

Summer 2009 Issue

Alumni Get Their *Suika* On at *Natsu Matsuri* Summer Picnic

Kushi-yaki (grilled skewers)! *Kaki-gori* (shaved ice)! *Suika* (watermelon)! What do these things have in common? All are part of summer eating traditions in Japan and could also be found in our own Golden Gate Park on Sunday, June 28 in Speedway Meadows, which was also the site of our *Hanami* Picnic.

The infamous San Francisco summer fog was nowhere to be seen and it was a bright, sunny day for our *Natsu Matsuri* Picnic. About 50 people gathered from all parts of the Bay Area, as well as a wide range of alumni years in the showing. Significant others and even one baby joined our former "Family Day Picnic."

Although all new 2009 San Francisco JETs were invited, we only met one new brave departing recruit. It was a great day to be asking around for new-JET advice. And it was also an opportunity (or another excuse) to wear our summer *yukata*.

This *Natsu Matsuri* picnic turned into another great afternoon of meeting with new and old friends, cold drinks and a great potluck of food provided by all the attendees. We had a *kaki-gori* machine and lots of flavors to choose from, courtesy of shopping in Japantown. Later on, we even had a *suika wari* game, in which a participant is blindfolded, given a big stick, turned around three times, and given a chance to split open a watermelon.

If you were there, it was great to see you and if not, we hope to see you next year!

Arisa Takahashi, Treasurer, *Natsu Matsuri* Coordinator, Nara, 1991-94



June, Arisa, Asuka and Arwen enjoy the summer, *matsuri*-style

夏祭り

Message from the President

Recently, JET Program Coordinator **Peter Weber** (Saitama, 2004-07) decided to make a list of events that JETAANC has put on in 2009. Through September, we will have had 39 events! To put that into perspective, that's a little over four events a month, which is an extraordinary number. Over half of the events were *nomikai* happy hours, but we also added many more active and cultural events this year, which have been great successes thus far. Yes, it is Fall, and

as much as I hate to say it, 2009 is winding down. So we need to start looking forward to 2010!

Vice President **John Branderhorst** (Okinawa, 2001-06) and I attended the 2009 National JETAA Conference in Chicago at the end of August. We were able to network with the 17 other JETAA chapters from across the country, while exchanging ideas throughout the conference and over some deep-dish!



Rod sends off the new JETs with a rousing speech

John and I represented Northern California well in all aspects of the conference and returned home with a lot of great ideas on how to make JETAANC better. For more about what other chapters are doing, check out www.usa.jetalumni.org.

Both National Conferences that I have attended have forced me to analyze who we are and what we do as a chapter. Perennially, JETAANC is one of the powerhouse chapters in the U.S., and even the world. We have a very active membership and strong leadership. What strikes me as our most valuable attribute is that we are always trying to improve. Last year was a good year, but 2009 has proved to be better. I am looking forward to what 2010 brings, and what new traditions will be born as we evolve as an organization.

By the end of 2009, we are hoping to hit 50 events. Events to look forward to for the rest of the year will be the Career Networking Forum, *Shobu* Cup Dodgeball, and sake tasting (yes, I will personally make sure that this finally happens!). As always, if you would like to become more involved by helping out with an event, please don't hesitate to contact me at president@jetaanc.org.

Rod McLeod, Shimane, 2005-07
President

会長からの
メッセージ

Message from the Consulate

Our office recently sent 67 new JETs to Japan to start their adventure on JET. On behalf of the Consulate, I would like to thank everyone who volunteered with the events helping to prepare the new JETs. Special thanks to the following JET Alumni for helping with Alumni Led Orientation, Pre-Departure Orientation, and/or JET Workshops: **Makenna Barris, Chris Chan, Lorelei Cortez, John Dzida, Brian Fujimoto, Mark Frey, Peter Kinmond, Ravi Kumar, Laura Kumataka, Adrienne Lipoma, Adam Lisbon, Douglas MacLean, Rod McLeod, Ryan Moore, Lauren Nakasato, Arwen Nogi, Jody O'Connor, Michelle Padre, Zach Piper, Leisha Sage, Kara Seil, Kelly Shah, Mike Shu, Kevin Rocci, Douglas Shelton, and Rodger Takeuchi.** As many of you may know this year, the Japanese Embassy in Washington D.C. received a record number of JET applicants and we were able to send one of our best groups to Japan to date.

Although the new 2009 JET Participants have just left, our office is already busy preparing for the 2010 JET Program application process this fall. If you are interested in volunteering to help with recruiting at a JET Information Meeting or do a college visit, let our office know. Contact me at jet@cgjsf.org or (415) 356-2462. Our best recruiting resource is you; the majority of new JET applicants say they first heard about the JET Program from a former participant. So if you know someone who would make a good JET, let them know that they will be able to apply soon!

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the alumni who took part in the JET Alumni Survey administered by the consulate. Over 240 JET alumni participated in this survey! We were able to collect information that will help us create future programming, know how alumni want to get involved, and update our JET alumni database.

I hope to see many at the upcoming Career and Networking Forum held at the Kabuki Hotel on Sunday, September 27!

Peter Weber, Saitama, 2004-07
JET Program Coordinator,
Japan Information Center

総領事館から
のメッセージ

Theme: "Tradition"

From the Editor

The theme of this issue is "Tradition." In watching the colorful *Bon Odori* dance at the Buddhist Temple of Alameda this summer, I thought to myself how lucky I am to live in a part of the country where I can continue to participate in the traditions I loved most while in Japan. I realized how much JETAANC helps to keep these traditions alive too, mounting Japan-related events like *shinnenkai*, *hanami*, and *natsu matsuri*—not to mention our new *Shobu Cup* tradition!

"Tradition" also has another meaning, as in the phrase "Tradition of Excellence." I suspect it is this more subtle, "attitudinal" type of Japanese tradition that many of us absorbed in Japan and—perhaps unconsciously—continue to observe in our lives here, including a tradition of solicitude toward others and fierce determination in the face of adversity. In turn, it may be that our more "attitudinal" American traditions—in contrast to all of the admittedly fun Halloween and Christmas parties—made the deepest impression on our Japanese students and friends. You will find both senses of tradition reflected in the articles of this issue; I hope you enjoy reading about them!

Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and talents for yet another content-packed issue! If you want to join our own "tradition of excellence" and volunteer for the next issue, email me at newsletter@jetaanc.org.

Mark Frey, Editor, Kumamoto, 2002-06



テーマ

Rod and John Represent JETAANC at National Conference 2009

This year the JETAA National Conference was held in Chicago from August 21 to 23. Chicago's chapter did a wonderful job of planning and hosting a very successful conference. Like any JET conference, we all worked hard during the days to cover issues such as NPO status, member retention, technology/social media, subchapter development...and then during the evening let loose, eating deep dish pizzas and enjoying some local libations.

The evenings were a great time, thanks to the hospitality of JETAA Chicago and the Consulate General of Japan in Chicago. They planned some great activities, including an evening at a local comedy club and dinner at the official residence of the Consul General in Evanston. CLAIR also stepped up and rented out part of the famous Gino's East for a deep dish *tabe-nomihoudai*!

While **Rod McLeod** (President, Shimane, 2005-07) and I had a great time making new Facebook friends, a lot of issues were covered that are important on the international, national, and local level. As one of the more established chapters and one of the only 501(c)3 non-profits, JETAANC has already dealt with a lot of the issues that some of the smaller chapters are now encountering.

With the momentum that we have after attending the National Conference, we are really hoping to increase our chapter's membership, establish subchapters, provide more unique and interesting events, and get more people involved. Below is a quick summary of the different topics that were covered in Chicago. If you have any questions regarding any of the decisions or would like to learn more about how to get involved, please feel free to contact Rod (president@jetaanc.org) or myself (vicepresident@jetaanc.org).



JETAANC's own "Blues Brothers," Rod and John, go in for some Chicago-style deep dish

- 1) The U.S. chapters voted to extend to U.S. Country Representatives the right to represent and vote on their behalf at the JETAA International Conference.
- 2) The U.S. chapters voted to extend the window for chapters to host the U.S. National Conferences to August 1 through September 15.
- 3) There were significant changes made to the Online Voting Guidelines for U.S. Country Representatives. They now include chapter endorsements and procedures for by-elections and removal.
- 4) A call was taken for chapters to host the U.S. National Conference in 2010. New York was officially voted to host the 2010 National Conference. Other chapters that put their hat in the ring for 2011 or 2012 included the Rocky Mountain and Washington D.C. chapters. Many chapters' lobbying efforts for Hawaii 2010 were unsuccessful.
- 5) A chapter mentorship role was discussed for US-16 Alaska, with lots of ideas to help provide support to that chapter. No provisions were voted upon.
- 6) Ways to support the JETAA International charity, Room to Read (www.roomtoread.org), were discussed. A Charity Committee was formed. This committee will meet and send out any ideas for effective rollout at the chapter level this fall.
- 7) A Technology Committee was formed to assess the needs of technology at the national level, including standardization, social networking, website templates, etc. This Committee will roll out a report of findings to have a second meeting/conference with Chapter webmasters across the JETAA USA organization by the end of 2009.
- 8) There were many ideas for regional conferences discussed, including the Midwest, the Southeast and the Pacific Northwest/Canada.

John Branderhorst, Vice President, Okinawa, 2001-06

将棋

Alumni On the Town

JETAANC Dominates Yet Again in Shobu Cup Round II: Kickball!

On a Saturday morning typical of Golden Gate Park in July (foggy, cold, damp), Team JETAANC and Team Japan Society of Northern California kicked-off Shobu Cup Round II with an intense, 10-inning battle for the Cup. Team JETAANC came out victorious in this kickball game with a 12-6 win, scoring seven runs in the last two innings.

Team JETAANC MVP **Sean Robitaille** was responsible for a good third of the team's 12 runs. "I'm pretty good at kicking things," he said in a post-game interview.

In the post-game ceremony/celebratory BBQ, Team JETAANC tasted the first sips of victory from the Shobu Cup and shared good food and conversation with Team Japan Society.

Team Japan Society was strong in the early innings, and even came back with three runs in the 8th, but could not hold on to win this time. Team Captain **Matthew Lewon** (Kumamoto, 2003-06) was already looking toward the future, as he started to get his team riled up for Shobu Cup Round III.

Shobu Cup Round III is coming up October 25: same place, same time, different event—**Dodgeball!**

Where: Golden Gate Park, George Washington Grove (25th Avenue and MLK Jr. Drive)

When: 11:00 am – 3:00 pm (we will be doing another BBQ after the game)

Come wearing red and white! For more information, email me at jetaancevents@gmail.com.

Lauren Nakasato, Shobu Cup Captain, Okayama, 2006-08



Team JETAANC poses with the hard-won Cup

勝負

A JET in the Making? JETAANC Scholarship Winner, Lukas Bonick, Three Years Later



Lukas (right), making new friends in Japan

Recently, while chatting with fellow JET alumni, I found myself sharing my rewarding experience chairing the JETAANC Scholarship. I was surprised to learn that some JET alumni were not even aware that our organization offered a scholarship. Reading the applications from high school seniors and sitting on the scholarship evaluation committee with the JETAANC Board of Directors every Spring is one of the highlights of my year, but it seems that I have been hogging all the fun. To make it up to everyone, I thought I'd check in with a past winner and find out what he's up to.

Lukas Bonick was impressive when I met him three years ago at our scholarship award dinner. From his competent ordering at a San Francisco Japanese restaurant (we share a love of *kitsune udon*), I knew we had chosen a winner who had a passion for Japan and its culture and would do JETAANC proud. Lukas has not let us down. Not only has he stuck to

his language studies, but he declared a Japanese major at UC Berkeley and is currently spending a year immersed in the language and culture in Sendai, where he will be studying Japanese and astronomy at Tohoku University.

"At this point in my life, studying Japanese has almost become second nature," Lukas told me recently. "I guess that is what is likely to happen when one has been engrossed in the same activity for five years running. I can't imagine what I would be doing if I weren't studying Japanese." The JETAANC Scholarship was one of several that Lukas received as a high school senior. The Salinas native was considering junior college until financial aid made going straight to UC Berkeley possible.

"Receiving the JETAANC Scholarship definitely helped push me towards where I am now, as the financial burden of tertiary education definitely put pressure on me to attend classes at a junior college," he told me. Like a lot of JETs, Lukas is finding first-hand living experience in Japan to be invaluable in his efforts to truly know the language and culture. "Every day, I learn something new," Lukas said. "Whether it's the name of a new product put out by Sony, or the name of a famous actress in a popular drama, I simply cannot avoid learning Japanese. I feel as if I am in the largest Japanese classroom imaginable; I need only open my eyes and unplug my ears and the lessons begin."

If Lukas' story brings you back to your days of bewildered bliss in Japan, you might consider helping JETAANC make connecting with the country a bit easier for future scholarship winners. The \$1,000 scholarship is awarded every spring, and it is through our fundraising efforts and support from the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco that we are able to carry out this important aspect of our organization's activities. Take part in our next scholarship fundraiser, donate money directly to the scholarship fund, or just help us get the word out to high school students or teachers who you know. Email me at shelton.douglas@gmail.com for more information.

—Douglas Shelton, Outreach Coordinator, Saga, 2000-03

感想

Alumni Movers and Shakers

From Peace Corps to JET and Back Again: One Alum's Adventures in Internationalization



Aimee, Internationalization Superstar

of the students in her community, including students at four elementary schools, two junior highs, and one senior high school, as well as an adult English club.

"I loved teaching the elementary students who were so *genki* to learn English and anything about American culture. It was incredibly satisfying to see the progress that my students made in their English learning in those three years and it was an amazing culture and community to be a part of," she says. "Peace Corps gave that feeling to me as well. It changed my life."

Aimee now draws on both experiences, having returned to Peace Corps as an agency representative at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "If JET alumni are ready to live in another culture, Peace Corps is the way to go," she says. "There is no cost to participate, you are fully supported throughout your two years overseas, and Peace Corps has a global demand for the kind of teaching experience that JETs have."

Peace Corps is a Federal agency that matches volunteers with communities around the world who are in need of their skills. More Peace Corps Volunteers work in education projects—including Secondary English Education, English Teacher Training, and University English Instruction—than any other sector.

Volunteers must be U.S. citizens, at least 18 years old, and in good health. There is no upper age limit and married couples may serve together.

In addition to training men and women in their host communities, Peace Corps Volunteers increase awareness of America around the world and increase awareness in America of other people and cultures.

Volunteers receive all transportation and living expenses, medical care, language and skills training, vacation and a resettlement allowance upon completion of the 27-month commitment. More than 100 grad school programs now partner Peace Corps service with earning a Master's degree.

The Corps is now interviewing for all assignments commencing summer and fall 2010. More information and online applications are available at www.peacecorps.gov or by contacting me at (510) 452-8446.

"Peace Corps is about professional, personal and cultural development, all in the name of promoting international peace and friendship," Aimee says. "It's the perfect opportunity for JETs looking for their next adventure."

Nathan "Hale" Sargent, Public Affairs Specialist,
Peace Corps, San Francisco Regional Office, Peace Corps
Volunteer in Armenia 1998-2000

Email Aimee at peacecorps@ucsc.edu.

国際人

For Aimee Munroe (Hokkaido, 2004-07), teaching in Japan through the JET Program was a natural step after completing Peace Corps service in West Africa. "Even though the cultures were a planet apart, the experience was so similar in many ways," she says.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger from 1997 to 1999, Aimee worked in health education and on various projects, including improving clean water access, tree plantings, a women's business co-op and a women's garden.

She also enjoyed participating in the local school's English program. "I loved the experience of being immersed in another culture and living as a member of a community, and that's what drew me to JET after I got home," Aimee says.

Through JET, Aimee taught from 2004 to 2007 as an ALT in the rural town of Furen-cho, Hokkaido, Japan. She taught all



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Alumni Movers and Shakers

Alum Patrick Ripton Reflects on 10 Months in the Army

Aru hi, I was sitting in the Doutor's on Kokusaidori in downtown Naha, Okinawa. I was likely studying Japanese, for at the time I spent almost all of my time studying Japanese. I was 27 years old and enjoying the last of my five years in Japan. A middle-aged couple came in and occupied the table next to me, and when the husband saw I was reading a book he knew, he began a conversation with me about it. We went on like that for a bit before we started talking about what I was doing in Japan. I explained that I was preparing for a Japanese test and working a part time job, but that otherwise I was mostly unengaged in Okinawa, and that I was worried that perhaps I ought to start making something more of myself and my life. He asked me how old I was and I told him.

He laughed, and I laughed with him. I was always, as you likely were too, so young to the Japanese. We continued to laugh about how young I was when he began to seriously address the issue. It was okay to be aimless, he told me, but I should have something established by my thirtieth birthday. Your thirties, he went on, were like each year a playing card dealt in a hand. You were given ten years, ten cards, and each must be spent or played very carefully. It would be how I played those ten years that would determine my success in life, he said.

I had never thought of the present as anything other than vitally important, but hearing him say this gave me great relief. I had almost three more years to prepare for what would be a decade of meaningful engagement with the world. I thanked the couple for the conversation and bid them a good trip, and walked out of the coffee shop a bit lighter, perhaps, into the heat of the street and my shiftless life, feeling a new sense of relish.

This month I turn 31. I swear my original enlistment documents read six months of training, and I believed that. But I just finished Month 10 and it looks like another four to go. I am the JET alum who joined the army last fall, just after my thirtieth birthday but as part of a plan I had hatched even before I had spoken to that man in the coffee shop. Now, almost a year into it, and poised to turn over the first of my ten cards, I can't help but think back to that conversation and wonder how I'll consider a year in TRADOC when I am his age and looking back on my "decade that mattered."

TRADOC (Training and Doctrine Command) runs most army training, and runs all of their courses more or less the same. Once you get the hang of one course it is pretty easy to check the boxes, go through the gates, pick up your certificate, and arrange travel to your next. Months run into other months in training. Weeks are spent on topics you know will never come up in your career. It's all time spent away from everyone you know and love. Will I have considered it wasted, this first year? Or, at best, a card gambled for some future glory in some future hand? Nineteen days until my birthday, this is my fear.

But, in that same year I have trained with almost every element of the army. I've gone through Basic Training with the impossibly young 18- and 19-year-olds that make up your average soldiers. There, I was "Rip" some days and "Grandpa" others. Later, I was commissioned with a class that was made up of new entries with college degrees like me, as well as prior service soldiers who were transitioning from the enlisted to the officer side. To them, we were the young, inexperienced guys who were an academic threat but knew nothing. I've done tactical infantry tasks with Rangers (buttressed by lessons in making Ranger purses and field stripping MREs), memorandum writing with lifetime AG soldiers, bridge construction and destruction with former bridging platoon sergeants, 30-hour, 40-hour, and one-week operations. During this period I've listened to more country music than I care to admit.

There are days, then, when I find myself face to face with what I would call a foreign culture, like in Japan. But these experiences have an entirely different tint than those in Japan. Where in Japan the population of Japan and I often struggled to find common ground or even a reason to find common ground, here we all have a lot of things instantly in common, the least of which being that we have all decided to wear the same thing to work. The culture of the army, like the best parts of the culture of the U.S. itself, is one of inclusion.

In this regard, my decision to join the army still feels like the right "response" to my time with the Japanese. When I feel alienated in the army I can't blame it on nationality or borders. I've met every stereotype I thought I might in the army but also every possible exception. I thought I needed to join the army to save it by ensuring that my voice and experience were represented. But I walked into an organization that was already more than sufficiently diverse, and amidst that diversity I discovered a sense of commitment that I am proud to be part of.

What pushed me through a lot of difficulty in Japan was commitment to the larger goals and ideals that I brought with me. So, too, the army. As hard as it is to imagine now, some days on JET were tough, and I'm sure I wondered then, too, if I wasn't just spinning my wheels. But I left Japan absolutely convinced that every day had been necessary. Just ten months in, the army surprises me almost daily with the manifold possibilities it offers. It's easy to think of this time in training as a "grin and bear it" situation. But when I think about these soldiers I serve with and what we've accomplished together, I imagine throwing this card onto the table with gusto and confidence. *Email Patrick at ripton.patrick@gmail.com.*

—Patrick Ripton, Okinawa and Shiga, 2001-05



Patrick directs the operation

Alumni Spotlight

Spotlight on: JETAANC Board Member Libby Wolfensperger, Chiba, 1992-94



What are some of your most vivid memories of your JET experience?

I was a JET from 1992 to 1994 in Chiba-ken, Yotsukaido-shi, working in the city's five middle schools. My most vivid memory was of three students—three bad boys—wild hair, punky, and barely making it academically. Would they graduate?

After much effort on the part of all of the 3rd-Year teachers, myself included, they made it. At the Graduation ceremony as each student's name was called he or she would stand and say "hai" and sit again, but not our three bad boys—they had somehow arranged to sit together. When the first of the three was called he said, "Sensei," causing the room to become quiet. The second then said "honto ni," and the teachers were frozen. Then the third said, "domo arigato gozaimasu!" By now everyone was so worked up and couldn't help but let their tears show. It was so wonderful to see the boys make it and to be thanked was just about too much; it was a perfect moment.

How did JET affect what you did when you got back to the States?

After returning to San Francisco, I became involved first by volunteering at the Consulate with the following year's recruitment. Then I actively participated in JETAA, eventually becoming an officer and then joining the Board. While I was doing all this, of course I was working and the company I was with bought a Japanese firm. Because of my JET work and JETAANC participation, I had the opportunity for a great expatriate assignment in Japan that lasted five years.

What are some of your proudest accomplishments and best memories as a leading member of JETAANC?

I just love it when I bump into a JET who has been positively impacted by the Program, people who see in a truly expansive way what they have experienced and what they can do with it. I have met these people not just here in San Francisco but in Japan and in other parts of the world.

What is your focus area or passion as a Board member?

Being part of the Board is interesting in many respects, but if I were to say what my greatest passion is, it's interacting directly with the alums! Oh, and I am proud of the JETAANC Scholarship Program.

Where do you see JETAANC headed?

I think JETAANC will continue to be a great example of what a chapter with active, interested, and ever-changing alumni can do!

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Alumni Movers and Shakers

A Conversation with New York Alum Steven Horowitz, Creator of JetWit.com



A.J., the friendly mascot of JetWit.com

*After spending the last several years growing the JETAA New York newsletter into a full-fledged alumni magazine, **Steven Horowitz** (Aichi, 1992-94) began focusing his efforts on JetWit.com last fall. JQ, JETAA NY's alumni magazine, caught up with Steven to learn more and see how he's doing.*

Hey, what is a JetWit, anyway?

It's just "JET" plus the acronym for "Writers Interpreters and Translators." I started the WIT e-mail group last May to find more writers for the JET alum publications and also to help freelance translators find more work opportunities. I wanted to create a sort of public face for the WIT group to be able to do these things on a more consistent basis. I also wanted to create an online archive of newsletter articles that editors from other JETAA chapters could easily access and copy and paste for their own chapter newsletters.

Then why does JetWit look like an elephant?

[Laughs.] I knew I wanted a Japanese-style mascot, so I went to graphic designer and Web developer **Zi Mei** (Saitama, 2002-05) because I'd seen some of the excellent characters he created on his site, sugarcloud.com. I told him I wanted a cute animal, and somehow he came back with an elephant that he named A.J., which I love anyway.

How's it going so far?

Pretty good. The site is getting between 50 and 200 hits per day right now. But more importantly, it's helped some JET alums find work, like **Julie Matysik** (Yamanashi, 2006-07), who had just moved to New York and was looking for work in publishing. I asked her to start writing about her job search process for the benefit of other alums. Within two posts, another JET alum at a publishing house saw her posts, got in touch and ended up offering her an internship. Meanwhile, **Jonathan Trace** (Fukuoka, 2005-08) was also looking for work in publishing and writing and had just started doing the JETAA Chapter Beat feature for JetWit when Julie told me to let Jonathan know that her company had another internship opening, which Jonathan subsequently got. This is the JET alum network at work and it makes me really happy.

So what's the plan going forward?

I'd love to get more JET alums writing about their expertise, like triple-threat interpreter/translator/writer **Stacy Smith** (Kumamoto, 2000-03) who does the WITLife posts after watching Japanese news each day, which she does anyway to keep her interpreting skills sharp. I'd also love to keep pulling veteran JET alums out of the woodwork. Like authors **Roland Kelts** (Osaka, 1998-99, author of *Japanamerica*), **James Kennedy** (Nara, 2004-06, author of *The Order of Odd-Fish*) and Rob Weston (Nara, 2002-04, author of *Zorgamazoo*), all people whom I never would have learned about if I hadn't started JetWit. I also wouldn't mind attracting some paying advertisers!

At the risk of offending, you're a bit of a veteran JET alum yourself. Any parting words of wisdom for the younger JET set?

So I'm at that age where I can start indiscriminately doling out gratuitous advice? Okay, I might as well get on my soapbox while the memory is still relatively sharp. I guess I'd say that the JET alumni community is a terrific resource, and it's still largely untapped in many ways. Given that the economy doesn't seem inclined to do anyone any favors these days—well, except for those of us who work in the bankruptcy field—now is a great time to take advantage of the JET Alumni Association and our network, including JetWit.com. You can meet a lot of people, but more significantly, you can use the organization to create opportunities for yourself to get experience in whatever field you want.

Check out JetWit at www.jetwit.com, as well as Steven's satirical financial services comic strip, *Bankruptcy Bill*, www.bankruptcybill.wordpress.com.

Justin Tedaldi, Editor, JQ, Kobe, 2001-02

Thanks to JQ Editor Justin Tedaldi for letting us share this interview with Pacific Bridge readers. For more great New York alumni news, read the latest issue of JQ online at www.jetaany.org/magazine.

校友

How do you feel about leaving for Japan tomorrow?: 2009 Departing SF JETs Reflect

I think every emotion imaginable or possible is what I am feeling as I leave for Japan. A mix of excitement, anticipation, stress, fear, joy, EVERYTHING. I can't wait to be there and start this amazing opportunity.

—**Keiko Hamano**, Headed to Osaka

How do you feel about leaving for Japan tomorrow?: 2009 Departing SF JETs Reflect

I'm feeling more excited than ever, because I realize I am doing what thousands of people only dream of.

—**Chris Lamb**, Headed to Chiba

Japanese Connections

Taboo: Alumni Discuss Weighty Issues—in Japanese!—in the Japan-America Discussion Group

Racial discrimination, suicide, gay adoption, organ transplants, life after death, and human clones...since its start in August 2008, the Japan-America Discussion Group (also known colloquially as the Taboo Discussion Group) has been discussing such controversial topics completely in Japanese twice a month in San Francisco.

The group has been attracting both Japanese and Americans who have very unique backgrounds, and has offered a forum in which members can enthusiastically share their opinions, thoughts and experiences. The discussion group has been a great place for Japanese and Americans to exchange ideas and for Americans to brush up Japanese language skills with other than everyday greetings.

JET alum **Christina Owens** (Ehime, 2001-03) is a member of the group and finds that it offers a rare opportunity to keep up with her Japanese skills. "Finding venues for practicing Japanese has been a major concern since I came back to the States," she says. "I've been participating in the Taboo Discussion Group for almost a year now and it's been an excellent way of challenging myself to talk about difficult issues even with my limited Japanese vocabulary. It's definitely not the standard 'Where did you live in Japan? What's your favorite food?' intro conversation that we get to repeat *ad infinitum*."

As to the discussions themselves, "The topics are controversial—the kind that everyone has an opinion on—and that, combined with the fantastic, friendly group of regular members, makes it a wonderful way to spend a Saturday afternoon!"

The group believes that the results of the discussions represent a very unique "third" cultural point of view, and the group disseminates records of their discussions throughout Japan using a variety of media. The discussions are usually serious, and sometimes intense, but they are always followed by a friendly home party or dining out, which has been very effective for members to get to know each other and make good friends.



JADG members listen and discuss

Another JET alumni member of the group, **Matthew Stephens**, commented on his fears about joining high-level discussions that are all in Japanese. "When I first learned about the Japanese Discussion Group, I hesitated to join because I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the discussion, and certainly not be able to contribute. With a little encouragement from one of the existing members, I decided to sit in on one discussion just to see what it was like."

It didn't take long for Matthew to feel comfortable. "I have been a regular member of the Japanese Discussion Group for nearly a year now, and it has proven to be a thoroughly enjoyable and thought-provoking means of improving my Japanese language skills."

Matthew also commented on the social aspect of the group, saying that it has been a place where he developed close friendships that extend beyond the discussions. "I highly recommend this group to anyone who has an interest in improving their Japanese and improving themselves," Matt says.

The discussion group pays highest attention to non-native Japanese speakers to allow them to participate confidently. The group attempts to provide a Japanese word-list in advance, according to the topic of discussion, so that non-native speakers can prepare beforehand. The group is also working on making an archive of past discussions in both mp3 and text formats so that anybody can download them and learn Japanese through these brain-rejuvenating learning materials.

August 2009 marked a major World War II anniversary, and coincidentally marked the one-year anniversary of the discussion group. In response, the group discussed topics related to World War II, including the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, during its August meetings, which gained enough attention to be written up in *The Nichibei Times*:

www.freedom-unltd.org/JDG/press/Nichi-Bei_US_080509.html

Anyone who has some background in the Japanese language can join the discussion group, as long as the individual sincerely wants to discuss the designated topic in Japanese. For more information, or to join the group, visit the group's website at www.freedom-unltd.org/JDG. Participants are guaranteed an intellectual weekend afternoon followed by fun socializing.

What: Japan-America Discussion Group

When: Every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month at 3pm

Where: Members' residences, public parks, and other locations in San Francisco

Detailed info: www.freedom-unltd.org/JDG

Shinya Yokota, Founder and Moderator, Japan-America Discussion Group

Contact Shinya at shinya@freedom-unltd.org.

座談会

How do you feel about leaving for Japan tomorrow?: 2009 Departing SF JETs Reflect

Stressed and excited. I know I have everything, but still feel like I forgot to do something.

—**Eliot Honda, Headed to Ehime**

Member Material



Natsu Matsuri Picnic, Golden Gate Park,
San Francisco, June 2009



East Bay Shabu-Shabu Dinner,
Berkeley, July 2009



New JETs Send-off Party,
San Francisco, August 2009



Shobu Cup II: Kickball, Golden Gate Park,
San Francisco, August 2009

伝 Kanji Corner

6画

音: デン テン | 訓: つた(わる)(える)(う)

Examples:

伝統 (でんとう) - tradition

伝説 (でんせつ) - myth

伝わる (つたわる) - to be handed down

家伝 (かでん) - heirloom

手伝う (てつだう) - to help, take part in

自伝 (じでん) - autobiography

駅伝 (えきでん) - relay race

遺伝子 (いでんし) - gene

Snapshots: Northern California JETs Departure, August 2009



Ask Oyaji - Are the Japanese Still Traditional?

Dear Oyaji,

I've heard that the Japanese are a very traditional people. Is that still true?

Sincerely,
Padwan



Dear Padwan,

It's interesting that you ask me that question because we definitely used to be. Now, I'm going to speak from my current situation and my situation only so please don't generalize.

As I speak, a little robot is typing what I say into a computer. It used to be that sons and daughters would live with their parents until they got married. Then they would go off and make a family and then the parents would move in with the kids when they got old. That was a great tradition. Fast forward to now and I'll tell you about my kids.

Keiko, my oldest daughter, met some English teacher and moved off to England. Now I see her every couple years and mostly talk to her through this computer she bought me. The robot sets up a camera and that is how I see my grandkids.

Jun is my oldest son and he is supposed to be taking care of me and inherit the house once I pass. He bought me this crazy robot that does everything for me and now I never see my son.

Ryoichi is the baby of the family and although he's 35, he still lives with me. I don't think he'll ever get married as he's got his "anime girlfriend" and no full-time job. Every once in a while he'll get a *baito* but that never seems to last.

So Padwan, traditions at home appear to be going the way of the dodo but in my opinion that's okay. I actually wouldn't have it any other way. My hapa grandkids are adorable, the robot my son bought me is pretty neat, and my youngest... well, *shoganaï na*.

Njya, mata na,
Oyaji

アドバイス

The Back Page

Save the Date

- Oct. 2 SF *Nomikai* Happy Hour
Location TBD, San Francisco
- Oct. 6, 8 Japanese Trad. Dance Lecture
UC Berkeley Int'l House (10/6)
SF Asian Art Museum (10/8)
- Oct. 16 East Bay *Nomikai* Happy Hour
Location TBD, East Bay
- Oct. 17 *Kabuki* Lecture/Demonstration
McKenna Theater, SFSU
- Oct. 25 Shobu Cup Dodgeball Match
SF Golden Gate Park



Top 10 Signs You're a JET Living in a Recession

10. You ruthlessly search eBay for bargains on a nice, third-hand *kotatsu*
 9. You bring an empty rice bowl to the next *meishi* exchange
 8. Tight budget means you can now only afford to buy songs and products from your favorite *six* members of Morning Musume
 7. Attending the next *Nihongo Dake* Dinner guarantees where next meal is coming from
 6. "Good day! I'm with Public Television and we've, uh, started collecting door to door. If you own a TV..." *SLAM!*
 5. You take your date to Santa Ramen and are instantly dumped after a misguided attempt to recreate the iconic "Bella Notte" scene from *Lady and the Tramp*
 4. "Bank of America, feh! Congress really needs to bail out Sony and Toyota!"
 3. That image to the left is actually looking pretty damn good right now
 2. *Pacific Bridge's* home office flooded with requests for next issue to be available in two-ply
 1. For the first time in your life, you seriously wonder what Anpanman tastes like
- Thanks to JQ, *JETAA New York's* alumni magazine, for another great Top Ten List! 笑

Note: *Nomikai* happy hours are held in San Francisco every first Thursday of the month and in the East Bay every third Thursday. For more details about upcoming events, join the **Message Board** at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jetaanc> and choose to receive either "individual email" or "daily digest." To stay even *more* in the loop, join the JETAANC Facebook & LinkedIn pages!

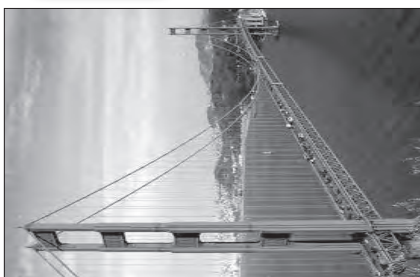
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