoes in a large colander. While the sweet potatoes will be barely par-cooked at this point the residual heat will continue to cook them nicely. If you are not at all worried about the fat content of this recipe then the classic way to make the perfect Belgian fries is to blanch your chips in oil at 160°C (degrees Celsius) until cooked through but uncoloured, then to fry at a higher temperature to crisp.

until the outside is golden and crisp. Dry your colander and line it with a paper towel. With long handled tongs, a slotted metal spoon or a metal sieve removed the chips from the oil and place them into the back into your colander. The paper will soak up any excess oil.

In the pot you boiled the potatoes in over a low flame add the sugar, mizuame and soy sauce. Stir until the sugar dissolved, then add the cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger. Once combined tip the chips in to the sugar syrup

For both methods, next heat oil in a tempura pot to 180°C. You can buy such pots complete with thermometers and lids relatively cheaply. Mine is from Nitori, but they are widely available. Once the oil is at temperature carefully fry the part-cooked sweet potato

and fold together to coat. I say fold rather than toss because liquid sugar gets incredibly hot incredibly fast and there is a need to be careful at this point. Before the sugar sets sprinkle over your sesame seeds and optional chilli.

Now coated and sticky, spoon the finished sweet potato onto the plate you intend to serve it on making an eye-pleasing pile. A fact I realized after making mine is that you should probably put a squared of baking paper under you chips when you serve them. Garnish with a few more black sesame seeds and season with a pinch of sea salt. If you like spicy food or if you just want to go with the hearty warming nature of this snack I suggest topping it all off also with a little extra finely sliced fresh chilli. Serves to friends, sit back and enjoy yourself as the compliments flow.



HOMAGE TO THE NAKED CHEF

Kelly Britton with photographs by Nat Andreini

Shepherd's pie, milkshakes, couscous, Doritos: part of life in Japan is having a list of foods that we desperately miss from home. We are fortunate in Sapporo to have access to a wide variety of foreign foods and ingredients; in fact, across from our apartment is one of the best boulangeries I've encoun-

tered in my life. But Japan remains unequivocally lacking in certain ingredients, appliances (ahem, ovens), and often the kitchen space to create the things that we crave the most.

Cue the in flight entertainment. On a recent trip back to Sapporo, I found myself watching "Jamie Does ---," a TV series in which British culinary sensation Jamie Oliver travels the world to cook and eat. Oliver brings a certain effortless and enjoyment to the idea of cuisine: it's simple, uncomplicated, and all about making messes and putting good things in your mouth.

Silly as it may sound, I found myself inspired. If that guy can make a tart on a log over a campfire, certainly I am capable of whipping up some coveted taste of home in my Japanese kitchen. The result was, in my humble opinion, the long-lost breakfast of champions. Whether as a result of being made from scratch, the famously high-quality Japanese ingredients, or simply the elapsed time and distance, I'm pretty sure this breakfast tastes even better than it did back home.



GRAVLAX WITH HORSERADISH

(adapted from Jamie Oliver's "Jamie Does Sweden")

30 minutes active time, 2-4 days curing time.

Gravlax is the Scandinavian original to our American misnomer lox. It comes from the Scandinavian word grav, meaning "grave" or "to dig," and lax, meaning salmon. It originated in the Middle Ages with fisherman salting and burying salmon on the beach to cure it. For this recipe, the salmon is "buried" under a brick or a jar of pasta sauce in your refrigerator, but as winter draws nearer, you might try putting it under a stone somewhere outside (do watch out for crows).

Salmon is at its best this time of year so enjoy it while it's fresh! Gravlax can be stored in the refrig-

erator, wrapped in plastic wrap, for a couple of weeks after curing.

Ingredients

- > 1 large salmon fillet, skin on
- > 4 tablespoons rock salt (reduce if using sea or kosher salt, which are less coarse)
- > 2-2.5 tablespoons sugar
- > 3 or more tablespoons grated fresh horseradish (jarred will work, but not creamed)
- > 1 oz of high proof alcohol, such as vodka (shochu might work too)
- > 5 tablespoons chopped fresh dill (This is a tough one to find, use an herb you like)
- > zest of 1 lemon

Place the fish on a large sheet of plastic wrap, skin side down. Spoon rock salt evenly over the fish (this is the curing element, it will draw out the moisture). Scatter the sugar over the salt. Spread the horseradish over the fish and pat it down gently. Driz-

zle the alcohol over the top and sprinkle the dill and lemon zest.

Wrap the fish in the cling wrap and lay it flat in a shallow dish. Place a weight of some kind (another tray filled with a couple of cans or a bottle wrapped in tinfoil) over the fish so that it's being pressed down upon. This is critical for the curing process.

After 2-4 days, pour the juices from the pan while pressing the fish firmly to prevent them from soaking back in. Unwrap the fish and wipe away all of the toppings (rinse lightly if necessary, and pat dry). The fish should feel drier and look opaque. Skin side down, carefully remove the skin by cutting the fillet away from the skin using a sharp knife. Cut off any brown parts. Slice the fillet thinly and serve with cream cheese or a sauce made from a mixture of sour cream, whole grain mustard, and lemon juice.

HOMEMADE BAGELS

45 minutes active time, 2.5 hours total time. Makes about 8 bagels.

These bagels are New York style, not squishy and soft. Serve with gravlax, cucumber slices, and capers. Also accompanied well by the season's last tomatoes, pureed into a Bloody Mary. These are best if served straight away but will keep for a couple of days in a paper bag. You can also slice and freeze them.

Ingredients

- > 1 1/2 cups tepid water plus 1 tbs for the egg wash
- > 1 (1/4-ounce) packet active dry yeast (about 2 1/4 tsp) or a little more
- > 4 cups bread flour (bread flour contains about 12g of protein to regular flour's 8g)
- > 2 tablespoons honey
- > 2 teaspoons kosher or coarse ground salt
- > 4 teaspoons sugar
- > 1 large egg white
- > Sesame seeds, poppy seeds, coarse salt or your preferred topping

Place 1 1/2 cups of water in a bowl and dissolve the yeast completely; set aside. Combine flour, honey, salt, and sugar in a bowl. Add yeast mixture making sure to scrape out any clinging to the bowl.

Mix with a standing mixer or by hand until loose flour is combined and the dough looks shredded. Continue mixing until the dough is stiff and elastic, about 10-15 minutes. (This takes

longer if you are kneading by hand - it helps to have a buddy or strong biceps.) The dough should be smooth and dry, not sticky.

Shape the dough into a ball, place it in a large oiled bowl, turning the ball to coat it in oil. Cover the bowl with a damp towel and let the dough rise in a warm place, until it's bigger and springs back when you poke it, about 30 minutes. (The dough will not double.)

Meanwhile, pre-heat the oven to 425°F (220°C you can also try the toaster oven). Fill a large pot with water, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and let simmer. Cover until you're ready to boil the bagels. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Turn the dough out onto a dry surface. Carefully divide the dough into 8 equal pieces. Gently form each piece into a fat rope. Try not to handle or squish the dough too much or it will deflate. Lightly moisten the ends with water and press together so you've created a bagel (overlap about 1"). Cover the bagels with a damp towel and let rest for 30-60 minutes.



After resting, turn the heat up a little on the pot of water and boil the bagels a few at a time (they need space to bob around). Cook for about 30 seconds on each side until the bagels have a shriveled look, then place on a rack to drain the water.

Whisk together 1 tbs water and the egg white. Brush the egg wash all over the bagels and sprinkle them with your chosen toppings. Arrange the bagels on the lined baking sheet about 1 inch apart and bake for 15 minutes. Rotate the pan and bake about 12 minutes more, until the bagels are a caramel color and have formed a crust on top and bottom. Remove from the oven and let cool for 30 minutes to form a chewy exterior.

Kelly Britton is a 3rd year ALT in Sapporo, Hokkaido. She likes eating, 90's R&B, and when couples wear matching clothes. Her husband has ridiculously great hair.



LAVENDER & ORANGE HOT COCOA

Jess Laggis

Some hints before you get started.

1_You can use the flowers and/or leaves of lavender.

2_In this recipe you don't want gritty bits of orange zest, so use a vegetable peeler on the oranges and then roughly chop the peel. Larger pieces are much faster easier to strain out. Avoid completely peeling the orange as the white pith closest to the fruit is rather bitter.

3_Save orange peel/lavender/chocolate goop that you strain out of your finished hot chocolate to bake into banana bread or other mildly sweet, simply

flavored bread (after chopping into the tiniest little bits you can manage).

Lastly, be sure to wash the oranges well because odds are there is a tumor causing buildup of pesticides on the surface.

Makes 2 mugs in about 10 minutes

All of these amounts can be adjusted to taste.

Ingredients

- > 2 1/4 cups / 550 ml of milk
- > The zest of 1 orange (prepared as described)
- > 1.5 teaspoons roughly chopped lavender (leaves or flowers, though I used leaves)
- > 1.5 bars Ghana / Meiji dark/black chocolate
- > 1 pinch of salt
- > 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Sugar, the amount depends on personal preference and which chocolate bar you chose, so go slow and add to taste. When I made this with Meiji black I didn't add any, but it wasn't a very sweet cocoa. You could alternately exclude the chocolate bar and use cocoa powder – in that scenario you would definitely need sugar. .

Process

In a saucepan, slowly heat the milk, orange zest, and lavender over medium-low flame, being careful not to scorch the milk. When bubbles start to form around the edge of the pan, stir in your chocolate (and optionally cocoa and sugar) until fully melted. Then stir in your salt and remove from heat. Add the vanilla and serve in large mugs. Toasted marshmallows (the little Japanese toaster ovens do this very well) are a great topping but make for less beautiful photos. If you're being fancy, top with a sliver of orange peel and bit of lavender flower for effect.

FYI

Lavender contains a chemical called linalool that according to both folk medicine and clinical studies alleviates anxiety and ameliorates sleep disturbances. So drinking hot milk (loaded with tryptophan, a precursor to melatonin which induces sleep) laced with lavender, as per this recipe, may help you get to sleep at night.

Jess Laggis is a 2nd year ALT in Sapporo where she lives with her husband, Brian, and all of his microbes. Suffice it to say that she spends large amounts of time roaming the Hokkaido mountains, playing the banjo, and experimenting with various edible and non-edible concoctions in the kitchen.



HOME BREWING IN JAPAN

Brian Laggis

Believe it or not, Japan is a great place to delve into the art of home brewing. If you yearn for your favorite Stout, IPA or Belgian Triple and can't get it here, then why not make it yourself? It is pretty simple to set up your very own small-scale brewery and even employ the same techniques that larger breweries use. You save money and drink beer abounding in flavor whilst also gaining a greater appreciation for the delicious beverage we call beer.

Beer – beautiful simplicity

Most beer, from the lightest straw colored pilsner to the darkest dry stout, is made with only four ingredients: water, barley, hops and yeast. I know it doesn't sound like much, but by using different combinations and varieties of those key constituents an amazing variety of tastes, textures and smells can be created. Flavors like chocolate, coffee, caramel, pine, citrus, sour apple and banana can all be accomplished with nothing but those four simple elements. With that said, it is getting more and more common for brewers to toss in other things to create truly unique flavors. This can be a lot of fun, especially when you have interesting Japanese ingredients to play with. Imagine concocting Yuzu Pale Ale or a Japanese Pumpkin Porter.

The Brewing Process – from kettle to cup in less than a month!

I know this may seem a bit daunting at first, but don't get discouraged. If you can follow a recipe then you can brew beer. Brewing can be broken down into four essential steps and two basic methods.

The two methods for making beer at home are known as extract and all-grain, the easier of the two being the extract method. The all-grain method is more technical, requires more equipment and takes longer; but usually gives you a better tasting beer. If you are a beginner I would highly suggest starting out with extract before tackling all-grain. Although it is not truly "from scratch" it allows you to get the basics down while still making really good beer. In extract brewing you

skip the first and most difficult stage in brewing – mashing. In this stage malted barley is soaked in hot water and a sweet liquid is collected, known as wort, which eventually becomes beer. To simplify this for homebrewers, companies offer malt extract (used solely for extract brewing). This concentrated wort is diluted with hot water. No matter which method you choose, once you have your wort everything else is basically the same.

The boiling stage is next and you typically boil your wort for at least an hour. The most important part of this stage is the addition of hops to your beer. Hops thrown in at different times add bitterness (beginning), flavor (middle) and aroma (end) to the beer. The beer is then cooled down as quickly as possible.

After the beer has been cooled down to room temperature, yeast is added and the fermentation stage begins. This takes anywhere from 5 days to 2 weeks (or sometimes longer). During this stage, the yeast eat simple sugars in the wort and excrete carbon dioxide and alcohol (now that's delicious pool!). These little guys also release chemicals that give flavor to the beer (the banana or clove like flavors in some beer comes from esters released by the yeast). During this stage temperature is critical. The same yeast has the potential to totally change the flavor, mouth feel, alcohol content and aroma of the final product depending on the fermentation temperature. The term dry hopping refers to hops added during this stage. Employing this technique will give your beer a strong hoppy aroma.



After fermentation has finished the final stage begins – bottling

During this stage you add a little extra sugar to the beer and bottle it up. The sugar provides the yeast with a little extra food and as they chow down they poop out a little extra CO₂ which is trapped inside the capped bottle. This natural method of carbonating beer is known as bottle conditioning and is still used by some commercial breweries, although nowadays most of them add CO₂ from other sources. This process usually takes about 2 weeks – after that, drink up!

Homebrew will stay good for a long time and many styles, like fine wine, will improve with age. Stronger beers with lots of flavor and high alcohol content tend to age better. Some beer will change dramatically in a few months time, so if you make something that you aren't too fond of at first try aging it a bit. It is good to keep in mind that hops typically get weaker as your beer gets older, so if you plan on aging that Imperial Pale Ale for 3 years make sure you add plenty of hops!

Equipment – it doesn't take much

There are several kits available online and in retail stores around Japan and they come in a number of varieties. Most are decent, but I would stay away from anything that skips any of the above steps or asks you to add more than 10% sugar. I know that Mr. Beer kit may seem cheap and look cute, but

drinking a bad tasting beer out of plastic bottles that gives you a severe hangover probably won't encourage you to brew again. Go ahead and pick up a decent kit. Some of the essentials include a food grade plastic or glass fermenter, bottling bucket, large brew kettle (at least 15 liters), hoses, bottle filler, bottle capper, sanitizing solution, stirring utensil, air-lock (for fermenter), hydrometer (for calculating alcohol), thermometer, bottle caps and bottles (start saving up). Most retailers sell all of this as a package which takes a lot of stress out of buying equipment. The best kit I have come across is available via AdvancedBrewing (see resources). Tokyu hands has kits available, but they aren't nearly as good as those available online. In addition, if you want to go all-grain you'll need some extra equipment – namely a very large brew pot (30-40 liters) and a container to mash your grains in (mash tun). These items can be procured relatively cheaply and inexpensively by snagging a cooler at a second hand store (mash tun) and a large pot from a used kitchen supply store. The standard equipment will allow you to make about 22 liters of beer per batch (about 45 bottles) and can be purchased for less than 20,000yen.

Maintaining proper fermentation temperatures in the winter and summer can be difficult in most places in Japan. In Hokkaido, where I live, keeping a heater running all winter long just to keep the yeast happy is not very practical. Placing the fermenter in a cooler filled with water and using an aquarium heater to maintain a constant temperature is an inexpensive solution (1,000 Yen) to dealing with cold winter temperatures. In the summer tossing a bottle of frozen water into that same cooler before heading off to work in the morning usually does the trick.

Ingredients – what you need to make delicious beer

When choosing a style to brew it is best to make beer that you are familiar with. If you want to try something new, buy a commercial version to try before you brew an entire batch. This way you avoid being stuck with two cases of beer you don't like.

Always use a recipe when starting out. Concocting your own will most often lead to sub-par beer, even for experienced brewers. Most retailers sell kits with pre-packaged ingredients for most styles. If you have a specific recipe most suppliers will allow you to pick and choose specific ingredients.



Using high quality fresh ingredients is key to making good beer. Always try to get your ingredients from a reliable source and if you are brewing with extract be sure to check the expiration date on the can to make sure you're not using something that's been collecting dust for 5 years. The same goes for your yeast and hops. If you are doing all-grain make sure that your malt is ground when you order it.

Getting shafted with old ingredients is especially problematic when buying pre-packaged kits. For this reason, finding a recipe and ordering individual ingredients is usually a safer bet. In addition, knowing exactly what types of ingredients are going into your beer will help you learn.

From American malt to European hops to Belgian yeast, the ingredients for making any style you can think of can be found in Japan. If you can't find exactly what you're looking for, acceptable substitutes are usually available. Ingredients for most beers average around 4 thousand yen (that's less than 100 yen/beer!).

Friends: key ingredient number 5

Not only does inviting friends offset the cost of brewing and make everything less stressful, but it's a good excuse to get together and hang out. (Not to mention that it's hard to dump 5 gallons of wort into the fermenter by yourself.) Besides, who wants to sit around drinking delicious homemade, hand crafted beer all by themselves? So don't be stingy - share the wealth.

Beer 101

This article is by no means a "how to" article on homebrewing. If you want to make beer you've got to know more information than is provided here. There are very informative books and videos

available online – many of them for free. Step by step instructions for any recipe can easily be found so don't freak out if your first beer kit comes with an indiscernible page of kanji and katakana.

The most important thing that separates a good beer from a great beer is the way it was brewed. It doesn't take a lot of knowledge to get started, but to make truly great beer you will need both experience and know-how.

The most common problem in homebrewing is probably contamination caused by improper sanitation, so when starting out pay close attention and make sure everything is sanitized. That said, try not too worry too much. It is very hard to mess up an entire batch so always remember to relax and have fun. I promise you and your friends will be pleasantly surprised with the results.

Happy Brewing

Resources:

www.howtobrew.com – an online book written by world famous homebrewer (ok so that doesn't really make him famous) John Palmer. Everything you need to know.

Advanced brewing (www.amy.hi-ho.ne.jp/brew/) perhaps the best Japanese homebrewing online retailer. Lots of ingredients, best equipment and good kit packages.

Sakeland (www.sakeland.net) another good online homebrewing store.

<http://beerinjapan.com/bij/486/homebrewing-in-japan/> - a nice blog post about homebrewing in japan.

[http://thebrewingnetwork.com/shows/The-Jamil-Show - Jamil show](http://thebrewingnetwork.com/shows/The-Jamil-Show-Jamil-show) - excellent podcast. I would highly recommend listening to a show about the beer you want to brew before you brew it.

Brian Laggis is a second year ALT in Sapporo, Hokkaido where he lives with his wife Jess. He is obsessed with all things fermentable and employs around ten billion microbes who, among other things, ferment his beer, fertilize his garden and keep him in good physical condition. Brian has fully embraced his nerd-ism.



WORKPLACE TIPS

photo from shutterstock.com



CLASSY VS. THE CLASSROOM

Christopher Chong

So: smart hair, fitted shirt, tailored suit... and trainers. For men, the Japanese school office is the scene of many a fashion crime. We've all seen guys who try sporting the short-sleeved shirt (tucked in, naturally) and tie combination while simultaneously strolling around in socks and lurid Crocs. As the new JET and in a desperate bid to fit in, you may be tempted into trying out this look yourself. Don't panic: you needn't give in so easily. Cool Biz – the culprit behind it all – certainly makes it difficult to stay sharp during the intense

humidity of the summer, but as the sun thankfully recedes into the distance, this will soon be replaced by Warm Biz (ironically, much cooler). We'll still be restricted to the usual subdued pastel shades, but it's certainly possible to retain some semblance of style if you follow these simple rules when suiting up for the transition to winter.

Hair

It's not easy to keep your Harajuku haircut in perfect shape as you cycle to work wearing a helmet and peddling in the blistering sun. However, if you shamble up to the classroom looking this scruffy, then prepare to be outdone by your own students – some of whom will be sporting

hairdos not unlike the chaps from Arashi. Furthermore, a teacher who doesn't look alert is hardly going to be successful in keeping their class attentive for fifty minutes. Store a pot of Gatsby or some other hairwax in your locker for when you arrive. At the very least, make a quick effort to tidy yourself up before you strut in with your "ohayou gozaimasu". In terms of dye, simple highlights are sometimes okay, but it's definitely worth checking first. And by the way, if you're really trying to fit in, Japanese hair is black – despite what you may have seen in Dragonball Z.

Trousers

Assuming you were able to find a pair that actually fit, you probably got away with casual garments like shorts or chinos in the summer. As it gets a little colder, you'll want to find trousers which are smarter and thicker. Wearing khakis, light coloured slacks or even dark denim with a good belt works well (and no, this does not include belts with the Harley-Davidson logo or massive Batman buckles).

Shirts

If you can, avoid the white short-sleeved shirt. Yes, it's technically acceptable clothing and some of your colleagues may wear them – but so do your students. You're now a teacher of English, so you'll need to come across as a lively and vibrant character. Definitely get various colors, but avoid brightly hued shirts: you'll come off as garish and distracting as opposed to fun and exciting.

Suits

The great thing about suits is that they always match. Women have more flexibility than men when putting an ensemble together, but it's also far easier for them to run into awkward problems regarding skirt lengths and the degree of chest/shoulder exposure. That said, a suit is in no way an excuse to be lazy. Find one that actually fits and wear a shirt which matches. Bear this in mind: you want to look sharp, not like you're selling phones at the shopping center just off your local high street back home. Color is great, but stick with grey or darker shades of blue or brown. Jacket sleeves should stop with just enough room for your shirt cuffs to be visible (unless you want to look like the dweeb son of Marty McFly in Back to the Future II).

Ties

When you're trying to inject a little personality into your work look, a tie is your friend. Silk or wool ties are excellent. Ideally, you should have a good selection: aim for between five or ten. Personally,

I'm a fan of tie pins and they're good for creating a little variety. Mickey Mouse ties don't break any rules, but if your JTE's say it's 'omoshiroi', it's probably best to leave that particular favourite languishing back home. By the way, plain black ties are reserved for funerals only and I don't care how alternative rock you are. If you really must wear a black tie, make sure there's some sort of striped pattern or white color on there. Skinny ties don't work unless you know how to make a large knot with them. And please: never wear a tie with a short-sleeved shirt. Ever.

Jumpers and Jacket

Was the Warm Biz campaign just a ploy to increase clothes sales? You can enter this debate some other time, and instead, take advantage of what it can offer you in terms of style: it's a great way to mix up your wardrobe and make the shirt and sweater look cool again. You don't have to buy cashmere, but get something warm that won't cover you in cheap fluff. Try a V-neck over a shirt, either with a tie or the top button undone. Sure, it's preppy, but it works well – especially for young, style-conscious ALTs. If you're not wearing a suit every day, consider a velvet (or even corduroy) jacket which is suitable for wearing indoors. Adding layers is more efficient than a single bulky item, and as the weather gradually warms up while we edge into spring, you can remove them one by one.

Underwear

Heat-tech may not normally be your thing, but it's necessary if you're in a particularly chilly prefecture. You can get undershirts and tights.

Accessories

Rules may differ between schools, but watches and rings should be allowed. A good timepiece shows you're an alert and punctual guy. Piercings and tattoos are definitely out, so avoid displaying any at all costs. Mobile phones are usually not permitted in school, so if you've got a Hello Kitty daisy chain or One Piece straps on your cell, tuck them in – or better yet, don't bring your phone to class at all.

It is entirely possible to be a stylish ALT or CIR. Being a JET often means finding a delicate balance between friendliness and professionalism. Putting an outfit together which manages to project yourself as serious about the job while still remaining friendly and approachable requires consideration from you, but it is very much worth the extra effort. Shop around and enjoy.

Anglo-EU Translation Guide

What the British say	What the British mean	What others understand
I hear what you say	I disagree and do not want to discuss it further	He accepts my point of view
With the greatest respect...	I think you are an idiot	He is listening to me
That's not bad	That's good	That's poor
That is a very brave proposal	You are insane	He thinks I have courage
Quite good	A bit disappointing	Quite good
I would suggest...	Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about the idea, but do what you like
Oh, incidentally/ by the way	The primary purpose of our discussion is...	That is not very important
I was a bit disappointed that	I am annoyed that	It doesn't really matter
Very interesting	That is clearly nonsense	They are impressed
I'll bear it in mind	I've forgotten it already	They will probably do it
I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault	Why do they think it was their fault?
You must come for dinner	It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite	I will get an invitation soon
I almost agree	I don't agree at all	He's not far from agreement
I only have a few minor comments	Please re-write completely	He has found a few typos
Could we consider some other options	I don't like your idea	They have not yet decided

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BANANA RULES

Shara Tonn

On the first day at my junior high school, the resident librarian approached my desk. Turning her laptop towards me, she showed me an elegant Halloween pumpkin craft that could have been made by Martha Stewart herself. She asked me, through my JTE, “Will you make some Halloween decorations for the library?” I agreed, and though I turned out not to be as talented as Martha Stewart, I did have a determination to show Japan the true spirit of Halloween.

In the days following the librarian’s request, I attempted to find instructions on how to make Halloween crafts. To get a sense of which ones I should focus on, I talked to a few teachers about their impressions of Halloween.

Walking around, I asked “What do you think of when I say Halloween?” The school nutritionist, wearing her white coat, touched a Halloween Mickey Mouse figurine on her desk and said, “Pumpkins.” Beside her, the Special Education teacher, thinking with his hands on his lower back, nodded his head and then said, “Costumes. Scary things.” Most enlightening though turned out to be my JTE’s answer.

My JTE, a young woman who is bubbly in the office and steely in the classroom, said, “I think of costumes. Children wear the costumes and walk around. They get candy in their costumes.” But she went on to say, “In Japan, we don’t do that. We don’t put on costumes.” But they have traditional costumes don’t they? “Yes. But we don’t put on silly costumes.” Again with the anti-silliness? The phrase sounded familiar because two weeks before, she had alluded to the same idea.

I had been explaining the rules to a timed flashcard game called Whammy. During the game, if a student flips over a Whammy card, they have to do a silly dance. My JTE laughed, but then she said, “This game sounds very fun, but the students are not silly. They will not be able to be silly.” Not able to be silly? No public displays of silliness? I do understand that some students are shy—I was shy—but I was able to be silly.

Fast forward a week and here it is again. No silliness? Silliness and mischief are the heart and soul of Halloween! It’s the one night of the year when it is totally acceptable to look ridiculous (or awesome—shout out to the Box of Crayons I saw on Halloween in college) and be ridiculous. The one night when you know crazy things will happen and you will be a part of it. Kids run around and are encouraged to scream as loudly as they can when their neighbor, who is dressed as a ghost, reaches out to grab their arms when they go for the candy bowl. When you are an adult, you dress up, dance crazy, play pranks and make-out. If only a little bit, I wanted my junior high school to understand that on Halloween you can—you MUST—be silly.

The next Thursday, I abandoned crafts and I brought my banana suit (the best birthday present I have ever received) to the junior high to execute my Halloween Display Plan. With the help of the librarian, a lady with a mischievous streak, I took a picture of every teacher posing in the banana suit and for the short time they were dressed in the banana suit, the teachers showed me their silly side. They posed as running bananas, peace bananas, sign-holding bananas, hygienic hand-washing bananas, drinking bananas, bananas being bananas. And while I watched them pose and laugh, I felt that the banana suit gave them a touch of the Halloween feeling—the feeling of ignoring the rules for a while and being silly.

GRAVE TOPICS

Jennifer Ann Garcia

This past month marked two important anniversaries. In Japan, it has been six months since the March 11th tragedies. In America, ten years have passed since the September 11th attacks.

These can be sensitive and scary subjects for kids, even the high school kids I have, as the ramifications of these events are still evident today. I remember reading articles about how difficult it can be to explain these topics to kids as they often times burden themselves with a myriad of concerns. Thus, I was surprised when two of my JTEs approached me on separate occasions to discuss lesson plans about these topics. One teacher had planned to talk about his recent trip up to Tohoku to see the recovery for himself while the other teacher used the lesson as an opportunity to teach about the two incidents using inquisitive words such as “when, where, why,” etc.

When it came time for the lessons, I was given the opportunity to share my experience of where I was and how I felt about both occasions. This is something I had never imagined that I would be talking about to these Japanese kids. I felt a real connection with them at this moment because although they may be too young to clearly remember 9/11, I know they will always remember where they were on 3/11.

The lessons themselves went over well. The JTE who taught using his experience in Tohoku spoke openly of his concerns about radiation. He apologized for frightening any of them, but then quickly got a laugh by call-

ing himself an idiot for riding with the windows down close to the power plant because it was just too hot. I could also tell the other lesson went well because even some of my more rambunctious students sat still and were respectful of the topic at hand. At the end of this lesson, I read aloud two poems, one for each event, that emphasized how the spirits of those lost, still live on in our hearts.

With Halloween coming up, I wonder if the possibility of these kinds of disasters happening again has taken the place of the monsters in their nightmares.

It’s a possibility and if so, understanding them brings about less fear and uncertainty. I applaud my JTEs for taking time out of their strict academic schedules to mark these occasions and educate these young minds beyond what is expected of them.

In my opinion, as much as both of these attacks have affected these specific countries, I classify them more as world events. At different times, these circumstances brought the world together for a time and showed the greatness of human compassion.



ajet Haiku Contest

furu ike ya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto
an ancient pond
a frog jumps in
the splash of water
– Matsuo Basho, 1686

Haiku are a very short form of poetry. Originally they were the opening stanza of a longer collaborative poem, written by two or more people, called renga, and they were called hokku. In the seventeenth century, however, the haiku acquired a life of its own at the hands of haiku masters like Matsuo Basho. Its modern name, haiku, was given to it by Masaoka Shiki in the late 1800's.

A Japanese haiku has 17 on, roughly corresponding to syllables, in a pattern of three lines of 5, 7, and 5 on. The haiku should contain a seasonal word (kigo), and also a 'cutting word' (kireji) which separates the different images in the poem. English haiku generally follow the same pattern, but are sometimes shorter than their Japanese cousins.

Jane Reichhold, on her informative website devoted to haiku (<http://www.ahapoetry.com/haiku.htm>), says that although haiku have an 'astounding' number of rules, you can pick and choose which rules you will follow. In fact, you have to, since some rules contradict each other. Even Basho was known

to break the rules of haiku when it suited him. Techniques such as comparison, contrast, association, riddles, metaphor (a hotly-contested technique, one not permitted by haiku purists), simile and double entendres and word-plays are all used in haiku.

Join the AJET Connect monthly Haiku contest! Submissions relevant to the JET experience are welcomed from current JET Programme participants. There are two categories: English Haiku and Japanese Haiku. Your submission will be featured in the October issue, where our readers can vote on their choice for the best haiku. The winning entries will be entered in the yearly AJET Haiku Contest. We encourage you to start counting out the words and composing!

Ownership/ Use Rights:

Haiku authors retain the rights to their haiku. By entering the contest, the authors agree to have their submitted haiku published in the AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Haiku will be

credited to the author named in the entry form.

TO ENTER – DUE OCT 25

Submissions should be original haiku accompanied by:

- 1_ your name
- 2_ your mailing address (this will not be published)
- 3_ your JET number (ditto)
- 4_ written in English or Japanese (if written in Japanese, your haiku must be accompanied by furigana and an English translation)

Contestants may submit one haiku (per category) each month. This contest is for JET participants only. Send your entries to contest@ajet.net, Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter.

Which is the best Haiku?
YOU decide!

Send the writers name to contest@ajet.net by October 20th. The winning Haiku will be entered in the yearly AJET Haiku contest, and will be eligible to win a prize.



THIS MONTHS HAIKU

To VOTE, go to ajet.net/haiku

JAPANESE HAIKU

心には ころには
周りとともに まわりとともに
変化する へんかする

One's heart
along with it's surroundings
transforms

By Nathan Lysne

東山 higashiyama,
風流だな fuuryuu da na,
花盛り hanazakari.

Eastern mountain,
How elegant,
In bloom.

By Nick Hallsworth

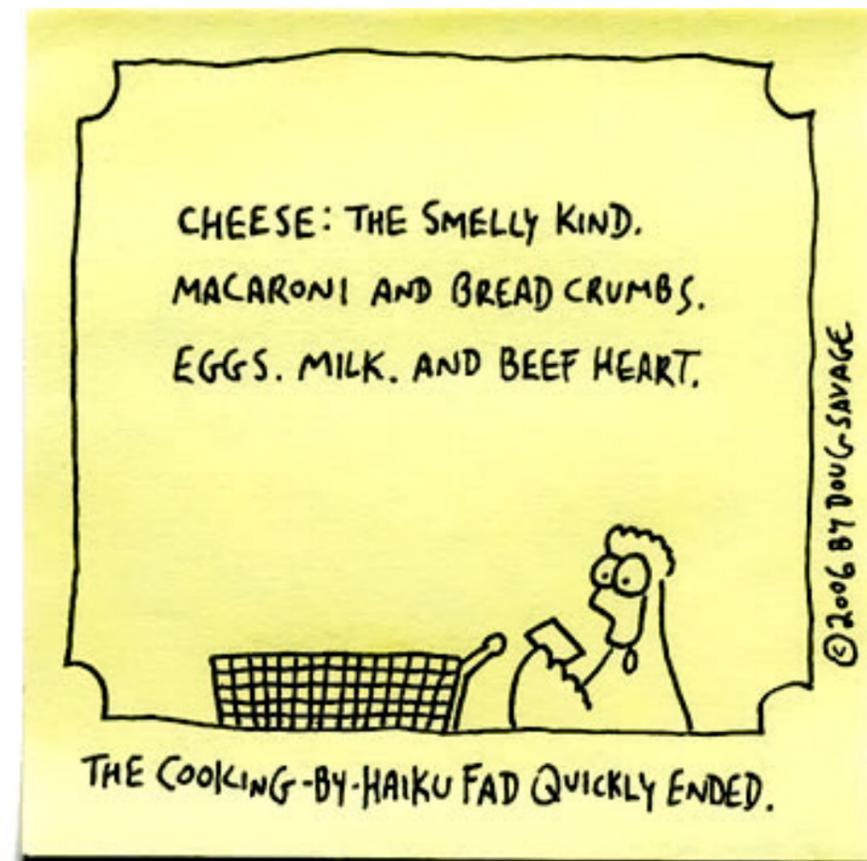
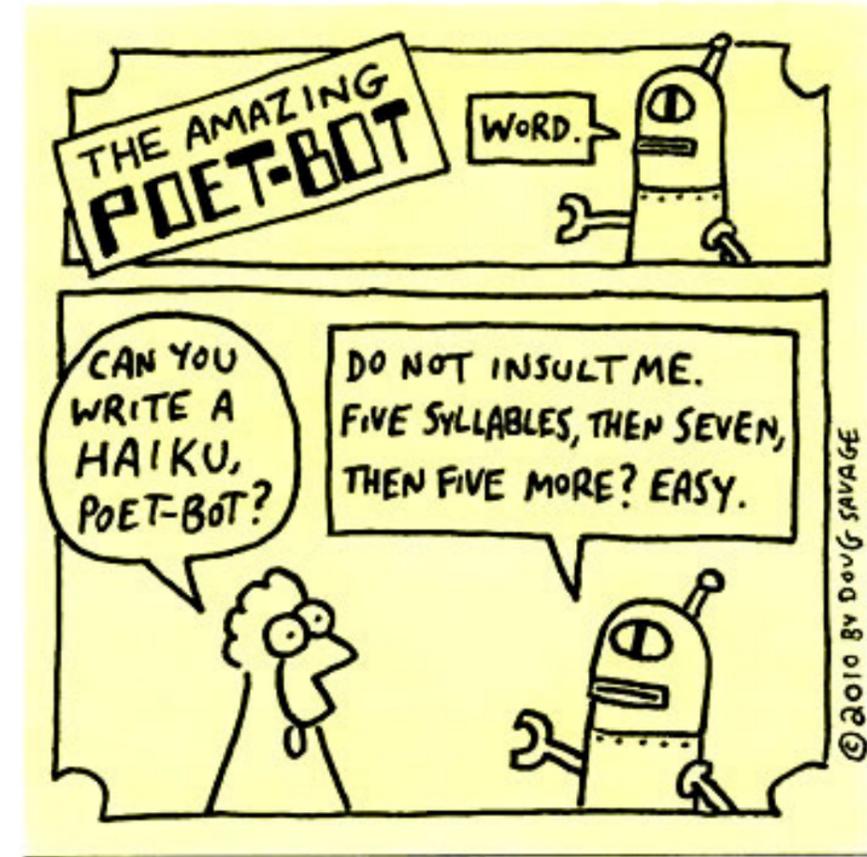
地下鉄か ちかてつか
建物見える たてもみえる
地下は嘘 ちかはうそ

Subway, eh
I can see buildings
subway my ass

By Lena LeRay

Savage Chickens

by Doug Savage



FASHION & BEAUTY



photo from shutterstock.com



WHERE'S THE ASIAN Barbie?

Anna E. Engle

Enjoying myself one Saturday afternoon at a toy store in Sapporo, I meandered into the doll section. There was Barbie, with her same svelte shape, but something felt off. Barbie's eyes were not shaped like Japanese eyes. Barbie's hair was blonde, red, or brown, but not black, except for the hair on the black-skinned Barbie. In a country where almost everyone has almond eyes and black hair, I found this puzzling and disturbing. On the bus I find myself longing for black hair and almond eyes to fit in, but Barbie must not feel that pressure.

Despite my discomfort at looking and feeling so different, I know it is good that I bring a little diversity to Japan. Maybe that's the intention behind Barbie's Caucasian appearance, but I doubt it. Barbie has never served to help girls feel better about their appearance. Is my belief that a girl should be able to buy a doll that looks like her that unrealistic? I think not, but unfortunately

the dolls that were the most Asian in appearance were the baby dolls. This is good for the little girls, but what about the pre-teen girls struggling with their self-image and developing their idea of beauty? What does it mean that a country which is 99% Asian doesn't have any Asian Barbie dolls

among the dozens of Barbies in Yodobashi Camera's toy section?

I have also noticed the overrepresentation of Caucasians in Japanese advertisements. Advertisements with Caucasians in non-Caucasian nations are common in other countries as well, such as Guatemala, where I lived for 2 months. In Guatemala, like in Japan, blonde and brunette Caucasians are plentiful on billboards and on posters in the malls. As a Caucasian minority in Japan, the surplus of advertisements broadcasting my race makes me feel a bit uncomfortable. It feels weird that I can go days without seeing another Caucasian female, but if I turn on the TV or head to the AEON mall I will see pictures of them everywhere.

I believe the demographics of a country should be reflected in their advertising. Yes, American advertising is far from perfect and should show more realistic and varying body shapes and sizes, but there is big a difference between weight and race. Your race is part of your culture

and identity, and classifying or portraying one race as superior to another in terms of beauty is racist and creates unattainable standards.

Many surveys show that Japanese women have low self-image, like the Dove (Unilever Corp) Campaign for Real Beauty, which showed that 42% of Japanese woman have never felt beautiful or could not remember feeling beautiful*. Responding to the question "How satisfied would you say you are with your own beauty?", only 23% of Japanese women answered "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied." Eighty-six percent of Argentinean women and 82% of Portuguese women, however, answered "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied"**. What a huge discrepancy!

I've lived in Japan for less than two months and I don't pretend to be an expert on how the Japanese perceive beauty. Still, during my short time here I've read the self-esteem statistics and I've observed the lack of Asian dolls and the overrepresentation of Caucasians in Japanese advertisements. What does this mean for my students? When I was in high school, I saw my race represented in advertising and I could buy dolls that

looked like me, but I still struggled with my self-image. Japanese women are beautiful, and I want them to see themselves that way.

* <http://news.3yen.com/2006-04-13/bad-hair-day-vs-self-esteem-japanese-woman/>

** www.easterwood.org/hmmn/2006/06/japanese-womens-attitudes-to-beauty/



Life After the B.O.E.

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

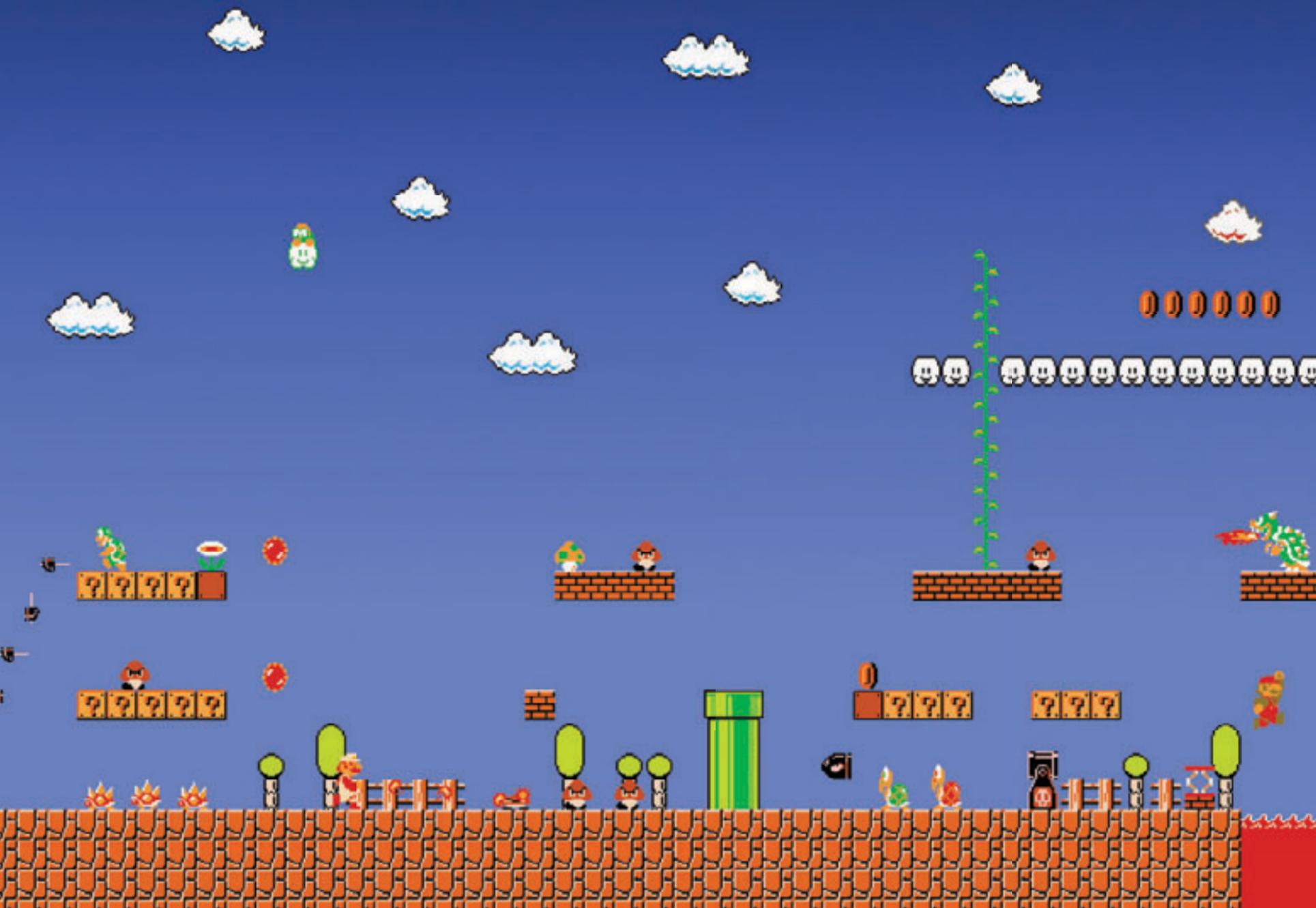


**Ah, school rules.
Did they ever make sense?**



photo from shutterstock.com

GAMES & HARDWARE



HELL YEAH!!! THE DIABLO III BETA IS A GO!

By Michael McWhertor via kotaku.com

Hurry! To the Battle.net account! Blizzard Entertainment has just dropped word that the long-awaited closed beta for Diablo III has begun and that the developer has "started issuing the first wave of invitations to participate in the testing process."

If you registered for the Diablo III beta, log into your Battle.net account, then click on the "ACCOUNT" tab to find out if you're one of the lucky few. Even if you aren't in today, don't lose hope. Blizzard also says it's "planning to add more participants over the course of the beta test."

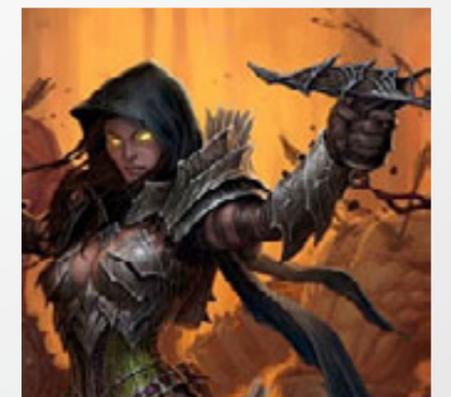
The closed beta lets players explore part of Act I from Diablo III, experimenting with the game's five classes—barbarian, witch doctor, wizard, monk, and demon hunter—and the game's skill and crafting systems. It's largely the same content we played a couple months ago at Blizzard HQ. The beta client (which runs approximately 2.7 GB) is available for Mac and

Windows PCs and should be available for download right now if you were selected.

"This closed beta test is an important milestone for us as we enter the final stages of development on Diablo III," said Mike Morhaime, CEO and co-founder of Blizzard Entertainment. "Our goal is to create the best action role-playing game experience to date, building on everything we've learned since the release of Diablo II and incorporating the powerful features of the new Battle.net platform. We hope players enjoy participating in the beta test and we look forward to hearing their feedback."

So... did you get in?

You can contact Michael McWhertor, the author of this post, at mike@kotaku.com.





WHAT THIS MAN REALLY WANTED WAS TO SEE BREASTS IN 3D

By Brian Ashcraft via Kotaku.com

Senran Kagura aims to please. So does game designer Kenichiro Takaki. According to Takaki, what inspired the game is probably what will inspire players to buy it: boobs.

In a post over on the game's official site, Takaki, who also developed PSP game Half-Minute Hero, talks about how this is the age of 3D games. Takaki recalls back to last spring when he first began work on his new project.

"I started to think about what I wanted to see in a game on the Nintendo 3DS and within thirty seconds, I came up with it," he writes. "It was boobs."

This shouldn't be surprising as Takaki refers to himself as the "Bakunyu producer" with "bakunyu" meaning "huge boobs" or literally "exploding breasts". This moniker is due to all the chesty characters that appear in his games.

This now makes me wonder where where the title Half-Minute Hero came from...

FOR A GAME WITH BIG BOOBS, YOU NEED A GIRL WITH...

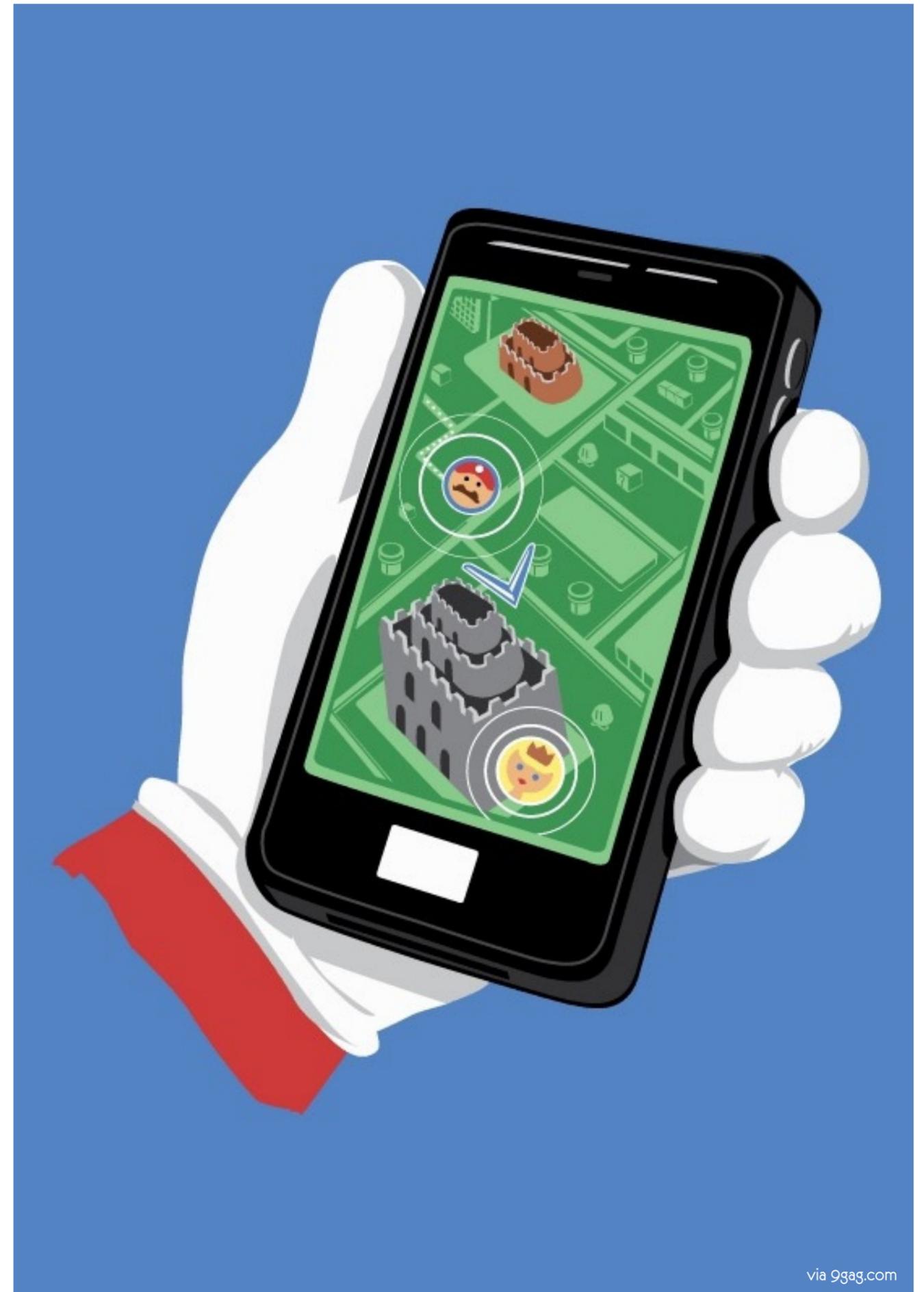
By Brian Ashcraft via Kotaku.com

Nintendo 3DS game Senran Kagura unabashedly features boobs. Which is exactly why the game's advertising campaign also features, you guessed it, boobs.

Ample pin-ups like baby-faced Chiaki Kyan are playing through the game in promotional clips. Kyan is part of the busty idol troupe created for the game.

Kyan is famous for her love of video games and anime. She's appeared on Japan's Inside Xbox and is apparently very into first-person shooters, especially Halo. She even pens regular game columns for Japanese mags.

Today, however, she's playing through Senran Kagura. Dressed as a schoolgirl. Halo, this ain't.



via 9gag.com

THE ART OF MANLINESS



photo from shutterstock.com

A TREATISE ON THE *Mustache*

By Abdul R. Chaballout
via artofmanliness.com

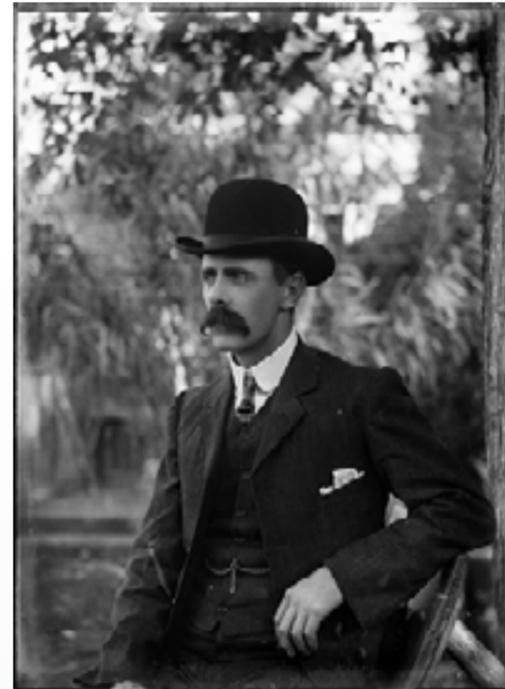
For those of us who have forgotten life in the United States before the 1980's, the sudden appearance of Brad Pitt and Yankees first baseman Jason Giambi, parading with freshly blossomed mustaches may seem random and unorthodox. Having spent the past year in the Middle East, where this particular expression of facial hair is very much a conventional display, I began to question whether we as Americans have forgotten an important element of human nature that many cultures globally have preserved. It was only after I embraced life with a mustache myself that I have come to transcend my initial prejudices on the matter.

I have found in this current age, men generally fall into two camps: those who tote and understand the mustache, and those who do not tote and do not understand the "hirsute appendage of the upper lip." The latter community perceives the mustache to be an arcane ornament, a male accessory that is often displeasing to the common eye. This is a group that also believes in the clean-shaven status quo of modernity, subsequently casting the mustache into the dark abyss of the past. The former community, however, can naturally delineate the *je ne sais quoi* importance of the mustache, which has everything to do with manhood, and nothing to do with fashion. This is a group that fully apprehends the dying state of masculinity and seeks to rekin-

dle the art of manliness through a reawakening of the mustache. At the core of this movement lays the belief that within every mustache lies ancient tradition, virtuous character, and resonant fellowship.

On Male Tradition

Every strand of hair found above a man's lips serves as a tribute to the pantheon of mustache holders throughout history, an ode to the testosterone that has driven every strand of



every male's facial hair since the first man roamed Planet Earth. Historically speaking, the first record of man's extravagant display of his mustache goes back to a painting of a Scythian horseman from 300 BC. Fast forward to the current age, where societies by and large have maintained their bond to the mustache, as evident in Egyptian society today, where a man's honor is measured by the size of his mustache. Truth be told, an Egyptian clan elder was stripped of

his honor in recent years when an unfortunate scuffle led to his kidnapping and the subsequent humiliation of seeing his mustache shaved, packaged, and sent home.

It is only in recent times that the mustache has become a ubiquitous trademark of villains, pimps, and scoundrels. One can easily find himself perplexed at how such a bona fide expression of man can so suddenly find itself disparaged. While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact source of this evolution, one must remember we live in a time where manhood itself has become a trivial matter. As such, it is up to the vigilant and the wise to bring the youth of today back to the straight path.

On Male Character

The outward display of any mustache ostensibly indicates the presence of attributes that have most effectively driven the survival of the male race: virility and masculinity. Biologically speaking, release of testosterone in the development of all males drives the development of secondary sex characteristics, physical features that eventually sustain the holy blessing of procreation. One can appropriately compare the mustache to the feathers of a male peacock. Those peacocks that can flaunt the most impressive feathers are most likely to produce robust offspring. Similarly, those men with the fullest and

cleanest mustaches are most likely to share their lives with women of the highest caliber.

Upstanding character in males holds honor as its nucleus. Only with strong honor can other positive attributes such as integrity, loyalty, and sincerity surface to the exterior of any man. That said, many societies hinge the honor of their males on the mustaches on their face.



In Syrian society today, men build trust by swearing by their mustache and even go as far as offering their mustache as ransom in the event their integrity is compromised. And old Arab proverb once professed "every mustache has its scissors," an indication that behind every mustache is a respectable male deserving of the utmost respect.

On Male Fellowship

Unlike women, who bond primarily through face to face discussions, males bond best through shared activities, namely through those performed side by side. Two men embarking on the road to friendship do so with a mutual appreciation of one another's machismo. Such activities include logging, hunting, war, etc. At a more primordial stage however, the process begins with the most fundamental element of human bonding: similarity. When two men meet, bonding prospects are significantly enhanced when both tote a well groomed mustache. The reason for this goes back to the ancestral nature of this patch of hair, as it integrates both tradition and character, which provides an invariably solid foundation any two men can find relevant.

The proverbial mustache is not only a male prerogative, but a bastion of the male presence. Pushing for its elimination from the zeitgeist of any era carries no meaning but a denial of the source of manhood itself. Toting the mustache with the right intentions is a God-given right that even the English recognized when they declared: "a man without a mustache is like a cup of tea without sugar."





Movember A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Since its humble beginnings in Melbourne Australia, Movember has grown to become a truly global movement inspiring more than 1.1 Million Mo Bros and Mo Sistas to participate, with formal campaigns in Australia, New Zealand, the US, Canada, the UK, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, South Africa and Ireland. In addition, Movember is aware of Mo Bros and Mo Sistas supporting the campaign and men's health cause right across the globe, from Russia to Dubai, Hong Kong to Antarctica, Rio de Janeiro to Mumbai, and everywhere in between.

No matter the country or city, Movember will continue to work to change established habits and attitudes men have about their health, to educate men about the health risks they face, getting them to act on that knowledge, thereby increasing the chances of early detection, diagnosis and effective treatment.

Big steps have been taken towards changing attitudes and habits relating to men's health around the world but there is still much to be done to catch up with the women's health movement. Via the moustache, Movember aims to fulfill its vision of having an everlasting impact on the face of men's health, by continuing to spark conversation and spread awareness of men's health each year.

About the Campaign

During November each year, Movember is responsible for the sprouting of moustaches on thousands of men's faces in Australia and around the world. The aim of which is to raise vital funds and awareness for men's health, specifically prostate cancer and depression in men.

On Movember 1st, guys register at Movember.com with a clean-shaven face and then for the rest of the month, these selfless and generous men, known as Mo Bros, groom, trim and wax their way into the annals of fine moustachery. Supported by the women in their lives, Mo Sistas, Movember Mo Bros raise funds by seeking out sponsorship for their Mo growing efforts.

Mo Bros effectively become walking, talking billboards for the 30 days of November and through their actions and words raise awareness by prompting private and public conversation around the often ignored issue of men's health.

At the end of the month, Mo Bros and their female supporters (known as Mo Sistas) celebrate their gallantry and valor by either throwing their own Movember party or attending one of the infamous Gala Partés held around the world by Movember, for Movember.

The Movember Effect: Awareness & Education, Survivorship, Research

The funds raised in Australia support equally the two biggest health issues men face – prostate cancer and depression. The funds raised are directed to programs run directly by Movember and our men's health partners, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and beyondblue: the national depression initiative. Together, the three channels work together to ensure that Movember funds are supporting a broad range of innovative, world-class programs in line with our strategic goals, in the areas of awareness and education, survivorship and research.

For more information about how to get involved contact your local AJET Chapter or visit:

www.movember.com

Movember STYLE GUIDE



Japanese study tips

10 FUN WAYS TO LEARN JAPANESE

Anna E. Engle

Other than buying half a dozen Japanese language study books and feeling guilty for not opening them, I didn't study Japanese before I came to Japan two months ago. However, I believe firmly in learning the language of the country you are living in, and living in Japan has dramatically improved both my Japanese and my motivation to study Japanese. Still, I'm not getting graded for my studying, so it's important that I learn through fun ways and keep my motivation up. Here are 10 of my favorite ways to use Japanese.

10 Facebook comments

Even if you don't know kanji, writing in katakana or hiragana on facebook will really impress your friends back home and make you feel cool. Even if you can't figure out how to type in hiragana, just copy and paste from a dictionary website like <http://jisho.org>. I have an Office Word document filled with the hiragana and kanji words and phrases I like to use on facebook, so it's just a quick copy and paste!

9 Language partner

Speaking the language is way more fun than studying, so try to find a language partner. You can teach them English for a half hour, and then they can teach you Japanese for a half hour. Or you can speak in Japanese and they can speak in English. However you do it, it's a great mutually beneficial relationship, and it's free! Find someone by asking around, checking out a website like couchsurfing.org, or advertising at your city's international center.

8 Church

Going to church is a great place to make Japanese friends, because people at church are supposed to be friendly. You can also talk to the little kids, who are cute and fun to talk to. Services are either in Japanese or bilingual, and singing the songs is great language practice.

7 Sing along

Speaking of singing, find some Japanese musicians you like and check out a website like www.jpopasia.com for their lyrics in romanji (or kanji, if you can handle that). Then play the music and sing along! Great practice for karaoke, and so much fun! Ask your students for music recommendations- they introduced me to Bump of Chicken, and I am now such a fan!

6 Make kid friends

If you like kids and you can find some (church is a good place), play games with them and read with them. You can buy kiddie books that are just in hiragana and katakana, and you can have the kids read to you! There are also lots of fun games with hiragana and katakana, and adorable flashcards.

5 Remember your mind is growing

Sometimes I pessimistically think that it's not very practical for me to know Japanese when I return to my home country, so why should I put the effort in? The truth is, though, you never know when a foreign language can come in handy back home, and it is undeniably practical to know it now. Besides all that, learning a new language is good for your brain.

4 Befriend the cashiers

If you go to the same stores especially, the cashiers can be great people to practice Japanese with. They are required to be polite, so hopefully they won't make fun of your Japanese too much. The manager at my grocery store loves to talk to me and his English is pretty broken, so I manage to throw in some broken Japanese. Plus, he showed me where the imitation crab meat is.

3 Read hiragana out loud

I've memorized the kanas, but I'm still far from a fluid reader, so it's always good for me to practice reading everything I see when I'm out and about, especially on the bus. I live in a big enough city that I don't care if people hear me muttering under my breath, because I probably won't see them again. You can also read inside your head, too!

2 Listen to Japanese

I know it sounds basic, but as someone who has learned a foreign language before, I know the value in deliberately listening to the sounds of the language, whether at teacher meetings or out in the street. Even though my vocabulary is very, very limited, if I concentrate while listening and can pick out the syllables, I know this will help me understand more in the future.

1 Motivation

The most important thing with learning Japanese is to keep up your motivation. The number 1 cause of failure is discouragement. Yes, sometimes it is overwhelming and so difficult to learn a foreign language. But set little goals that you can meet and keep going! Ganbatte ne!

UNDERSTANDING JAPANESE GESTURES

Rob Maxwell

After a particularly entertaining class, where we discussed various Japanese gestures and how they differ from the west, I thought it may be worthwhile tackling a few of them over the next few issues.

Although before coming to Japan, one would be led to believe that Japanese keep body movements to a minimum when speaking, standing virtually motionless as they talk. In reality, after arriving in Japan we find this is far from the truth. Japanese commonly use up to 120 gestures, although many of these (about 50 or so) being mainly used by the older generation. Some are slowly being replaced by newer ones from the younger generation or simply left to disappear with time.

Most of you have been in Japan now for over 6 months and are sure to have encountered situations where a co-worker or friend has gestured to you or you to them and you both had no idea what the other was asking (or gesturing). This is where we hope to help, by de-mystifying the world of Japanese gestures.



Kotchi ni oide こっちにおいで Come over here

Holding your hand out in front of you with your fingers out straight and your palm facing down, bend your fingers like you are grabbing the handle of a bag and repeat the motion, moving the fingers forwards and backwards. Make sure to pay attention to the eye contact. If they are looking at you, it's a good indication they want your attention. If a person is saying "Go away" they will most likely not make eye contact.



Atchi ike! あっちいけ! Go away!

This gesture looks almost the same as come here and can be easily confused when you first see it, heck the first few dozen times for me. The main difference is with this gesture you keep the fingers straight and bend the wrist in a forwards brushing movement, kind of like the "shoo, shoo" gesture we use in the West for scaring away birds and animals.

As stated earlier, make sure to pay attention to the eye contact. If they are looking at you, it's a good indication they want your attention. If a person is saying "Go away" they will most likely not make eye contact.



Ochi tsuite! 落ち着いて Calm down!

With both hands out in front of the body, palms facing down and keeping them level, move them up and down in a "higher/lower" fashion. At the same time saying "maaah, maaah, maaah" shows you want the person/s to cool it or calm down. Without saying this they might not know what you are trying to convey.

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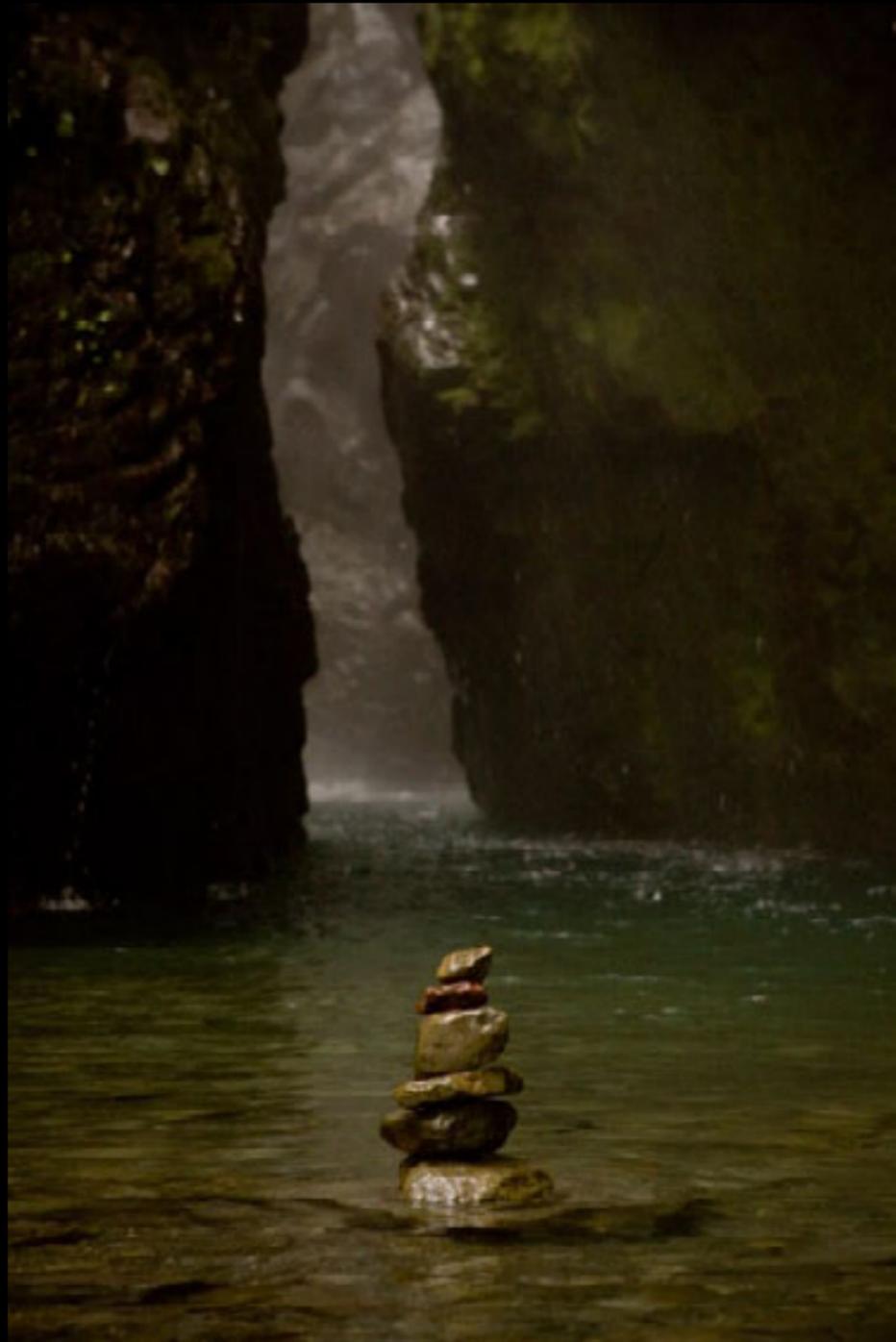
Soon Lai Teoh



**Which is the best picture?
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Send the photographer's
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by October 20th. The
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EPIC FAILURE

Sometimes, you just have no excuse.