Greetings
Welcome to the June, 1999 edition of JET Streams. This edition is being distributed to more than 4,600 JETAA members and 2,600 returning JETs.

JET Programme News
As of July 1999 there will be participants from 37 countries on the JET Programme. There will be participants from the following new countries joining the programme: Hungary, Kazakhstan, Norway and Singapore.

CLAIR is also planning to make significant changes to the Japanese language courses available to JETs. Participants in the 1999-2000 JET Programme will be able to take the Japanese correspondence course free of charge. The course has a cultural/linguistic focus and is aimed at those who already have some knowledge of the Japanese language and who are interested in teaching it in the future. This autumn, there are also plans to introduce language-based courses which will be available to all JETs. There will be beginning, intermediate and semi-advanced level courses.

JETAA News
About half of the JETs who left the programme in 1998 joined JETAA and once again membership is expected to grow from August. We hope that new members will make an active part in their local chapter of JETAA and that activities can continue to expand as they have done this year. Please refer to pages 4-7 for more information on JETAA events organised by regional chapters.

Although entry updates for JETAA membership cannot yet be made directly from CLAIR's homepage, they can be made from the update form on the JETAA homepage: http://www.jet.org/clairupdate.htm. You can also send email updates to: jet-aa@clair.or.jp. The JETAA homepage has recently been up-dated. For information on JETAA chapters around the world and JETAA International, please look at: http://www.jet.org. JETAA chapter homepage addresses can be found on page 12.

Pension and Tax Refunds
The Pension Reform Bill was passed in the Diet on November 2nd 1994, and was promulgated on 9th November, 1994. In order to qualify to be considered for the lump sum withdrawal payment (the pension refund), you need to have been in Japan on or after the promulgation date and had a Japanese address on or after the promulgation date. Only JET Programme participants who left Japan after 9th November, 1994 and who fulfill the following conditions are eligible to apply for a Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment provided that they file a claim within two years of leaving Japan. They must not possess Japanese citizenship or have ever qualified for a pension beneficiary (including disability allowance). In addition, they must have paid the National Pension or the Employees' Pension Insurance premiums for six months or more.

CLAIR is not responsible for the decisions made by the Social Insurance Agency, which administers the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payments. We cannot check on individual claims. Inquiries may be made in writing (in English or Japanese) to the following address:

Social Insurance Operation Centre
3-5-24 Takaido-nishi
Suginami-ku, Tokyo 168
Japan

A flat-rate tax of 20% is levied on the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment. Once you have received the Notice of the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment, you can apply to reclaim the tax. Applications must be made within 5 years of leaving Japan.

If you have not already claimed your tax back and you would like to do so, please contact your JET host institution. Your supervisor or someone at your host institution should be able to help you. If you have trouble making yourself understood, ask them to refer to page 134 of the 1999 Host Institution Manual (Heisei 11 Nendou Ukeirendaitai you Manyuyou). You will need to fill out a declaration naming a tax representative and also provide your tax representative with the Notice of the Lump-Sum Withdrawal Payment (Shokyu Kettei Tsuchisho).

The tax refund can only be claimed if you have received a Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment upon which tax was levied.

These rules are in accordance with Japanese law. If you have any further questions regarding pension or tax refunds, please contact the JETAA Liaison at CLAIR at the address below.

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Send all correspondence to:
CLAIR: JETAA Liaison, Shin Kasumigaseki Building, 19F, Kasumigaseki 3-3-2, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0013, Japan, FAX: +81-3-3591-5350

JET Streams is printed on 40% recycled paper
The Seventh Annual JET Programme Essay Competition

A total of 95 entries were received for the Seventh Annual JET Programme Essay Competition, including a number of entries from JET Alumni. The judges awarded prizes to the following ten entrants:

First Prize:
Bonnie Lee La Madeleine (ALT, Fukuoka)

Second Prize:
Matthew Cox (Former ALT)

Special Prizes:
Gary Gervais (Former ALT)
Bernadette Teresa Catherine McNulty (ALT, Akita)
Carrie Millson (ALT, Kumamoto)

Honorary Prizes:
Michael Barrett (Former ALT)
David Sweet (ALT, Saitama)
John Davies (ALT, Hyogo)
Ry Beville (CIR, Fukuoka)
Anita Girvan (ALT, Miyagi)

The first prize winning essay, "TEACHE" Threatens," appears in this edition of JET Streams. In addition, all prize winning essays will be published in the summer 1999 edition of the JET Journal. Congratulations to the prize winners and many thanks to everyone who submitted essays. Once again this year one of the JETAA members received a prize. For those alumni who are interested in submitting an entry to the next competition please see the enclosed sheet for more details.

"T" "E" "A" "C" "H" "E" "R"

by Bonnie Lee La Madeleine, winner of the first prize in the seventh annual JET Programme Essay Competition.

Near the end of August, as I sat dutifully at my desk pretending that I knew how to make lesson plans, my supervisor came up to me and asked me if I had a moment. I think I startled her with my enthusiasm as I bounded out of my seat and replied that I had many moments. She said that there were a few items to discuss with me, and that she wanted to sit down and go over the coming term’s schedule.

The precision and the detail with which the days ahead had been arranged were a welcome relief. As I was still reeling from the chaos into which my life had fallen and attempting to get my bearings in my new home, it was refreshing to find that the school had laid down to give some structure to my days at school. It didn’t really matter that this structure was nothing more than a schedule indicating when I would be teaching. It was a beginning, and I was just happy to have evidence that I would, in fact, be teaching someday. It had been a slow summer.

As we looked over the chart in more detail than I felt was needed, Inoue-sensei, my supervisor, drew my attention to an event which she thought might interest me. "On September 25 there will be no afternoon classes. The whole school is taking part in a Japanese drama festival," she told me. "You should go, maybe." I looked at her and nodded my head; yes, I would like to go if I could. I had images of the festivals back home - decadent orgies of music or food or film festivals which go beyond the simple enjoyment of one’s passions, and lure one into sinful, gulluttonous feasts, far too rich to enjoy guiltlessly.

It occurred to me that I miss home.

I tried to focus on the event ahead. Some fond memories of English and French drama wandered into my consciousness, as did images of Kabuki theatre from bad post-war movies. I imagined a drama festival like the Shakespeare festivals we have back home in which students of the theatre and professionals alike present a variety of the Bard’s plays in a large area where people can see one, two, three, or even four plays every day - Summer Stock theatre, and makeup and costume workshops. A festival of Japanese drama would surely be a nice introduction to an interesting aspect of Japanese culture. I imagined being completely swallowed up in Japanese as I experienced Kokura Minami High School’s students acting and dancing in a festival of Japanese drama.

I waited impatiently - like a child waits for Santa Claus at Christmas - for my first experience with Japanese drama. It was to be an entirely new experience for me - it did not matter that I would not be able to understand the dialogue. I would watch carefully and attempt to gather meaning the same way I try to understand abstract art or an opera in a language I do not know. Simply put, I would gather those images I could and construct a story from the plays I know. I would make do.

At last the day of the festival arrived. I thought it strange that I hadn’t seen any of the students rehearsing, but I assumed they practiced when I was not at school. I arrived at the theatre early with a few other teachers and marvelled at the efficient manner in which our students lined up in those neat little rows and sat quietly, before going into the theatre. I cannot imagine students in Canada or the United States being able to form such neat rows without making snarly comments or yelling. There was something almost solemn about the way the kids sat and whispered to their classmates.

The scene around the theatre was equally calm. In contrast to the pre-show scene I had seen in my imagination, hordes of thespians moving about frantically (but with purpose) were nowhere in sight. The cacophony I had anticipated was missing. Not only did it seem that only one theatre was involved in this Drama Festival, but it also appeared that none of the students at Kokura Minami High School were preparing for any performance. Many of my assumptions about the day were beginning to melt away. Okay, so the festival of drama was not to be a celebration of drama akin to the twelve day jazz festival back home. This festival was no more than a school trip to see a Japanese play. I adjusted my expectations a bit - nixing the concept of a festival and replacing it with that of a lone play. It would still be a uniquely Japanese experience.

As I entered the hall, I spied a blind student from another school being led into the theatre. Several years ago, I interned at a small theatre in Massachusetts that frequently presented
shows for deaf members of the community. This was done by bringing in translators who would sign during the performance. How would the play I was about to see be modified to make it accessible to a blind member in the audience, I wondered? How much of the drama was action, and how much was dialogue? What sort of adaptations would be made to help this student experience and understand the play? I then began to worry about how much of the play I would be able to understand; despite the knowledge that a lot of dialogue would be better for the blind student, I selfishly prayed that there would be very little.

A moment later, I saw eight or nine students signing to each other. For not the first time in Japan I felt like Alice in Wonderland, and I joked with myself that I was about to see *The Miracle Worker*, the story of Helen Keller, in Japanese. Were those students deaf, hearing impaired or just learning to speak using sign language? Once again, I wondered how the play would be made accessible to the students with sensory impairments. What modifications would be made to adapt the play to their different needs?

Finally all the students are seated; we find our seats and prepare ourselves for the Japanese drama. I am nervous and excited as the actors take their places and the lights on the stage begin to brighten. The stage is sparingly set, with minimalist elements suggesting the frame of a western style home. In the opening scene, four people stand near a baby's crib. It looks like most of the contemporary offerings I have seen in Montréal or Boston. Okay, I think to myself, this is a modern Japanese play - and it is about the baby. Beyond that, I am clueless.

The next scene confuses me more. A woman seated at a western style desk in Victorian garb is writing. I hear a series of sentences featuring the word "Ane". I think, well what about "older sister"? Is she the baby from the first scene? What is going on, I wonder? Banjo music plays, and a girl appears at the top of the stairs with her arms stretched out before her. She is touching things and feeling her way around the set. After watching her feel her way around and remain somewhat disconnected from the rest of the action in the scene. I draw two conclusions: one, she is blind; two, she is deaf. Several incomprehensible scenes later, the Victorian women meets the blind and deaf girl. She gives her a present, and takes her hand, simultaneously signing and saying:"D-O-L-L." The Japanese drama I am watching is the story of the American hero Helen Keller. Her story is as familiar to me as Anne Shirley's or Laura Ingall's. All were the main figures in the books I read just after I learned to read. Suddenly this play has a unified meaning and the feeling of being lost in wonderland subsides, albeit only slightly.

Act I ends with the scene where Helen signs D-O-L-L. During the intermission, my fellow teachers question me about Japanese drama. "Do you understand story okay?" one asks. "Well, the story is well known back home so at least I know the plot," I say. She then says, "This story is famous in Japan, do you know this story?" I am asked the same question a few times. Flumoxed, I chirp that the story is about a rather remarkable American woman. No one seems to hear me; this is a Japanese story, I am told. So be it, I smile and return to my seat.

My thoughts wander quite a bit during the second act. It’s not so much that the story is well known to me and probably to most North Americans my age that strikes me, however, it is the situation. The irony of watching a translation of an American play about communication and understanding in my new role as an ALT is apparent. A chain of questions coils around my head. Not only were all of my assumptions about this Japanese drama festival wrong, but the nature of those assumptions exposed some cultural stereotypes I brought with me to Japan, about Japan. And so I sit in a dark theatre trying not to fall asleep, rethinking my purpose as an ALT. The message that this play (which I cannot understand) carries for me is unique. No one else in this room, at this moment, is having my experience of this play.

Among the things which I ponder is the difference between the play I am currently watching about Helen Keller and the one I learned by heart as a child. This play begins in Helen’s infancy with her family and doctor standing in a circle around her crib talking about her. Several scenes follow showing life at home for both Helen and Anne. In the middle of the first act, the teacher is introduced to her student for the first time; the rest of the act depicts the two as they work and play together. The relationship is one of harmony and acceptance that is occasionally threatened by Anne's attempts to teach Helen sign language. The only tension in the first act comes from Anne’s relationship with Helen's parents, who question the teacher’s methods and her success with their daughter. The tension is temporarily resolved when Helen correctly signs D-O-L-L to her doll, demonstrating that Anne is teaching her something. Act I ends here.

Photograph by: Richard Wallbridge, Oita-ken

Act II opens with more quarreling between Anne and the Keller parents. The parents think that Anne's methods are too harsh and are painful for their daughter; Anne thinks that Helen's parents are interfering with her daughter's progress by coddling her and protecting her. Anne takes Helen away. Now if the same thing happened between any parent and teacher in the States, Anne would have to concede to the parents' wishes. Eventually, however, the parents take Helen home and Helen's life returns to its isolated and unstructured patterns - that is until
Anne visits for dinner, and Helen has a tantrum at the table. Anne takes charge and insists on disciplining the girl, despite the parents protests; this time Helen succumbs. After all the fights and struggles, Helen finally is able to recognize and identify the authority figures in her life: her father, her mother, her teacher. After all the fights and struggles, Anne is finally able to prove that Helen is able to be part of the normal family struggle. This is the end of the play.

The American version of the story starts just before the scene which ends the Japanese play. The fight at the dinner table happens very early in the North American version of the play, just after Anne's arrival to the Keller home. Her entrance marks an end to Helen's isolation, and to the freedom which came from her isolation. Before Anne arrives, Helen lives in a world of smells, textures, and climates; she is physically touched by the people around her, but she lives in a world that they can never know. It is a strange freedom. Anne's arrival is an intrusion into this world. She ruptures Helen's world by using one element of Helen's world, touch, to impose a structure upon the girl which will allow her to understand and be understood by others. Naturally there is tension between teacher and student. Unlike in the Japanese play, however, American Helen's story begins only after she accepts a certain degree of control from her teacher.

It is Helen's education and emotional growth which are the focuses of the American play. In this version of her biography, Helen's effort to communicate with others is depicted as she eventually learns to speak without the use of sign language or Braille. She learns to make herself understood on her own terms, not through the means of an interpreter, to the people within her community. In fact, her first teacher is not so merely a catalyst to Helen's journey toward individuality and freedom. The differences between the two plays reveal a fundamental difference in cultural attitudes towards education and teachers in Japan and North America. The dinner table scene is crucial to both versions but for very different reasons. In the American version, the scene marks the point at which teacher and student enter into some kind of acceptance of each other. It exposes the strong wills of both Anne and Helen, and the determination of both as they learn to communicate with each other. By accepting some restriction on her freedom and learning to respect the ways of her family, Helen learns how to respect herself and her unique position within a larger society. Eventually she learns how to talk about her world in a language which those around her understand. It is the restriction of her freedom which helps her understand the nature of her isolation from her community - both its assets and its restrictions.

The Japanese play's focus, however, develops a different relationship between teacher and student, child and parent. Helen's eventual recognition of her place within her family is the climactic moment of this play. It is a moment I barely understand.

As I muse about this, the last words of the play ring out in English: T-E-A-C-H-E-R - TEACHER.

As the applause bursts forth, I am close to tears. Why? Not because the play is particularly good or original. Despite that, it brought home a clear message about my role in Japan as a member of the JET Programme, and as an ALT. While I am here to teach English, I am really trying to learn how to communicate with people I see every day in this country; I am also shedding more than a few of the assumptions I brought with me about the people and culture of Japan. Like Helen, we are all lonely dwellers in the dark, reaching out for larger connections into our world. My presence in Japan is like a stranger's hand spelling out water, mother, doll and teacher. I am the keyhole through which my students will look to see small pieces of the home from which I came, and through which my friends and family will look to see and learn something about Japan. In order to be a good teacher in Japan, I must reflect and study not only on where I am, but also on how I came to be here. I leap into the darkness and learn to talk about what it means to be foreign by listening to my new neighbours, co-workers and students. The students will not learn about me until I take the time to learn about them. Only in this way will I learn to be a better communicator, and a better looking glass for the cultures which I am helping to bring together; and only then will I be an effective teacher of my language and culture. In effect, I must strive to be not a teacher, but a S-T-U-D-E-N-T.

### JETAA Regional Activities

**All Chapters**

For all JETS who are returning home and who are interested in getting involved with their local JETAA chapter, please contact your regional representative and local Japanese embassy or consulate to find out more details about JETAA activities. Regional representative contact details can be found on pages 9 and 10. The contact details for Japanese embassies and consulates can be found at the back of the General Information Handbook. Chapters other than those listed here are also very active.

**Atlanta**

We can't wait for you to join us in Hotlanta! Please get in touch with us as soon as you get back. You can reach us at: atlanta_jetaa@hotmail.com. We will have a welcome-back party at the end of August, but we would also love for you to join us during our regular activities. We currently meet about once a month for happy hour and we are also involved in monthly volunteer activities with the International Rescue Committee, a non-profit organisation that resettles refugees in the Atlanta area. We have a lot going on and we want you to get involved. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call Kristie McCobb. You can obtain my current contact details from Mr. Chi at the Consulate-General of Japan in Atlanta. Welcome back and good luck!

**Canberra**

Canberra JETAA welcomes all returning JETS and invites them to participate in our ever-expanding programme of activities. We have four social functions a year: a dinner night in April, which is also a welcome dinner for new JETS, a farewell lunch in July for new JETS, a hanami in October and a BBQ/softball day in January. We also hold quarterly meetings.
Canberra JETAA also provides assistance and support to the JET Programme. We are heavily involved in the selection process and orientations, providing an information book and running language and culture classes. We also participated in school visits arranged by the Embassy of Japan. Exciting initiatives this year include trying to get a regional conference up and running in 2000, setting up our own webpage and instigating a regional promotion strategy for the JET Programme.

JETs returning to Canberra are encouraged to contact Catherine Wallace so that we can get your name on our mailing list, keep you informed and get you involved.

Chicago

JETAA Chicago has elected new officers this spring who are enthusiastically scheduling events and programmes for the upcoming year. For the latest information, please access our new web site at: http://www.jet.org/chicago/index.html. As more event details become available, we will post them there.

We are proud to announce an informal Welcome Back BBQ on September 18, 1999 from 1p.m. at Waveland Park along Lake Shore Drive. In case of bad weather, a bowling event will be held at Marigold Bowling. Last year had a great turn out with alumni from a variety of participating years. So come by yourself, with your family, or with your friends and join the fun.

Photographs taken at Chicago JETAA's Fall BBQ

Our annual Jobs Fair will be held on Saturday, November 6. Come for tips on job searches in the Chicago area, the chance to meet with Japanese recruiters, an opportunity to network with local JET alumni, and much more. The event will be organised by our Jobs Coordinator, Tim Finley, who disseminates employment information to job seekers throughout the year. He keeps a current list of job opportunities in the Chicago area and there is a strong network which encourages alumni to forward information about any openings to him. For more information, e-mail: TFinleyjp@aol.com.

If you are moving to the area, we hope you will contact us. We have a variety of activities ranging from social to volunteer, so there is something for everyone. Yoroshiku onegaishimasu!

Christchurch

On arrival back in Christchurch or the South Island, ex-JETs can get in touch with their local JETAA chapter by contacting the Consulate-General of Japan. JETAA South Island usually meets up in March each year to welcome home ex-JETs in a combined dinner and AGM. We are involved in helping the consulate in selecting new JETs, and provide seminars on life as a JET for prospective JETs and prior to departure for those selected. We also have several social get-togethers and put out a newsletter.

Hawaii

Here in Hawaii, we have been working with the Japan America Society on a number of functions. Last fall, we helped with Japan Bowl, which was geared towards local high school students. Many of our members helped out and got to meet the four Hawaiian sumo wrestlers last month at a dinner honouring them. We look forward to welcoming you home and having you join us.

Houston

JETAA USA Region 9, based in Houston, has a variety of activities and special events to meet the wide range of interests of our alumni. To learn more about our chapter, upcoming events, and life in Houston, please visit our web site: http://www.jet.org/usa9. All returning JETs should contact Sara Revell at the Japanese Consulate-General in Houston. This will allow us to update our database and inform you of future events.

One of the first events for returning JETs is the annual Welcome Back Reception, hosted by the Japanese Consulate and our chapter. This event provides the chance to meet fellow returnees, alumni and to learn a little about life in Houston. We also publish a quarterly newsletter and help returning JETs with their job search by publishing job openings in it and maintaining a resume bank, which links employers with qualified JETs. During the next year, members who are job searching will have a list of current jobs directly e-mailed to them.

We are also the only JETAA chapter in the world to have an annual regional conference. Topics include: employment, reverse culture shock and the Japanese education system. In addition, our organisation also contributes to the cultural variety of Houston through our participation in numerous cultural events. Of course, our chapter is also very social and has regular outings. We look forward to welcoming you to Houston and showing you our famous warm Texas hospitality.

Indiana

Indiana JETAA has some exciting things going on for the fall
of this year and would like to have all returning JETs check-out one of our get-togethers to see what we're all about. Events for the fall include: meeting, August 28; new returnees' picnic, October 9; Anime Film Fest in September/October; quarterly newsletters. For more information, contact Michael Klueumper at: michael_klueumper@yahoo.com. We look forward to hearing from all of you!

Manitoba-Saskatchewan
The Manitoba-Saskatchewan JET Alumni Association was started back in 1994. We help with JET Programme interviews and orientation of new participants. Over the years, the scope and quality of our activities and services has improved. Initially, the association's objectives included providing newly-returned JETs with the support network necessary to ease the transition process. We did this by initiating social activities. The process has now evolved to include helping returning JETs with job searching. We realise that being in Manitoba or Saskatchewan limits one's exposure to Japanese or Asian companies. Nevertheless, we try to refer individuals to others who may be able to help them in these or other job fields.

We have just completed another year of orientation sessions and we have also been conducting JET Programme presentations at universities. We feel it is a way for us to give something back for the warm and generous hospitality we were accorded in Japan. For further information, please contact: mansaskjetaa@hotmail.com.

Mid West
Returning JETs! Coming back to the Midwest? Coming to the Kansas City area? Check out Midwest JETAA: www.jet.org.kc. Join JETAA - we'll get you back in the swing of things!!! Contact the Kansas City Consulate as soon as you get home.

New Orleans
Although our chapter is relatively small and distributed over a broad geographical region, we have been growing steadily in the past few years and have become more active in community outreach programmes, JET recruitment and social activities.

Educational and community oriented programmes are an important part of our chapter activities. Last year chapter members visited local elementary, middle and high schools to speak about their experiences in Japan. Members have also been taking part in JET-related activities by giving informational presentations about the JET Programme at colleges and universities. Also, during early summer, several activities were organised for departing JETs. Then, during the fall and winter months, local alumni welcomed back recently returned JETs through formal and informal social gatherings.

Our chapter has participated in several cultural and social events in New Orleans and as our chapter grows, we look forward to having more JETAA activities for members who live outside of the New Orleans region. We are striving to achieve our mission of providing educational, cultural and social support for our members and the larger communities in which we live.

Northern Alberta
Fun, fame, fortune... Well, okay, maybe there is no fame or fortune to be had by joining the Northern Alberta JET Alumni Association but those things are overrated anyway. Besides, after a year or more on JET, aren't you tired of those things by now?

NAJETAA would like to extend an invitation to those JETs returning this year to join us as we build igloos, hunt seals, drink beer and forage in the cold for food. If those activities don't interest you, perhaps you would like to help out with other exciting activities such as pre-departure orientations for new JETs, JET interviews, school visits to promote Japan Days, monthly social outings to local restaurants to swap tales, or by adding to our growing list of resources for returning JETs and the community at large. This year we have planned an exciting calendar of events to bring together JET alumni and members of the Japanese community in Edmonton and surrounding areas. Join us, won't you? For more information, check out our newly updated (and pretty hot looking) webpage: http://www.jet.org/alberta/.

New England
For all you hearty New England natives, come join NEJETAA, the New England JET Alumni Association, at their annual "Fall Baa-Baa-Kew" in September in honor of your triumphant return. For details, visit the NEJETAA web site (http://www.tiac.net/users/nejetaa/html/events.htm) when you return. For those not connected, call Ethan Gettman. If you lose all this info, please call the Japanese Consulate in Boston and they'll tell you what's up.

Ottawa
We are looking forward to welcoming you back home! Plans are already underway for your welcome back party in September. There are talks of an alumni band performing...sushi will most definitely be a part of the festivities. We are also planning a career seminar for you. This seminar should provide you with the necessary skills and information to help you on your way.

To help you keep your ties with Japan as well as get you back into the swing of things here in Canada, JETAA Ottawa has a number of activities we hope you will join: two weekly Japanese language classes, monthly movie nights, Japanese cooking classes, cultural workshops, Christmas/Bonnenkai Party, Skating Party, White-o-Eve (try to guess what that's all about...) Anime Eve, quarterly newsletter, pre-departure BBQ/camp, and more to come... Contact us ASAP, so we will know how to contact you! No excuses! Do it now or miss out on a year that could change your life!

Southern Alberta
The Southern Alberta chapter offers a variety of events to its members throughout the year. These social events give JET alumni an opportunity to meet new people who share a lot of common interests and experiences. In addition, SAJETAA has organised some sports teams for their members' enjoyment. If you are a returnee who will be coming home to Calgary or a community in SA, be sure to contact us.

UK
Welcome to JETAAUK! The association runs an exciting programme of events throughout the year for all ex-JETs residing in the UK. We start in October with a Careers' Information Day where newly returned JETs can get guidance and ideas on future careers. This is followed by a welcome
home reception - your chance to meet other ex-JETs and catch up with old friends. These events will be followed by an annual party and other social events. The highlight of the year is in July when we hold a Japanese Natsu Matsuri, which last year attracted over 3,000 people! JETAAUK also organises monthly pub nights for those who live in London and supports the creation and activities of regional chapters around the UK.

So come and join the other members of JETAAUK and continue to be involved in the Anglo-Japanese community in the UK. You can sign up before you leave Japan by contacting our regional representative.

Vancouver
JETABC organises several events including a preparation seminar for new JETs, an alumni reunion and an annual Mixer (for new JETs). We have also made the move to become more independent on the Internet - we have obtained our own domain name: www.jetabc.bc.ca. We hope that if any alumni are passing through BC that they will contact us. Nothing pleases most alumni more than the chance to talk about Japan.

Washington DC
The Washington DC chapter of JETAA is very active and has a variety of committees which organise events to appeal to a range of interests. All JETs returning to the DC area should immediately contact the JET Office at the Embassy of Japan to update your information on the database. This way you will stay informed of upcoming JETAA activities. Be sure to request a copy of the JETAA DC Returnee Handbook. This handbook was compiled in September 1998 to provide information for JETs returning or relocating to the DC area. It contains a wealth of information from housing to shopping to eating out.

One of the first things JETAA DC organises for recently returned JETs is the Annual Career Night. Slated for the end of September, it features a keynote speaker proficient in what employers are looking for and a panel of JET Alumni at various stages of their careers. It serves as an opportunity for members to learn of job vacancies, interview tactics, as well as graduate school options. The Welcome Back Reception, in honour of recently returned JETs, takes place in November and is hosted by the embassy. There are also a number of volunteer activities and community involvement projects organised by JETAA members. In addition, there are regular social events and outdoor activities - something for everyone. For more information, contact regional representative JoAnna Phillips.

A message from AJET's JETAA Liaison...

Allow me to introduce myself, My name is Trung Quach, and I am the block 3 representative on the newly elected 1999-2000 AJET National Council. Besides my duties as representative for Gunma, Saitama and Ibaraki, I have also volunteered to be this year's JETAA Liaison for AJET. I am assuming that most of you know a little about AJET and our work, but allow me a moment to update you on some of our current projects.

Over the years, as the JET Programme has mushroomed in size, the needs of JET Participants have also increased. AJET's duties and responsibilities have grown to meet these needs. AJET has come a long way since its initial days of just trying to locate and connect JET participants through newsletters and telephone directories. Today, AJET provides various types of support for its members and non-members alike. AJET has grown into an organisation consisting of a national council, prefectural chapters, eight nationality groups, sixteen special interest groups, a publications division and special projects such as the Peer Support Group (PSG) and Tatami Timeshare. AJET continues to work closely with CLAIR and Mynosho to help plan events such as Tokyo Orientation and Kobe Renewers' Conference. In recent years, we are especially proud of the PSG and Habitat for Humanity (a special interest group). The PSG now has a toll free number and professional counsellors. We work closely with CLAIR to provide 24 hour service to the JET community. Habitat for Humanity has plans to build homes in the Philippines this year.

Another project with which I am personally involved and for which I hope to recruit JETAA support is the Job Fair in Tokyo. Last Year's Job Fair did not materialise due to late planning. Not wishing to make the same mistake this year, AJET has already started planning the Job Fair for 2000. I will be contacting each JETAA chapter individually to ask for your support in making this year's upcoming Job Fair a success. I look forward to working with all of you and you can expect to hear from me again in the future.

For more information, please don't hesitate to contact me at: adrian@po.wind.ne.jp

Photograph by: David Duffy, Kagoshima-ken
by Brant R. Dykehouse

I think it hit me that I was back one cold week in January of 1998, when the holidays were finished, and the winds blew in stronger than any typhoon that I could remember. I was kind of in limbo. I had left Yamaguchi-ken in July, took a slow, ten-week trip home, heading from Japan to Amsterdam without one single airplane, and found myself back in a small town in southwestern Michigan. I had a nice autumn, and it was great to be home for the holidays without feeling jet-lagged or rushed. However, I still didn’t know what I wanted to be “when I grew up,” and found that living at home and substituting teaching on a full-time basis did not really allow for me to think about the next step. Instead, it just sort of had me held there in a not-so-good, yet not-so-bad situation. I look back on it now, and I call it Purgatory.

On Wednesday of that particular week, a junior high school student asked me, “Why do you wear such nice ties, have a big watch, and lived in Japan, when all you are now is JUST a sub at our school?”

I really wanted to sit down near that student’s desk and respond, “And I was a TOA, and a Prefectural Advisor, and gave great workshops about “Creative Writing and Debate in the Japanese Classroom” at local and national conferences, and, and, and...” And instead, I chose to talk about the lunch that my mother made for me that morning.

The next day, I didn’t teach, and headed for Chicago to see Madame Butterfly at the opera with members of Chicago JETAA. In the big city, I realized that most people worked before going to the opera. The day after the opera, I found myself at the sale rack at a popular clothing store, telling myself, “Gee, this sweater is only $12.99, but I STILL DON’T HAVE A FULL-TIME JOB!”

JET Programme participants, like any returnee, can find that coming back after one, two, three (or even more) years, is a sometimes rough situation. “coming back,” also known as “repatriation” is a very taxing process. The full cycle of adjustment is said to last between nine and fourteen months. An upper-case "W" changes the graphs in mood experienced during the "repat" process. First, spirits are high when a person comes home to friends, family, and old favourites. This wears off quite quickly, and a "slump" hits. Then, there is an elevation in moods; a new job, a new significant other, or a new living situation can bring on these feelings of happiness. However, this elevation comes too quickly, and it just completes the hump in the "W" when the emotions fall flat again. From this second low point, though, a person usually takes a slow but steady rise, and will find him/herself in higher spirits again soon.

The CLAIR and AJET manuals discuss the difficulties associated with "reverse culture shock." They advise taking more time for oneself, keeping a sense of humor, and keeping in touch with friends back in Japan. Beyond this, however, there are some psychological patterns of learning that account for some of the mood swings. Learning to do something differently, like so many tasks in our daily lives in Japan required, isn’t too difficult on the brain. However, from a behavioral standpoint, re-learning something, again, upon return to one’s home country, places a great deal of stress on the brain.

Relying on friends is fundamental in getting through the repatriation process. Friends can make life less difficult. They talk to you. They help you find jobs. They can be roommates when you realize that the board of education is not paying for half of your housing costs anymore. However, even the best of friends can be a challenge to you at times. You are not the same person as you were when you left Japan, but neither are your friends who weren’t with you in Japan. The best way of dealing with friends is to remember two small things. First, "Great," is an appropriate answer when responding to the question, "So, how was Japan?" Secondly, ten is the correct number when a friend asks you, "Can I see some of your pictures?"

Another important thing is to be honest with your friends when you are not feeling so great. Do you remember the days when, as a child, a parent would say, "Maybe this isn't such a good day to play with your friends today," when he/she could see that you were in a cranky mood? You now need to be your own monitor of these feelings. Having an "inside day" by yourself isn’t such a bad thing, especially during the winter. Take a cue from your Japanese students. How many of their friends made? One word - kurabe. Think about joining a club or a class of some sort. It is sometimes nice to be around a completely new group of people. That way, you can control the distance at which you place yourself from the other members. The activity could be a carry-over from Japan, or something completely new. Do something you like. Looking at the very worst case scenario (making no new friends), you have still learned/participated in something that interests you.

Above all, remember, "This too, shall pass," and while there are tremendous amounts of stress in repatriation, there are some joys found in this "quasi-sabbatical." On the Saturday of the terrible week last January, I sat down to a brunch with (and paid for by) some friends from college. They had everything: great jobs, graduate degrees on the way, a nice apartment in Chicago, and a wedding to look forward to this summer. "You know, Brant," one of them said to me, "take advantage of this time while it lasts. You won’t believe me now, but you’ll miss it."

I nodded, but I didn’t believe him. He was right. Months later, the same words came out of my own mouth when I talked returning JETs from my prefecture. They didn’t believe what I had to say, and now that they are back to work, they do. They miss that time in ‘purgatorial, sabbaticalistic, repatriation land’. And just like those words, "Well, every situation is different," yet another cycle in the life of a JET continues to turn.

Brant R. Dykehouse, an AET and Prefectural Advisor in Yamaguchi-ken (1994-97), now lives in Chicago and works for a cross-cultural training company. He is also the co-chair on New Membership and Social Activities for Chicago’s JETAA.

Photograph by: Allison Fox, Miyazaki-ken
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(New Zealand continued on page 10.)
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The interesting thing about perspective is we all have one and, like snowflakes, no two are alike. We may agree on particular aspects of politics, religion, or sex, but individually we have personalities, environments, and realms of experiences that make our perspective unique to each of us. Which leads to the subject of perspectives on the Japan experience on the JET Programme.

"It depends on your situation" was the phrase heard most often at the July, 1990 Tokyo Orientation. This was in reply to questions regarding job assignments, housing, transportation, expenses, etc. I used the same reply two years later while helping out at the 1992 orientation. This same reply could be heard by the thousands of JETs who have experienced the programme to answer the question "How would you describe the JET experience?" Everyone who comes onto the JET programme comes in with a unique perspective, encounters unique situations while on the programme and will have a unique story to tell about their adventure. An adventure it was.

I was not your average JET participant. I went to the JET Programme 35 years old (the official cut-off age), married, on a one year leave of absence from a job I fully expected to return to in Arizona. I left Japan three years later (two years longer than I had planned to stay), 38 years old, divorced, and returned to my home state of Michigan without a job waiting for me. But as was the case for my younger colleagues, my three years were a growth experience. It was not just the Japan experience, but the entire experience of being away from my "normal environment"; being on my own for the first time in my life (I had married during my second year in college and divorced while in Japan); and, encountering people and situations that influenced my perspective subtly, but inevitably.

I used to think that the phrase "being a product of one's environment" was one of those sixties-seventies slogans/anthems spouted out like others: "free love", "peace", "open marriage". Then I saw it attributed to Freud in the thirties. So there was some psycho-truth to the phrase. And, of course, one's environment influences one's perspective.

Typically, I learned the hard way that I had indeed become a product of my environment - that of an English teacher in Japan, surrounded by Japanese people (adults and children) who were somewhat serious about learning English more or less. I was exposed to how-to-teach-English seminars, textbooks, private language schools.

Then I wrote a letter to the Japan Times deriding the use of Japlish on NHK news programmes. News announcers were describing the 1992 Summer Olympics using English sports terms with Japanese (katakana) pronunciations. I realised what an idiot I was expecting to hear perfect English spoken on Japanese national TV. For two weeks, there were letters printed daily in response to my letter letting me know how narrow-minded my views were. I should have remembered my days growing up in French-influenced Detroit, where news announcers on TV were always evident when they tried to use French pronunciations on very much anglicised street names: DuBois vs. Duboys, Gratoit vs. Grashit.

Now I defend my narrow mindedness with the explanation that I was a product of my environment. I thought everyone in Japan really did want to learn English. What better way to have everyone exposed to real English than during Japan's national pastime of watching TV? Alas, I was just another arrogant American English teacher, as a fellow American pointed out in his response to my letter.

There were many experiences - learning, growing, humanising - to be had in Japan. I have replied to all who ask that they were the best three years in my life. It was like being on vacation for three years, even though I was working. I lived on the Amakusa Islands - "Paradise on Earth". The weather was great, the people were friendly, I enjoyed the seven junior high schools where I worked. But I also had the perspective of someone who was not right out of school. I had over ten years of work experience since graduating from college. I was older, more settled. Most of all I loved and flourished in the solitude I found in the rural area of Japan where I was situated. Alone, but not lonely.

It would take a book to fully express my entire perspective on the Japan experience through JET (I give the JET Programme full credit for making it possible). I know of at least three JETs (all who were in the same prefecture at the same time as I) who have written books about their experiences in Japan. How many more of the thousands who have gone through the programme have written their story/their perspective? Obviously, the Japan experience through the JET Programme makes an impact on many lives and many perspectives.

* As described by Will Ferguson, a fellow JET who lived in Amakusa the same period as I did, in his book Hokkaido Highway Blues: Hitchhiking in Japan, Soho Press, 1998. Until I actually saw it in writing that another westerner had the same viewpoint, I thought I was overly biased in how fortunate I felt to live on the Amakusa Islands.

Rosemary Rakita (formerly Rosemary Januszewski) was an ALT in Kumamoto from 1990-1993.

Photograph by: Shari Virjee, Saitama-ken