Greetings
Welcome to the June, 2000 edition of JET Streams. Thank you to everyone who took the time to submit articles and assist in the production of this issue. This edition is being distributed to more than 5,200 JETAA members and over 2,600 returning JETS.

JET Programme News
As of July 2000 there will be participants from 39 countries on the JET Programme. There will be people from the following new countries joining the Programme: Jamaica, Thailand, and Yugoslavia, bringing the total number of participants to over 6000.

CLAIR has made significant changes to the Japanese language correspondence courses available to JETs. All participants will be able to enroll in either the Beginning, Intermediate or Advanced language courses to improve general language skills. The course formerly known as the Correspondence Course (JCC) will now be called the Linguistics & Pedagogy Course and focuses on learning about Japanese language education. A new course will be introduced as well, the Translation and Interpretation Course, for those who want to learn the basic skills of translation and interpretation. The Linguistics and Pedagogy Course and the Translation and Interpretation Course will only be open to new JETS.

JETAA News
About half of the JETs who left the Programme in 1999 joined JETAA and once again membership is expected to grow from August. We hope that new members will take 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 5-8 for more information on JETAA events organised by regional chapters.

Although the membership and entry update forms on the CLAIR homepage are currently being fixed, people can join JETAA or update their address from the update form on the JETAA homepage: http://www.jet.org/clairupdate.htm. You can also join JETAA or update your address by sending your personal information by e-mail to: jet-aa@clair.or.jp. For information on JETAA chapters around the world and JETAA, please look at: http://www.jet.org.

Pension and Tax Refunds
The Pension Reform Bill was passed in the Diet on November 2nd 1994, and was promulgated on November 9th, 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 November 9th, 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 as a pension beneficiary (including disability allowance). In addition, they must have paid the National Pension or the Employees’ Pension Insurance premiums for at least six months.

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, or by telephone in Japanese to the number listed below:

Social Insurance Operation Centre
Takaido-nishi 3-5-24
Suginami-ku, Tokyo 168-8505, Japan
Tel: +81-3-3334-3131

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 159 of the 2000 Host Institution Manual (Heisei 12 Nendou Ukeiredantai you Manyuuaru). 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 (Shikyuu Kettei Tsuchishio).

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

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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, Email <jet-aa@clair.or.jp>

JET Streams is printed on 40% recycled paper
The essay that won Grand Jury Prize, "Hands in the Clay: Coming to Know Japan Through Japanese Pottery," appears in this edition of JET Streams. In addition, the top six prize winning essays will be published in the 2000 JET Journal. Congratulations to the prize winners and many thanks to everyone who submitted essays. Once again this year, JETAA members received prizes. Details about the next Essay Competition will be in the next edition of JET Streams.

*Pen name

by Heidi Siemens Rhodes, winner of the first prize in the eighth annual JET Programme Essay Competition.

If the Japanese pot has a single message, it might be, "Be a passionate participant and not a cool observer. Involve yourself in every aspect of your existence."

Richard L. Wilson, Inside Japanese Ceramics: A Primer of Materials, Techniques, and Traditions

Beginnings

I came to Japan with empty hands. I am a teacher by training, but I didn’t know if the techniques used with biology and French classes in the United States would translate across the Pacific. While I came to Japan as an English teacher, I also knew that I would learn more from this experience than I would ever teach. I came prepared to kneel among my students and learn from them, and through the course of my three years in JET I have learned much in the classroom and school environment. But one of the places where I have been led to reflect the most has been, without a doubt, my Japanese pottery class.

In hindsight, I see that there were many small steps that had already started me on the path to Japanese ceramics before I even set foot in this country. I lived in the Middle East as a child, and my favorite photograph from that time shows me seated on an elderly potter’s lap, held safe, close to the clay. One of my childhood heroines was Margaret Hudson of Fresno, California, a potter who invited classes of elementary school children to her shady backyard, supplied us with clay and let us play, surrounded by her smiling clay menagerie peeping out from behind palms and tufts of grass. We learned that art was meant to be fun. As a college student I had always felt like I was going the wrong direction as I headed to the science building to check some instruments and passed overalled, clay-splattered art students on their way to the ceramics lab. I dimly remembered some talk of a technique called raku, which breathed of the East and the earth. I hadn’t fit ceramics into my college schedule, but I had always wanted to make up that lost time.

More fundamentally, I began to long for clay. When had I last been allowed, even encouraged, to play with dirt? Yes, when I last got my hands dirty, when was the last time my nails glowed like thin brown crescent moons on each finger, even after a good scrubbing? The first months of the JET Programme were in some ways, and on some days more than others, complex interactions on the surface of things. I worried about what I should (or shouldn’t) say to whom, and what would that mean to them, and so on. As I began to negotiate this new culture I felt the need for some intimate contact of a more elemental nature.

Soon after arriving in my base town of Ito, in Shizuoka Prefecture, it became clear that my JET predecessor had built up a circle of loyal friends who were eager to welcome my husband and I, and introduce us to Japanese culture. We were invited to join a basket making class, a chaban (flower arranging for the tea ceremony) class, and to go to various exhibitions and museums. Through this settling-in time I felt myself responding the most to the handmade ceramics I saw, from the wide plates of a specialty curry shop to the tea bowls behind glass at a local art museum. Every meal seemed to require an unexpected assortment of little plates and bowls. Then, one day in September, over a cup of freshly brewed green tea, a teacher at school informed me that in Japan fall is the season for geisatsu, the arts. Hearing this, I finally worked up enough courage and Japanese to say to several friends that while I was not particularly interested in basket making, I’d really like to join a pottery class. Within two weeks three separate potters had been contacted, and I had my first glimpse of the lengths to which people in this connection-driven culture will go to help a friend.

Wednesday Night Faces

I chose the class held nearest my house, a Wednesday night class to which I was driven by the cheerful nurse from my husband’s school, Hagiwara-sensei. That first evening, having quivered through my self-introduction in Japanese, I was able to look more calmly at the faces around the long plank table. At the head of the table sat Kitou-sensei, a man in his thirties, wearing old corduroys and pushing his shaggy hair from out of his eyes. The classes are held in the basement studio of his house, nestled on a hill in the woods. His wife makes luscious western and Japanese sweets, which we are served each Wednesday after cleaning up. Sensei smokes constantly, leaning back in his chair and exhaling toward the screen door, and the studio smells of earth and damp and cigarettes, and of
cakes and tea.

Next in seniority is silver-haired Mizuguchi-san, who began the class that same September, having recently retired and needing something to put his hands to. He seldom speaks, but often smiles sheepishly. Mizuguchi-san makes sake flasks and ashtrays primarily, and joins sensei at the screen door for a smoke from time to time. Moving around the table, we meet forty-something Ibara-san, employee of the longest established resort hotel in the area. He whips gorgeous things off the wheel with the quick confidence of a master fisherman bringing in his intended catch. Where plates, cups, bowls and the like are concerned, his faculty is now self-sufficient. He likes to discuss cars and aya (sweetfish) catching contests with sensei over tea.

That next year he drove a half hour out of his way to take me to class every week. Next to him is Masayama-san, who was late that first night, as usual, since he works in a city more than an hour away by train. He and I are about the same age, and we were the only two who, after a night of throwing, are inevitably covered with clay. I marvel at the others who come in, put on their crisp smocks, sit down at the wheel, and stand up two and a half hours later as pristine as when they sat down.

Hagiwara-sensei and Okada-sensei were my mainstays at the table that night. Both worked at his husband's high school at that time, and we got into the habit of making a meal together before making our way through the woods. Hagiwara-sensei's husband deals internationally in Honda sports cars, and we often ate beef stew at a small table in the showroom, surrounded by fast, sleek beauties. When she first announced that we'd be eating beef stew I heard "Shi-Chew" and thought it must be a Chinese dish of some sort. Okada-sensei was at her first school that year, teaching home economics. She was promptly transferred the next spring, but I'll always remember her as the creator of a pot in the shape of the mythical forest creature from the animated film "My Neighbor Totoro" by Hayao Miyazaki. The pot's lid was Totoro's fat tummy. The class unanimously pronounced it kawaii (cute), a term of highest praise in modern Japan, "the world's capital of cute."

There were others who met around the long table that first eleven weeks, and through the years of successive sessions. Some tea times overflowed with talking and laughter, some were quiet. I grew to understand more and contribute more as time passed, and now feel able to tell my stories, too. These faces, these ordinary people, led me further into the Japanese culture than any book or lecture ever could.

Preparing the Clay

In order to make a pot of structural integrity, the clay put on the wheel must be both completely solid, containing no air holes, and soft enough to respond to the potter's touch. To achieve both these goals, the clay is kneaded before any forming begins. In Japan, this is an age-old, highly developed process. First, one kneads "roughly" for a short time, softening the clay. Then, in order to expel all the air, kikuneri (called chrysanthemum or spiral kneading in English) is done. This is the tough part, a rhythmic dance of the hands that yields a beautiful flowerlike shape, if done properly. I am just getting the hang of it after two years, but it is a joy to watch sensei do it except that he's usually correcting my botched attempt. Sometimes last fall, as I struggled and struggled, sensei chuckled and told me that Americans don't do kikuneri. Instead, he insisted, they throw chunks of clay on a table, which achieves the goal of expelling air in a fraction of the time. It would seem that the Western potter sees the result as paramount, and the real work at hand the actual forming of vessels. The traditional Eastern potter, I have learned, values the process as art in itself. In many arenas of my life in Japan, things that seem to be a waste of time to me, are an irreplaceable part of the process to my Japanese colleagues. The circulating of an idea through each level of an organization before it is accepted, the endless practices for ceremonies or events that could have been achieved in much less time and with much less fuss, can set my teeth on edge. At times like these I try to remember the beauty of kikuneri, of the ritual process that inspires the product, and let those rhythms bring me back into community.

A Pot Has a Purpose

After several weeks of class it became very clear that form and function came before any application of hand to clay. As I walked through the screen door each Wednesday evening, complacently full of Hagiwara-sensei's beef stew, the question, "What are you going to make tonight?" always caught me off-guard. Wasn't I just supposed to sit at the wheel and daydream a pot to life? Here began the realization that those art students and potters I'd seen at work before hadn't just been playing, but had a plan, and were drawing the clay up on an invisible but very real scaffolding.

The idea of pots for specific purposes and for use rather than display is deeply rooted in the Japanese ceramic tradition. Souetsu Yanagi, father of the Japanese folkcrafts, or mingei, movement writes "I think any work of art should be not be separate from practical use, but rather harmonize with it. Then its happiness will be truly displayed." The other students seemed to have internalized this concept, and naturally sat down at the wheel with the general idea of yunomi (tea cup) or chawan (rice bowl) in their heads. The frustration I felt when asked to defend the practicality of my first pathetic pots led me to look up the Japanese word for bowl, hachi, and use that across the board.

Of course, the next question was never far behind— what was this particular hachi to be used for?

Centering

As the above implies, I am a fairly goal-oriented person. I savor the feeling of getting things done efficiently, and I am in-step with western society in this, I think. This is not, however, the philosophy with which to approach ceramics. I can't count the number of times I've been told, "Slow down! you're going too fast!" Often, when I was ready to destroy my sad wobbling pot and start again, sensei would run across the room and put his almost imperceptibly moving hands to it. Inevitably, it perked up and became something worth working on. Forming pots is all about being centered on the moving wheel, and if your hands move too quickly, the clay begins to wobble and is soon
in danger of having no useful future. From my teacher I am learning patience. The clay can become a sturdy, useful, beautiful pot, but I must tune in and concentrate on centering and moving with the clay, not in ignorance of it or against it. Kanjiro Kawai, a Kyoto potter whose home is now a lovely museum, also created poems about art and life. He wrote,

Who is moving?

This hand of mine?
Centering pots on the wheel requires an almost Zen-like concentration, and a willingness to sacrifice personal desire to focus on an external goal. The same can be said of fitting into a new culture first-hand knowledge of the day-to-day routines and values of the culture are essential, as is an ability to set aside one’s own cultural biases and truly accept the other. Understanding can only be earned through patient observation and long practice. Like the clay, I am in a middle place, a center of sorts. Whirling about me are the new things I’ve seen in Japan, the new dance I am learning as I huff and puff to keep up. Within me are the quieter turnings of the places I’ve called home, the friends and family I often feel closer to than to my neighbors, despite the thousands of miles between us. I am in the center, centering, and it is hard.

When our class’ first batch of pottery came out of the kiln, it was easy to identify the two all-nighter-sized coffee mugs I had made, hulking among the flock of dainty yunomi and chawan. I picked them up, pleased, and as I turned them to catch the light, Kitou-sensei came over. They’re good, he said. They look like Heidi, he said. And with a laugh, they certainly aren’t Japanese. Why did that hurt? And yet, almost two years later, when a visiting friend scoffed at the organically shaped bowl I proudly pointed to as “my pottery,” I had a hard time being civil and remembering that when I first saw this sort of bowl, formed by putting a thin sheet of clay on a rock, I wondered, too, why anyone wasted their time on such things, and went on making my big mugs with handles. My center has been slipping, through my months at the wheel. I am being formed.

No Ears, No Mouth, Only Eyes, Only Hands
I had been told that we would be glazing that night. I wore particularly ratty clothes. I was ready to dive in, to give my masterpieces the coats of many colors they deserved. But by the time the evening was up, I had dissolved into a weepy panic. Where were the bright jewel colors I had imagined? How was I to entrust my hard-earned pots to the dubious contents of the plastic vats provided, each not very different from the next, to my eye? Never have I been as frustrated with my Japanese ability as those glazing panic nights at the end of each term. I had the dubious privilege of learning the art of pottery in a remarkably language-free environment. Rather, the fault was not with the environment, but my ears, not yet trained to Japanese. I often thought of this as a major disadvantage. Sometimes just a familiar word could have saved me from sending yet another infant pot to oblivion. Yet this reliance on eye and hand was, in a sense, a necessary rite of passage. I learned that observation was key. I learned to look, and to touch, and to feel the clay. In fact, I later realized that my experience runs an ironic parallel to that of Japanese ceramic apprentices. In his book Inside Japanese Ceramics, Richard L. Wilson explains,

Traditional pottery apprenticeship stresses incidental tasks, silent observation, and trial and error. The teacher does not tell the student how to position the fingers in making a rim, how long to grind a pigment, or when to stoke the kiln. This is a lonely road, but the solitude provides focus and self-reliance.

I, too, was privileged to walk this “lonely road,” and develop the visual and senses first. But how glorious it is now, these long months and years later, to understand the chatter of the studio, the admonitions and advice of my sensei! And how much more I am able to sympathize with my own students, adrift in the sea of English I have been brought to Japan to provide.

Determinations
As the calendar turns through the months here and the wheel turns before me, I begin to analogize. I am the potter, my students are the clay. At first I feel that this is far too strong, and would rather not put myself in the position of molder and maker. But I think again, and know that the clay is not static but dynamic, and plays a vital role in its own development. The character of the clay determines what sort of pot it will become, and what sort of forms it will fight against. This past term I used a particularly rough clay one evening, created a few crashed beginnings, and eventually coaxed out a rice bowl and small flower pot with surfaces of a strong nubby texture. The next week I trimmed them slowly, careful to maintain their personality. I have been given the opportunity to work in a position of leadership with young people in Japan, one set of the many hands that form them. I hope they have felt no respect for who they are, even in my encouragement to strive for progress in English communication.

Then again, I am the clay, and my students, the other teachers and administrators, the office workers and shop keepers, the pop stars and manga writers, all these have formed me in the past two and a half years. A student writes a funny journal or tells a personal story, and I am changed. I won’t forget the chabana teacher who slowly rotated a flower 360 degrees, showing me how the flower’s expression changes, from cheerful to wistful to sad to shy and so on, depending on the angle. I know autumn has arrived when the sweet potato man comes singing through the streets. I have been molded by these people, and I am thankful.

One of my first looks into Japanese ceramics was through the eyes of Leila Philip, who came to Japan as an apprentice to a potter in Kyushu, but learned at least as much about daily life in small town Japan as about forming the clay. In her book, The Road through Miyama, she writes,

I hold my right hand up to the light and look at it slowly. The skin is cracked in places, wrinkled and dry from daily contact with clay...it looks more like a tool than a hand...Fall spent on teacups, winter repeating rice bowls, then spring concentrating on plates, and finally summer months of small-necked bottles and flower holders my hands have been molded too.

In the end, neither the potter nor the clay remain unchanged. As the potter’s hands move the clay toward form and function, their intertwining awakens a spinning in the potter, a dream of centering, and a faith in the integrity of the soil. These truths I have learned by doing, my hands in the clay, and I will take them with me when I go.

I have now participated in five eleven-week pottery sessions, and I am starting my sixth. I have learned much about clay and about people. I have learned that no pet is true until it has gone from the earth to the kneading table to the wheel, until it has been trimmed and dried and glazed, until it has been transformed in the fire. I can fit two more sessions into my time here, and I hope to further develop the skills of kitaneri and forming on the electric wheel. Last week Kitou-sensei asked if I wanted to help him fire the next set of pots, which will give me a fuller sense of the whole process. Yet, eventually I will have to go. Perhaps I will return here someday, as I have come to love my Japanese home, and I will certainly explore pottery further in the home of my birth. When that last day comes, I will go reluctantly, knowing that while in Japan I was a part of the spinning and turning and moving, that I invested my heart and hands, and was richly rewarded.
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 11 and 12. 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 and may sponsor a number of similar activities.

Perth/Adelaide
JETAA WA/NT was formed to provide an informal means of fellowship for JET participants returning from Japan in Perth. While the chapter is aiming to ensure the standard of candidates from WA/NT remains high this year, its general aims are to help returning JETS settle in and find suitable employment when they return to Perth.

The chapter holds a meeting on the first Friday of every second month at the Consulate in Perth and each month in between involves a social activity. New members are warmly welcomed and we look forward to seeing newly returned JETS in our meetings after August this year.

Canberra
As we head into the southern winter, activity in JETAA Canberra is hotting up. Of course, we continue to run our normal slew of activities, including well-received school visits, well-attended social functions and a comprehensive orientation program that is being enthusiastically received by our 2000 crop of JETS, comprising 5 CIRs and at least 12 ALTs. Our language and culture classes are proving particularly popular.

The most exciting news is that the very first regional conference (covering Australia and New Zealand) will be held later this year, prior to the international conference. JETAA Canberra is immensely proud of the key pioneering role we have played in getting the conference off the ground, being responsible for securing the support (including financial) of Japanese ministries for a regional conference. We also put forward the initial conference proposal, which produced much excitement and interest from chapters in Australia and New Zealand. JETAA Canberra is looking forward to participating in the conference and continuing our contribution to the establishment of a strong regional identity.

JETAA Canberra representatives look forward to reporting on more of our activities and to meeting with other JETAA chapter reps in Tokyo in November at this year’s international conference.

Edmonton
It’s been another exciting year here in Edmonton with more great things to come such as the World Triathlon Championships and the World Track and Field Championships. The NAJETAA has also had a busy year with a reception for returning JETS in October, a Christmas party, free tickets to the premiere of “Snow Falling on Cedars”, a skating and ramen party, and much more. This year we have also focused on building stronger ties with the local Japanese community by becoming associate members of the Japan Canada Business Association and attending events organized by the Northern Lights Club of Edmonton. Alumni members have also been active in promoting the JET programme and assisting the Consulate General conduct this year’s JET interviews. Several alumni members also participate in the Consulate’s “Japan Days” program by visiting JHS throughout the region, teaching students about various aspects of Japanese culture.

On the cultural side, Edmonton has played host to two amazing taiko groups from Japan - Hatodaiko and Ayatsuzumi. Several alumni had the opportunity to attend their performances in addition to an origami festival and several other cultural events. Upcoming events include the Pre-Departure Orientations, a spring festival at the Kurimoto Japanese Gardens, a Kimono dying workshop and an anime festival.

More information on our Chapter and our upcoming events can be found at: www.jet.org/NAJETAA or contact us by email: najetaa@egroups.com or clarkebi@planet.com.net. We look forward to hearing from you.

Vancouver
Coming back to BC? The 300-strong BC Chapter of the JETAA is looking forward to meeting you. We are an active chapter that has monthly gatherings including social, educational and fun ones.

Upcoming events:
September — Welcome Back Party for Returnees
November — Re-entry & Career Seminar
Monthly — Hikes, Cooking classes, Meetings, Pub Nites
Programs — Mentor Program, Tatami Timeshare Program,
Returnee Website
For more info and contacts, check out our website at www.jetaabc.ca.

Germany
The Regional Representative for JETAA in Germany is Frank Bender. The German group is still planning a homepage for the current year. If you return this year and want to get involved in our work, please contact the German Regional Representative. All returning JETS are welcome to help.

Ireland
IRI Dublin welcomes home all non-renewing JETS. Don't forget to contact us as soon as you arrive (or before you leave Japan) with a contact address/phone number/email address.

IJET news is published four times a year and is sent only to members on the database. You must contact us to be included on the list. Have a safe journey home.

West Japan
Second Annual JETAA Charity Marathon a Big Success!
The Western Japan JET AA Chapter held its Second Annual Charity Fun Run on May 14, 2000. Over 170 people participated, including over 30 current and former JETS living in the Kansai area. The event generated 260,000 yen for TICO, a local NGO which provides health care service and infrastructure to impoverished people in Zambia. Although our chapter fell slightly short of its goal of raising 300,000 yen through this year’s event, a good time was had by the organizers and participants alike. Western Japan would like to put this experience to even greater use by producing a bilingual “Charity Marathon Guide” for the benefit of other JETAA chapters as well as organizations such as AJET, JALT, and local international associations through Japan. A big thanks to all the participants, and an invitation to other JET alumni in Western Japan to help make next year’s event an even bigger success!

Awa Dance Festival Homestay Opportunity
The Western Japan JETAA Chapter is working together with local international associations to provide foreign residents and visitors to Japan with the chance to participate in Awa Odori, Japan’s most famous dance festival. During the O-bon holidays (observed from August 12-15th in Western Japan), the population of Tokushima City quadruples to over 1 million as visitors from around the country and around the world crowd the downtown streets to join in the fun and frolic that is Awa-Odori. For nearly one week, the streets of downtown
Tokushima are closed to traffic while hundreds of highly trained or dance troupes—or "rens" perform for the crowds as the famous Awa-Odori music rings out from all corners of the city. This year, Western Japan plans to arrange homestays for foreign visitors living in Japan or visiting from abroad to give them a rare opportunity to participate in the festivities. In addition to watching other dance troupe, foreign visitors are welcome to undergo a brief training session, don a traditional Japanese "happy" coat, and perform with one of the two dance troupes sponsored by local international associations. (Transportation from Tokyo will be arranged by the Eastern Japan chapter if enough members express an interest in participating.) Moreover, all visitors are welcome to join in a beach volleyball competition on August 13th that is co-sponsored by the Western Japan chapter in cooperation with a local international association as a means of getting a little traditional exercise before an evening of "dancing." If you have never seen Awa Odori, you should not miss this opportunity to not only see, but also participate in the greatest dancing festival in Japan!

London

JETAA now has about 2000 members in the UK in chapters based in London, the Midlands and Edinburgh. We organise a variety of events for our members - some of these are social, for example, pub nights, paint balling and boat trips, while others are educational, such as lectures, Japanese classes and Japanese cookery lessons. We also organise an annual Natsu Matsuri, which this year is taking place at the Millennium Dome on Saturday 8 July. For returning JETs, we offer a Careers Information Day, which will be in London at the end of September. For information on this, or any of our activities, and to join, please look at our website - www.jetau.uk.freeserve.co.uk. All our members also receive a quarterly magazine, JETLAG, and, for those on email, there is a monthly email update.

Atlanta

We have an exciting summer ahead of us here in Atlanta! Upcoming summer plans include assisting the Consulate General in preparing a Question and Answer session for the new JETs in June, and a pre-departure orientation in July. We will continue to volunteer for the IRC (International Rescue Committee), an organization that works to settle refugees from many countries in the Atlanta area. In August, we will begin helping with the IRC’s international youth program. The Japan Caravan is also getting re-introduced with new props and trinkets from Japan. Members can volunteer to speak at public schools to educate children about Japan.

On September 16 & 17 JapanFest will be held at Stone Mountain in Georgia. JETAA will have its own booth to promote the JET Program and will put on a workshop for those interested in teaching English in Japan. We will also be welcoming the new returnees with a reception and dinner. This year we have plans to expand our organization into the Japanese community and organize more social functions and outings with Japanese companies. Information about these events can be found on our website at www.jet.org/jetaa-southeast or contact the club at jetaa.southeast@ mindspring.com.

Chicago

Welcome Back Barbeque, September 16, 2000

Jobs Fair, November 4, 2000

JETAA Chicago is looking forward to welcoming current participants back to the area. We’re an active and fun group, and would love to see you at some of the events we have scheduled for this Fall—most notably, the Welcome Back Barbeque and 3rd annual Job Fair.

Each year JET Alums new and old gather by the Clock Tower at the Waveland Recreational Area (east side of Lake Shore Drive at Waveland Avenue) to reminisce over a couple of hibachis, coolers of beverages, and games of football (American, mind you), frisbee, and competitive croquet. So mark your calendars—Welcome Back Barbeque, Saturday, September 16 at 1:00 p.m. If it happens to be raining, head on over to the Marigold Bowl at 828 W. Grace.

Also in September, we are planning to attend the Around the Coyote Arts Festival in Wicker Park (9/9), and to go camping at Starved Rock in LaSalle-Peru, IL (still working out the details). If you want to go hook up with us in August, join us for the Chicago Cubs v San Diego, 7:05 start (Reserve with Selima Ani by 8/13). Please contact Selima Ani at saphoto@onebox.com to RSVP or with questions.

A Job Fair will be held for all JET alumni on November 4th, 2000 at the Japan Information Center (737 N. Michigan Ave., 10F) in Chicago. Representatives from recruiting companies will be present, and area alumni will speak on the importance of networking and marketing your JET experience. Don’t miss it. Please contact Jobs Coordinator Nancy Schaaf at nschauf@yahoo.com or 773-477-9547 for more information.

We hope to hear from you upon your return. To join JETAA Chicago, contact Andrew Osanka, Database Coordinator, at andaboy5@msn.com or 773-935-6764.

See you soon!

Houston

JETAA USA Region 9, based in Houston, Texas, has a variety of activities and special events to meet the wide interests of the over 250 JET Alumni living in Texas and Oklahoma. To learn more about our chapter, upcoming events, and life in the area please visit our website at http://www.jet.org/usa9.

All returning JETs should contact Sara Revell at the Japanese Consulate-General in Houston at (713) 652-2977 or send an e-mail to jetcoord@ccgohouston.org. 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 Consulate-General of Japan. This pleasant event provides the chance to meet fellow returnees, alumni and learn a little about life in Houston.

The Keitai Samurai, our quarterly newsletter, publishes information on Japan-related happenings in the region, chapter events, and articles on Japan. Current and past editions are available on our website (http://www.jet.org/usa9). As the chapter grows and progresses more and more of our publications will go electronic.

The chapter also helps returning JETs with their job search by publishing job openings in the newsletter 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 one of the few JETAA chapters in the world to have an annual regional conference. Conference topics included: employment, financial planning, reverse culture shock and the Japanese education system. This year’s conference was held on March 17 - 18, 2000, in Houston. Due to our ever growing membership this year’s conference showed progress in establishing sub-chapters in Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio.

Our organization also contributes to the cultural variety of Houston through our participation in numerous cultural events, like the Japan Festival. In cooperation with the Japanese
JETAA REGIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

Consulate, we sponsor school visits to educate students about Japan and her relationship with the United States. It’s a great investment that only requires a little time.

Of course, our chapter is very social and has regular outings. Last year’s events included sake tasting; an Astros game; karaoke contest (1st prize was a pair of tickets to Tokyo on Continental Airlines); “Art Nite”; Bonenkai; and Shinenkai. We all look forward to welcoming you and showing you our famous, warm Texas hospitality!

Seattle (Pacific Northwest)
The JETAA of the Pacific Northwest includes a large geographical region: Washington, Idaho & Montana. Our membership base consists of about 250 people, with 50-75 active members who live primarily in the Seattle area.

In order to attend to chapter business, we hold an annual chapter meeting every February; the steering council (comprised of elected officers and committee chairs) meets on the first Monday of every month. All members are welcome to attend these meetings.

In 2000, we have continued to develop our annual Social programs as well as initiating several new activities. Annually we hold the following events: the Shinen-kai, a Hanami Picnic, River Rafting, a Wine & Beer Tasting Tour, a Summer Picnic and Christmas Party. We gather at local restaurants for monthly dinners and the Arts Committee selects novels and Japanese films for group attendance and discussion.

This year the PNW JETAA is happy to host the first PNW Regional JETAA conference. The event will be held on Saturday, Sept. 16th at a local Seattle hotel. We have invited our JETAA neighbors: Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Vancouver, B.C. to join us at this event. Our goals in hosting this regional conference are:

1. To create a strong network among the chapters of the region
2. To discuss how to establish a rapport with current JETs before they return to the USA, how to recruit future JETs and also how to keep further develop the JETAA membership
3. To offer new returnees with relevant career information and an opportunity to network

We will provide new returnees with a panel of JET Alumni who can share insights about their professional and personal experiences after the JET Program. We have invited an impressive group of speakers from the University of Washington, Microsoft, NEC, and local language schools for a career forum. For further information about this conference, please contact us at: pnwjetaa@hotmail.com or refer to our website at: www.jet.org/pacificnorthwest.

Our Education Committee continues organize and sponsor a quarterly Japanese language class for JET Alumni members. Likewise, they are active in getting volunteers for Japan-related educational events such as the Japanese language speech contest and the International Children’s Fair. We continue to seek means by which we can offer our assistance to public school teachers in the area as well.

As a chapter, we assist the Japanese Consulate Seattle in the recruitment, selection and pre-departure training of future JETs. In recent years, we have also started assisting the Consulate by volunteering at their booth for Japan Week (a local event providing information about Japan) and also at the Sakura Matsuri, an annual cultural festival.

PNWJETAA publishes a quarterly newsletter that includes various information including upcoming events, chapter news and articles of interest on Japan-related topics. This year we have also instituted a list-serve for members and we’ve found that being able to reach most people at one time, via the WWW has been very helpful. Our website also serves as a method of keeping members abreast of activities.

The Career Committee provides beneficial tools for JETAA members in both the daily job postings via email and also at our annual Career Day in October. At Career Day we invite a guest speaker to address issues including finding your professional passion, how to incorporate your JET Experience on your resume and methods for approaching your job search. We also provide a training session on Re-entry into one’s home culture and a panel of JET Alums who discuss their professional choices.

The Community Outreach Committee has continued to develop more opportunities for JET Alums to offer their assistance at the American Heart Association’s Heart Walk, the Cancer Society’s Daffodil Days, and the Asian Crisis & Referral Service’s Rice Walk.

We encourage and welcome returning JETs to get involved with the activities of the Pacific Northwest JETAA Chapter. Most of our members agree that involvement with the PNWJETAA has given them an essential core group of friends. Through the shared experiences of Japan, we try to help make the adjustment to life “at home” much easier. As we develop as an organization it is our goal to not only share our experiences with one another, but to continue developing means by which we can share and promote our experiences in Japan within our own community.

Honorolu

Aloha Kanaka Maoli!

As you begin packing for your final departure from Japan, remember that you won’t have to leave the JET Program behind entirely. Unlike other JET Program participants, you are lucky enough to come from a land where Japanese food is readily available in any supermarket, you can hear Japanese music in your car during your commute to work, and where people of all races take their shoes off before entering a home. NGN (Nippon Golden Network) keeps cable subscribers up to date with the latest Japanese TV programming, so if you’ve become hooked on Japanese dramas, sumo tournaments or J-Pop, you won’t have to worry about finding a regular fix. In other words, reverse culture shock won’t affect you as much as most others returning from Japan.

The JETAA Hawaii chapter functions primarily as a social network for former JET Program participants and as a liaison with the Japanese consulate in Honolulu. We work closely with the consulate in all aspects of the JET Program, from interviews to orientations for the new selectees, so there are plenty of opportunities to stay involved in the program after you return to the islands.

Our chapter’s two social coordinators also plan a variety of events throughout the year to keep everyone in touch and involved.

This past year has seen remarkable improvements as our chapter has finally entered the Internet age. A website is in the process of being created (any returnees with webpage building experience will be very popular!), and we’ve just set up a listbot as a means for quick dissemination of chapter activities. We also hope to use the listbot as a tool for the Hawaii JET participants who will be going to Japan this summer. Any questions or concerns they have can be sent via the listbot to the entire JETAA Hawaii membership, which is a nice way of saying that they will never be far away from those who can help.

We’re always in search of fresh people and fresh ideas, so we look forward to hearing from you after you get settled back.
home. The Japanese consulate usually hosts a “welcome back” reception in the late fall, but nothing says you have to wait that long to get going. Please jot down some of the contact info below; we’re already waiting to hear from you! JETAA Hawaii website: http://www.jet.org/Hawaii/index.htm JETAA Hawaii e-mail: jetaahawaii@yahoo.com (a more “private” way of contact the chapter, this goes only to the JETAA Hawaii chapter officers) JETAA Hawaii listbot: jetaahawaii@listbot.com (messages via the listbot are sent simultaneously to the entire JETAA Hawaii membership).

Minneapolis

JETAA-Minnesota is the chapter of the JET Alumni Association that serves the State of Minnesota.* All past JET Program participants and MEF participants living in Minnesota are automatically members. There is no obligation upon members to participate in chapter activities, and there are non dues. JETAA-Minnesota seeks to promote the JET Program, support newly selected and recently returned JET participants, teach Minnesotans about Japan and its culture, and foster grassroots ties between Minnesota and Japan. JETAA-Minnesota’s chapter affairs are run by a “Core Group” consisting of committed volunteer members. Members wishing to join the Core Group or volunteer in another capacity are encouraged to contact us by e-mail. The Core Group produces a quarterly newsletter that is sent to all members who provide a mailing address.

*JETAA-Minnesota regrets the inevitable geographical focus on the Twin Cities. JET alumni living in Wisconsin are welcome to join if our chapter is more accessible than their own.

JOBS AFTER JET

One area of support in which the JETAA organization has become very good is Life After JET, especially in helping its members with post-JET career planning and job hunting. Your local JETAA Chapter (http://www.jet.org) is the first place to go as you begin to think about getting a job after JET. If nothing else, the networking potential is enormous. Many chapters provide some or all of the following kinds of support:

* Distribute job announcements by newsletter, email or chapter web site
* Maintain resume bank and mentor network
* Sponsor networking events, ranging from social occasions to formal events with speakers from companies or agencies to introduce local opportunities
* Sponsor job fairs, panel discussions (What are Japanese companies looking for? What kinds of jobs do local JETs have? What are graduate school options?) and seminars (career planning, networking and job hunting techniques, resume topics)
* Publish list of recommended resources: employment agencies and career planning services, local Japan related and other organizations, local library and other resources for industry and company research, internet links to local job information

For more general information on career planning and job hunting after JET, visit the JETAA Job Guide (http://cheno.com/job/). This web site features:

* The JETAA Job Bank, a job and company database just for JETs
* Original career advice articles written specifically for and by JETs, and links to job information on other JET web sites
* An email list devoted to JET job and career topics

Good luck and happy hunting!

Linda Chenoweth Kennedy, JETAA Job Guide Editor

AJET

Konnichiwa everyone! My name is Daniel McKelvey (please call me Dan), and I am the newly elected CIR/SEA representative for the AJET National Council. For anyone who doesn’t remember there being a CIR/SEA representative, it’s a relatively new position. It was created two years ago as an appointed position to attract the interests of CIRs and SEAs in AJET. This year it was established as a generally elected, full voting position. Aside from my representative work, I’ve also volunteered to be this year’s AJET JETAA Liaison and co-lead on the Destinations Home Page, which has taken over for the Destinations Career Fair. I’d like to address each below.

As you know, the JET Programme has truly blossomed over the years, not only in terms of what it offers but also in the number of people participating in the program. After starting with only 848 participants in 1987 there are over 6,000 ALTs, CIRs, and SEAs in Japan, and more promise to be on the way as the Ministry of Education enacts its plan to teach English at the elementary school level. With so many people on the program, the number of JET alumni has grown as well, and active membership in JETAA across the world has reached more than 10,000 people. As JETAA Liaison, I’m really interested in exploring opportunities to create links between past and present JET participants. Both groups serve as wonderful resources for each other. Present JETs will at some time leave the program, and aside from providing membership numbers for JETAA chapters they also have the potential to serve each chapter with their talents and creativity. Furthermore, current JETs offer a window into what the present state of JET is for anyone who’s curious. JETAA members also serve as a resource for present JETs. As a senpai, you not only assist them in career planning but you also provide advice on what to expect for “life after JET.”

Linking these two groups is my main goal for the liaison position, and I welcome any suggestions you might have. I will also be working on the Destinations Home Page this year. This project was started by the CIR/SEA representative before me after many attempts to organize a career fair failed. I admit to not being a computer wiz, which is why I have a partner on the project, but I do want to help with the content of the page. The page is already up and running, albeit a little rough around the edges. It can be accessed at: www.geocities.com/ajetdestinations. Because I see a definite advantage to linking JETAA to our Destinations Page as a resource for current JET participants, I will be in contact with each JETAA chapter gather your ideas, opinions, and support. I hope everyone enjoys their summer, and I look forward to working with all of you. For any information, or if you have any ideas you want to share with me, please do not hesitate to contact me at: danielm@city.gifu.gifu.jp. Until next time, yoroshiku!
FEELING AT HOME IN HONG KONG by CHRISTOPHER HARGRETT

I never actually visited Hong Kong when I was on the JET program. I figured it was going to be just another city just like Osaka. Big, dirty, full of people. It wasn’t till after JET when I spent almost a year traveling through South East Asia that I got there. It was an awful lot like Osaka.

Now that I am back in the U.S. slogging at a job I don’t particularly like while going through reverse culture shock, I go to Hong Kong on a regular basis to feel at home. Not Hong Kong the city, but Hong Kong Market in the Chinatown district of Houston, Texas. Compared to the real Hong Kong, it is, as the Indonesians would say, “Same same, only different.”

Of the allures of living and traveling overseas, the feeling that every day is an adventure is the most intoxicating. Going on a trip to a new place is an adventure for sure, but while I was in Japan, going to the bank tended to be an adventure, same as the post office, getting on the train, and the big adventure: going to the grocery store. How glorious it could be. Dozens of new kinds of mushrooms, thousands of fish, millions of boxes of pleasant looking young ladies holding plates full of delicious looking...food! The Kimichi lady introduced me to the hot stuff, which in later days would make up a meal unto its self. How many vocabulary words I learned! How I baffled the housewives in the check out line, who assumed I could neither cook nor clean, yet had no spouse with me directing me what to buy, and then paying for it. But it was not always a pleasant adventure. After one bite full of hope, desire and the anticipation that I could medicate my homesickness for a few glorious moments, I realized that those things, no matter what they looked like and how bad I wanted them to be, were definitely not, and never would be, donuts.

As I settle back into living in the U.S., I find it more and more difficult to keep that feeling that every day is, or is going to bring, an adventure. I’m no longer a foreigner, and things are no longer strange. It is not a lengthy combination game of geon, charades and map juggling to figure out where a bus is going. I got lazy in Japan, adventure would find me wither I had the energy for it or not. Here, donuts are donuts, and I can read the package to make sure.

I try to keep a connection to Japan and the time I spent there. Various clubs and activities that are Japan oriented keep me feeling that I am still learning things about the country I spent a great four years in. I am personally keeping a certain sushi bar in business as much for the food as for Mami, the ex-pat Japanese woman who runs it and reminds me of my school’s bookkeeper who armed with an abacus, white face make-up and kansai-ben from here till next week kept the school from falling apart by sheer force of will. I go to a Japanese movie as often as they come around. But Houston’s Japanese population is small, and the cultural things that do come around, while being the best there is to offer, don’t come too often.

While keeping the connection to Japan is difficult here, keeping the connection to a life full of adventure is more problematic. Of course there is the occasional trip, but with a job that only allows 2 weeks vacation a year, spending 3 weeks backpacking in Thailand or Vietnam is impractical. There certainly is a lot of history in the area, but the risk of getting lost on the way there and back is minimal. Even going to Brazos Bend State Park to see the 14-foot wild alligators is pretty low on the risk scale. The warning signs are posted in a language that takes no time or energy to understand.

There is a limit to how much risk I want to take on. Ten minutes of blithely walking around in the broad daylight by myself in certain sections of Houston would carry more risk than my whole time in Japan. And while I loved hiking through the persimmon and plum orchards of Southern Nara, I would never think of just walking unannounced through people’s property here. Far to many people are insured by Smith and Wesson in Texas, and the line between adventure and stupidity, while easy to cross, isn’t any fun when you get there. The prevailing attitude around these parts is “shoot first, ask questions later.”

 Plenty of places around here offer a lot of “adventure” without any risk at all. There are a number of amusement parks in the area that will drop, spin, plunge, twirl and loop you until you get sick. And according to the media, there are more “shopping adventures” in the local malls than I would be able to experience in my whole life. Of course, for the pleasure of all the “adventure” I could ever want, I run the risk of going broke for the rest of my life. And that sort of adventure is unfulfilling, even while it is happening.

So, every so often, when the homesickness for my former life gets too bad, I go to Hong Kong (market). It is one of several grocery stores that serves the huge Vietnamese and 200,000 + strong Chinese population of Houston. I walk through the doors, and except for my fiancee, I am transmogrified into the only foreigner. I am magically and instantly transported back to my Japanese hometown grocery store. All the people are shorter and darker. I can easily persuade myself that I understand most of the Chinese kanji on the packages and that the government mandated English stick on labeling doesn’t exist. There is still the risk that the package that looks like shrimp gyozas are actually dog biscuits. What looks like a normal pepper could incinerate my mouth, tongue, and lower jaw if put in an omelet.

While the stink of fresh durians at the door, the vials of “tiger penises”, and the dried sea horses test my ability to maintain the illusion of being in Japan, the shelves of sake, rows of soy sauce, aluminum cookware, and brown stick-like vegetables my fiancee Jeannie assures me are gobo, keep me grounded in my alternate reality. We ask random nice looking women and men what this and that are and the magical universal translator puts it into English for us. Sometimes better than others, which is remarkably like the way the universal translator put things into Japanese for us when we were in Japan.

There is also the highly anticipated risk that the universal translator may not work. We may go home with green beans to find out they are hot peppers. The soy sauce may be fish sauce. We may be shafted on the price of it-might-be-lettuce. We may walk out the door to find out we have to drive home on the wrong side of the road. We may bite into a donut to find out that it is an adzuki bean filled mochi puff.

And for a few glorious moments, I am no longer in Houston. No longer in Hong Kong, or Osaka, or Nara.

For a few glorious moments I am in a life full of every day adventures.
I realize many of you reading this article are at different stages in your life. Some of you may have just returned from an exciting experience on the JET program and are looking at somehow taking advantage of your new found skills and international knowledge. Others may have returned many years ago and are now well into a career in the workplace, possibly married, maybe even with a family, but are now looking back at your time in Japan and reflecting on all the goods times that are now just distant memories. If you are like me, you have at one time or another thought about a business that would somehow service the Japanese consumer. Now don't get me wrong, I realize that not everyone is Bill Gates looking at starting the next JTB Travel Agency but I can guarantee that you have at least thought about the idea of bringing your Japanese friends to your home country to see the fabulous town hall, or the one-of-a-kind museum. Well, it is almost as simple as that!

My original idea was to bring Yoshinoya to Canada. I did my homework and discovered that the head office was just not willing to listen to the idea. Oh well, so much for that! In the meantime, I had been talking to a friend who had also just returned from the JET program and he was interested in starting up a golf tour business for the Japanese. As it turned out, he faced the realities of needing income sooner than would be possible to get his idea off the ground. So one day, he sends me an e-mail about his thoughts on starting an English as a Second Language school right here in little old Winnipeg. Immediately, my entrepreneurial mind took over and I got excited about the opportunities. In the following few months, we set out to gather as much information as possible and put together a business plan. Five months later, the bank approved our loan and as they say “the rest is history”.

Heartland International English School is proud to be Winnipeg’s first English conversation school. Our business has grown consistently over the past year and we are looking forward to celebrating our 1 year anniversary in June 2000. If you have a moment, please visit our homepage at www.heartlandenglish.com.

The determination necessary to start and success in small business must not be ignored. It requires a huge time commitment and a thrill for the task at hand. That is why believe that all JET alumni are ideally suited to capitalize on their Japanese experience. Hey, what better way to live than doing something enjoyable but for the benefit of your own pocketbook!! So, get out there and start building your plan, the real key to success is to Just Do It!

Rennie Zegalski
zegalski@escape.ca

Many JETAA chapters maintain homepages. They are accessible from the JETAA homepage located at:
http://www.jet.org

A Tokyo-based travel agency will arrange round-trip airline tickets from the major international airport closest to the delegates’ residence to Tokyo Narita International Airport at no charge to the participant. Roughly two weeks prior to the conference, airline tickets will be sent to all delegates through a secure method of delivery, such as overseas courier service or diplomatic mail to the local Japanese embassy or consulate. The cost of any additional domestic flight segments in Japan or the participants’ home country will be borne by the conference delegates.

Double occupancy hotel accommodations and meals will be provided to all delegates for the entire conference period (November 9-12, 2000). This includes three nights accommodation (November 9, 10, and 11) at the Shin-Takanawa Prince Hotel in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo. Delegates choosing to arrive in advance of the conference or remain following its close will be responsible for making their own hotel arrangements for the additional nights in Tokyo. (A list of budget travel and accommodation resources can be found on the travel links section of the Eastern Japan home page at www.jetaa.com).

Over the next several weeks, the Eastern Japan chapter will work to confirm the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the official JETAA chapter representatives from each of the 43 chapters around the world. If your chapter is planning elections in the coming months and the contact information listed in JET Streams is not current, please be sure to contact the Eastern Japan chapter immediately at <Daniel.Lintz@jp.sony.com> or <gihanotakis@hotmail.com>. Thanks again for your continued support.

We look forward to seeing you all in Tokyo this autumn !!!
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(JETAA chapter homepages can be accessed from the address listed on page 10.)