Hello! Welcome to the 2004 edition of the JET Streams newsletter. JET Streams is sent out once a year to all alumni who request it. It is a forum that allows people whose lives have been touched by Japan and the JET Programme to stay in contact with the development of both the JET Programme and the JET Alumni Association. On behalf of CLAIR, I would like to send out a big otsukaresama to the participants just finishing the Programme this summer. Thank you for your hard work and good luck in your future endeavours. Also, thank you to all of the JETAA chapters and members who have contributed articles for this issue. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Steve Shipley - CLAIR JETAA Liaison (jet-aa@clair.or.jp)

**JETAA News**

**Membership Count and Developments**

Membership in the JET Alumni Association currently stands at 16,669 out of a total of 32,700 former JET Programme participants, according to the CLAIR database. A total of 1,681 JETs who completed their tenure on the Programme in 2003 have joined JETAA, with another 3,087 set to leave the Programme this summer.

In order to maintain strong connections between former JETs and Japan, CLAIR encourages former JETs to become active at the local chapter level. JETAA chapters around the world hold events in connection with their local Japanese communities, and as such, it is an excellent way to continue enjoying a connection with Japan and its culture. If you would like to find out more about your local JETAA chapter and become more involved, please contact your regional chapter representatives. A list of representative contact information can be found on pages 15-16 in this issue and links to chapter homepages can be found by accessing the JETAA website at www.jet.org.

**Request for Chapter Volunteers**

With recent changes to membership level requirements associated with forming new alumni chapters, and considering the increases in the number of new JET Programme participant countries sending smaller numbers of JETs, there are more and more countries with sufficient numbers of former JETs to justify establishing formal JETAA chapters. However, making contact with former JETs in those countries who are interested in starting a new chapter is often difficult. Often they do not know about JETAA or do not know the rules and procedures necessary in forming a chapter. In an effort to establish contact with JETs who have returned home after their tenure on the Programme, CLAIR, in cooperation with JETAA International, would like to make a general request for volunteers to help begin the process of forming chapters in countries with sufficient numbers of former JETs to justify new chapter organisation. The countries currently targeted for new chapter development are: South Africa, Singapore, Spain, Portugal, and Finland. If you are a former JET participant living in one of these countries, please contact the CLAIR JETAA Liaison, Steve Shipley (jet-aa@clair.or.jp), for more information about how to start a new chapter in your area.

**Resources for New JET Alumni**

There are many resources that JET alumni can take advantage of after their tenure on the programme. First, all alumni should check the homepages for JETAA (www.jet.org) and JETAA International (www.jetalumni.org). These pages contain important information that can help former JETs with their transition back to life in their home countries or to life in other parts of the world. Resources that can be found on these pages include employment and teaching resources, information about Japan, links to all chapter homepages, chapter event information and newsletters, and reports of the current changes occurring organisationally within JETAA International. In addition, be sure to check out the JETAA Job Guide at http://cheno.com/job/ for more information on career planning and employment.

**Pension and Tax Refund Information for Former JETs**

Every year, CLAIR receives numerous calls from former JETs regarding the process by which they can file for and obtain refunds of the money they paid into the Japanese national pension fund over the course of their time in Japan. In order to provide the most up-to-date information about how to apply for the pension and tax refunds, CLAIR has included a page on the JET Programme website detailing the refund procedures and associated contact information. This page can be accessed by going to www.jetprogramme.org and clicking on the Pension and Tax Refund link under the “Information for Former JETs” section. Please keep in mind that there are time limits on pension and tax refund applications of 2 and 5 years respectively. We encourage you to access this information and apply for your refunds early in order to avoid the possibility of being denied funds to which you are entitled.
The Fourth Annual JETAA International Conference in New York was held this past February 26th- 29th. One delegate from each chapter was invited to attend this year. There were 49 official delegates present and 13 countries represented (Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

On the first day, to open the conference, representatives from CLAIR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made presentations regarding the future of the JET Programme and JETAA’s role in their vision for the Programme and for Japanese international relations. Following the opening ceremony, intensive group sessions were held for the purpose of discussing the future of JETAA, challenges it faces at the international and chapter levels, sponsorship, resources sharing between and among chapters, and organisational communications. In addition, smaller break-out sessions were held so that small groups of chapter reps could begin to formulate a more concrete vision for JETAA as it continues to grow and change. It was a good opportunity for JETAA chapter representative to meet with those from other chapters around the world to talk about common challenges and their solutions, share ideas, and build a community.

In addition, after each day of workshops, welcome receptions were held to celebrate the common bond enjoyed by all of the conference delegates, Japan and the JET Programme. On the first night, CLAIR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsored a reception at the Williams Club, which also served as the conference venue. Then, on the second night, a reception was held at the residence of the Japanese Consul-General of New York. These receptions were a good way for the delegates to get to know each other better, form new friendships, relate their common experiences in Japan and talk about the future of JETAA. These common bonds and feelings of camaraderie helped spur vigorous discussion and were the basis of a very profitable three days.

While there were many positive aspects to what was accomplished at this year’s conference, perhaps the most important discussions were held with regard to JETAA’s future. A vision for JETAA was developed whereby the organisation is run more like a university association, whereby members receive tangible benefits from their involvement and the organisation as a whole pools its human resources as a means of obtaining additional capital resources for improvement and expansion. Along with this, as organisational management becomes increasingly difficult, the formation of a Board of Directors supported with a paid staff was discussed as a means of meeting the organisational challenges the will naturally develop as member and chapter numbers grow and financial issues become more complex.

With the articulation of this vision of JETAA’s future came a more detailed debate about necessary shorter-term goals that will be integral to its realization. The development of a comprehensive database of former participants and JETAA members and its integration into the existing technological infrastructure, sponsorship as a means of meeting increasing financial challenges, changes to the JETAA conference system, improvements in information sharing, new chapter development and the pursuit of non-profit status were key topics, the result of which will have a large impact on the future of JETAA.

Taken together, in the context of an organisation consisting of over 16,600 members and spanning 48 chapters and 14 countries, these are very complex issues, but what was apparent from the discussion was the fact that JETAA possesses in its members valuable knowledge, experience and networks of relationships which, if capitalized upon, will provide the necessary base from which to build an internationally recognized organisation with the human and financial resources to benefit both its members the cause of internationalization on local, regional and worldwide levels.

The results of discussions held at this year’s conference in New York, the International Meeting to be held in Portland in November, and the next International Conference which will be held next year in Japan will help decide the path of JETAA and the impact the JET Programme will continue to play in the lives of its participants well into the future. The conference in New York was the first step and the leadership of JETAA are intent upon utilizing such opportunities to build an organisation of which we can all be proud.

For this wonderful opportunity, I would like to thank the Consul-General and staff in New York, the CLAIR representatives from both the Tokyo and New York offices, and MOFA for their support and also to the hosting New York chapter for all of their hard work on a most enjoyable and successful conference.

Brenda McDonald
JETAA International Executive Chair

The newly elected executive committee of JETAA International for the 2004-2005 year are:

Chair: Brenda McDonald (Canada)
Vice-Chair: Cristina Sagara (Brazil)
Secretary: Alison Bond (England)
Treasurer: JF Mannina (USA)
Introduction

The JET Programme, which was established in 1987 with a goal of improving mutual understanding and internationalization at the regional level through foreign language education and international relations at the local level, is now entering its 18th year. The Programme initially had 848 participants from 4 countries, evolving into one of the most highly regarded and largest international exchange programs in the world.

Participant Support System

From CLAIR’s perspective, one of the main reasons that the Programme enjoys such a good reputation is the fact that the individual efforts and ambitions of individual JETs are strongly supported, and, as such, we think the orientations and training seminars sponsored by CLAIR are indispensable to the Programme’s smooth implementation. Every year, in addition to the Tokyo Orientation for new JETs, the various prefectural conferences, the Conference for Recontracting JETs, and the Conference for Returning JETs, which provides comprehensive information regarding the post-JET transition for JETs who are returning home, we also actively provide Japanese language instruction for JETs of all ability levels. Likewise, because emotional support for JET participants is important, in addition to providing counselling support through the Contracting Organisations, the Prefectural Advisor system and the JET Line, which is handled by CLAIR’s Programme Coordinators, CLAIR has also established a Counselling System Committee composed of mental health professionals who help manage changes to and manage the success of the entire counselling support system.

The JET Programme’s Recent Improvements

In an effort to enrich the Programme and the experience of all JET participants, CLAIR is currently investigating possible changes in areas of the Programme that need improvement. The main areas of the Programme targeted for revision in recent years have been:

- From 2002, the age limit for Programme participants has been raised from 35 to 40.
- As participants who have completed 3 years on the Programme are usually those with better job performance and Japanese language ability, additional 4th and 5th year positions of “Elementary School ALT” and “Specialist Prefectural Advisor” have been created for the benefit of the counseling support system and the Programme as a whole.
- The eligibility requirement stating that people who have lived in Japan for more than three out of the last ten years cannot be Programme participants has been shortened to three out of the last eight.
- At the Tokyo Orientation for new JETs, during the Ministry of Education workshops, we have added a section during which a veteran ALT and the JTE with whom they work perform a sample lesson in order to show the new participants what a sample team teaching lesson is like with the intention of shortening the learning curve required for JETs with little or no teaching experience.
- In order to help JETs with finding employment and making the transition to life after the JET Programme, CLAIR published “JET Alumni Activities Around the World” (2002) and “The After-JET Prep Guide” (2003). The goal of these publications is to increase the profile of JETAA and its members while also providing valuable information necessary for former JETs to make the transition back to life in their home countries.

Future Expectations for the JET Alumni Association

The JET Alumni Association is also expanding rapidly, now composed of over 16,600 members, with 48 chapters in 14 countries. One aspect of the increasing expectations for JETAA is in its capacity to act as a bridge between Japan and former participants’ countries. CLAIR places great emphasis on the role JETAA plays and extends grant money to JETAA chapters worldwide. Beginning last year, CLAIR has begun implementing a grant system for smaller alumni chapters in order to expand the benefits derived from JETAA involvement to countries with smaller numbers of former participants. As JETAA chapters have been established in many countries and regions, we encourage you to actively participate in chapter activities, to stay in contact with Japanese culture, and to help widely communicate the wonder of Japan to the world.
The 12th Annual JET Programme Essay Contest Winners

A total of 74 entries from current and past JETs were received for the 12th Annual JET Programme Essay Competition. After careful consideration a total of 10 prizes were awarded to the following entrants by a Judging Panel made up of representatives from a number of foreign embassies and CLAIR directors and staff:

**Grand Jury Prize:**
Catherine Chung (ALT, Kumamoto)
Alice Beban (ALT, Wakayama)

**Prizes of High Distinction:**
Lia Pas (ALT, Fukuoka)

**Special Prizes:**
Suzanne Belzile (ALT, Kagoshima)
Elizabeth Ong (ALT, Gunma)

**Honourary Prizes:**
Kim Austin (ALT, Oita)
Samantha Dawn Kennedy (ALT, Fukuin)
Dalilah Haughton (ALT, Saga)
Eirene Donohue (ALT, Nagasaki)
Katherine Shorrock (ALT, Aomori)

This year there were two particularly excellent essays and, as a result, the judging panel decided to award both essays Grand Jury Prize status. They are included below. The 5 top essays will also be published in the 2004 JET Journal and will also appear on the JET Programme homepage (www.jetprogramme.org). Congratulations to the prize winners and many thanks to everyone who submitted entries. A special thanks is also extended to the number of entrants that took the time and effort to write in a language that is not their native tongue.

**Harmony across the seas…**

*by Alice Beban*

**The battle ground of internationalisation**

I arrived in Kozagawa town in August 2002, with a bike, a backpack, and a righteous attitude: I was ready to do battle for internationalisation. My first lesson would explore racial discrimination. I would then move on to the environment and the role of disposable chopsticks in decimating rainforests. Mustn’t forget animal rights, especially as relates to eating whales. Then I would gather the young rights, especially as relates to eating whales. Then I would gather the young

They did not want an upstart foreigner threatening their livelihood. There are no young people in my town. (My prefecture, Wakayama, is the most aged in Japan: 78% of the population is over 45.)

By September I was all puffed out of internationalisation and feeling very alone.

**Turning Japanese**

I decided the only way to be accepted in Japan was to become Japanese. Nights were spent rushing between Japanese dancing, tea ceremony, singing group, and Taiko drumming practice. *Natoo* became my staple, competing for fridge space with juicy *umeboshi*. Practice before the mirror perfected my bow depth.

But, strangely, the more fervently I gushed about my love of *natoo* or seaweed, the more disappointed people seemed to become. Japanese acquaintances filled conversational pauses with the inevitable question of difference:

- ‘How are (schools/trees/sheep/mountains/mushrooms/blood types) different in New Zealand?’
- ‘New Zealander’s eat bread, not rice, right?’
- ‘Foreigners think different from Japanese, don’t you agree?’

There seemed to be no end of comparisons to be made. I just wanted to be normal and accepted as an individual, but I was always pulled right back into the box labeled ‘Gaijin Stereotype’. I felt that people asked those types of questions as a marker to reassert the space between us, rather than out of real interest.

‘I’m Japanese. You’re Gaikokujin (foreign). We’re different.’

There was an emotional barrier I couldn’t cross. I despaired that I would ever be let into the ‘uchi’ (inside) of the town. It frustrated me to the point of screaming:

‘Can’t you see I’m a person, not just ‘The Gaijin’?’

**A Middle Ground**

I see now that it was my warped concept of internationalisation, rather than the people around me, that was to blame for my feelings of isolation. As a student of South African literature, I learnt about the power of binary opposition, our tendency to define the world in terms of black/white, right/wrong, me/them, Gaijin/Japanese. My attempts at internationalisation had subscribed to this theory: initially by forcing my morals onto the people around me, and when this failed, by attempting to become Japanese: something I could never do.

It took an eclectic bunch of eight people, including a truck driver, a Ramen restaurant owner and a rice grower to help me realize that a better kind of internationalisation existed. This could be called ‘personal internationalisation’, the concept of focusing on the individual difference, and attempting to see through stereotypes to the individual behind them. The eight people that helped me see the light are the members of my singing group, ‘Tsukushi’s’, and the event that bought us together was the grandly named ‘From Kozagawa to Sri Lanka - Harmony Across the Seas Charity Concert’.

The concert began as a drunken thought I came up with during our weekly singing practice:

‘I’m going to Sri Lanka to build houses. I thought, maybe, we could hold a little fundraising concert or something.’

Over four months the event evolved to include my whole town. Fourteen groups would perform, including over fifty of my school children, and one hundred adults.

I began to spend more time at my singing group’s meeting place, the *Tsukushi’s Ramen Restaurant*, practicing, making programmes, writing speeches and talking. Over time, with the concert as a common goal, the eight faces of my singing group became eight individual people. I began to listen to their stories. Kazushi, the owner of a local rice shop and an incredible pianist, was struggling against the giant supermarkets invading even my tiny town. Meguru was in trouble after speeding away from the police in his dump truck. Hitomi complained of being married to her father in law. I can’t pinpoint where it happened, but it dawned on me that the barriers had gone. I realized that the whole time I had been storing up anger at the Japanese for stereotyping me, I was doing exactly the same to them. I had been obsessed with a me/them mentality:

‘The town won’t let me in. They’re closed. There are no young people – how will I make friends?’

Slowly I let go of my prejudice and learnt to see beyond the faces and ages of the people around me. The ‘Gaijin’/Japanese’, ‘Soto/Uchi (inside/
outside) dichotomy began to be replaced with something much more powerful: friendship.

**Making it real**

My lessons, too, became more meaningful when I concentrated on internationalisation by commonality rather than difference. I was determined to teach my elementary school kids about Sri Lanka, but the words I threw out at them: ‘poverty’, ‘war’, ‘sickness’, only turned them away. The concepts were too far removed from their peaceful lives in the Japanese countryside to have any impact.

Things changed when I made a ‘Sri Lankan school’ out of a cardboard box, complete with opening windows and doors, and photos of kids playing games, eating school lunch, and studying in classrooms. My students crowded to see inside. This was something they could relate to, something real.

‘Wow, Sri Lankan kids play soccer too.’

‘Look, they go to school just like we do.’

‘But there are no books.’

‘And there’s nothing on the walls’. From a point of commonality; ‘they are kids just like us’, we talked about the lack of resources for children in Sri Lanka, and how we could help them.

I remember one of my kindergarten five year olds opening the door of my Sri Lankan school, pointing to a photo of a laughing Sri Lanka child, and squealing in pleasure: ‘Kei-kun is in the school!’

The kindergarten teacher laughed.

‘Mami chan, that child is Sri Lankan, not Japanese. Kei-kun is right here’.

But Mami was convinced and jealous that Kei-kun had managed to get inside the cardboard-box school. I was overjoyed. How wonderful to be five years old and to see the world as full of Kei-kuns instead of being blinded by meaningless colour differences.

**All gifts great and small**

After seeing how well the kids responded to photos of real people, I asked Habitat for Humanity (the volunteer organisation I would work with to build houses in Sri Lanka) to help set up a letter exchange. They introduced me to Anika, a 13 year old Sri Lankan girl working on a tea plantation who could speak some English. We began a letter and photo exchange with my 6th grade students. This was a real challenge for kids who were still struggling to write the alphabet, but the excitement upon receiving a letter from overseas was special.

This exercise also provided the finest example of internationalisation from the heart that I have experienced. After a trying class spent struggling over letters to Anika, one of my 6th grade boys shuffled cautiously up to my desk. He was bent over, holding something heavy in his trembling hands. I didn’t know his name, but recognized him as the serious kid who didn’t say much, and was often picked on by other students.

‘Ee...Arisu sensei. Anika. Presento’. I took the plastic shopping bag he held out, and undid the well-tied bow. The bag was full, bursting, with one and five yen coins. I looked down at the empty brown chairs seem to laugh at me from the darkness. Whose idea was it to put out so many? What a joke. They’ll never fill. I’m glad for the dark, hiding the sweat gathering under my arms.

I spend my time rushing between the nervous group of students rehearsing, and greeting the people trickling into the hall. The chairs seem to be filling. Then Shoko san runs to me, breathless, her eyes sparkling.

‘Arisu. There’s a problem. No seats.’

No seats? She’s right. There must be 400 people crowding the hall, cramming the entrance ways. Its stifling inside, but the atmosphere is electric. I can’t remember ever being so nervous, and I hear my Japanese go awry during my opening speech. No one seems to mind. The Koto group performs, then a rock band, a guitar duo, a string quartet. The best moment is the kids’ rendition of the New Zealand Haka (dance of the native Maori people). We manage to get the whole crowd standing; over 450 people from toddlers to grandparents stamping their feet and shouting with pride: now that is some kind of internationalisation.

**And the grand total is...**

As the last note of the town song rings out, the Mayor, accountant, and assorted important people in suits retreat into a back office with the donation boxes under their arms. By the time they reappear an hour later, it is only the *Tsukushi*’s members and a couple of keen local journalists left to hear the result. The Mayor is serious but his eyes are sparkling.

‘Well, I think we have reached the target of 60,000 yen’. Cheers from the tired onlookers.

‘And maybe a bit left over...like 300,000. Grand total: 360,000 yen.’

**After thoughts**

Internationalisation is not something you need to battle for. It is not about highlighting the differences between cultures, or becoming a preacher. It is about bringing people together by starting with the basic: *we are all people*, and realising that this is more important than any differences. It needs an ‘us’ rather than a ‘me/them’ mind frame. It may sound corny but it took me a painfully long time to realise.

This doesn’t mean we should avoid teaching about cultural differences, or controversial subjects. Rather, we can approach these topics with sensitivity by first establishing something we have in common, and focusing on individual people rather than stereotypes. Now when I teach lessons about the environment, I focus on a world issues – local issues – solutions approach, rather than simply pointing the finger at Japan’s problems. For discussions about my native New Zealand, I talk about the lives of my friends – individuals who are completely different, but all identify as New Zealanders.

Internationalisation extends beyond the classroom, and in a sense it is what we were bought to Japan for – to show that real Gaikokujin are all different, and do not fit stereotypes. But, as I found, it is not always so easy to express our individuality. For JETs who are struggling with the me/them mentality as I was, I encourage you to see the people around you as individuals. Try to discover what you have in common, or even better, build something new together. For me, this was a concert. All of us involved with the project have made bonds that will never break, and have been touched by internationalisation, but undoubtedly the person most internationalised was myself.

Flying to Sri Lanka with a cheque from the town of Kozagawa and numerous messages of good luck in my pocket was a humbling experience. But more than the money raised, it is the spirit of a community working together that I will remember. I wish I could have taken people from my town with me, but it is luxurious to see the people around you as individuals. Try to discover what you have in common, or even better, build something new together. For me, this was a concert. All of us involved with the project have made bonds that will never break, and have been touched by internationalisation, but undoubtedly the person most internationalised was myself.
Walking through a field of *daikon,* you can sort of smell the scent of the tangy, white radishes that eventually seem to crop up in all different kinds of Japanese dishes. At first glance, all one sees are fluffy bunches of green, somewhat prickly leaves coming out of the soil. Sometimes the tops of the roots themselves will poke out of the ground, as if to say, “Oyao-san! I’m down here!” and you can catch a tiny glimpse of something deeper growing inside the earth. However, it isn’t until harvest time, when the whole root is unearthed, that you can see just how deep the root has grown. Watching something grow from a seed into maturity takes a lot of time and patience, but in the end, the result can be delightful and nourishing. Thinking yourself to be quite the careful and diligent observer, you might also find the things that finally do come to bear to be quite unexpected. These things unforeseen have the potential to become the unique and treasured memories that remain in our hearts for a lifetime.

**Seeds of history**

Many people have asked me, as an American of Korean descent, why had I chosen to live and work in Japan. This question was posed to me numerous times, even before that fateful day I stepped onto Delta Flight 55 to Tokyo, Narita Airport, nearly three years ago. When I generically answer that I was interested in living in Asia and learning about a new culture, sparing myself and my questioner a lengthy and detail laden reply, I am sometimes then asked if there was some reason I didn’t choose to go to Korea instead, or if I was concerned at all about the way I would be received in Japan, given the complicated and immensely difficult history between the two countries. In truth, I did feel that I might need to take care about openly exposing my ethnic background, unsure of the answer to the latter question myself. However, the answers to the question of why I personally chose to come to Japan are endless. Some of my reasons were planted in my very being, some of my reasons until long after I had arrived, these being things that might never have become apparent in my life had I not come to Japan in the first place, such as the treasured friendships I have made, and the unique life lessons that I’ve learned here.

**Planting time**

The memory of my first few days of life in Japan is a somewhat blurry rush of images compiled into two highlighted sensations, heat and confusion. I recall sleeping most of the day, after arriving at my host family’s house, only to be timidly awakened by the four year old daughter of the family for dinner. I had slept six hours, and it was already past nine o’clock in the evening. The entire family, four children, none yet over the age of 13, the parents, and the grandmother who lived next door, had been patiently waiting for me to wake up so that we might eat together. I was taken, children put to bed.

The next few days were full of Kyushu’s brutal sunshine beating down onto our backs and into the famous walls of Kumamoto Castle, and just about everywhere we went. We escaped the scalding heat for a short time in the tunnel museum and mountain springs of the Aso region, and the evenings proved to be a bit cooler, relaxing at home to the sounds of palmetto bugs in the rice fields all around us. During the daytime in the car or while walking around, I had been learning Japanese and teaching my family English through a pointing game, where we would point at an object, and say its name in our native languages. Sometimes the children would up the difficulty level of the game by pointing to objects whizzing past us on the highway as we sped along. How much vocabulary we were retaining I wasn’t sure, but I was content in playing these games with them, and little by little, the natural shyness that inevitably exists when people meet for the first time, seemed to melt away into laughter, and with that, also seemed to dissipate any language barriers that might have been there.

Before going to bed, my host mother, Rie, and I would sit at the kitchen table, laden with dictionaries, paper, and pencils, our minds filled with a desire to understand one another. Although we had only just met, I feel as though we seemed to have had a silent kind of connection with one another, and in broken English, scattered with bits of Japanese, we truly became a family.

**Sprouts and first true leaves**

Those late night talks at the kitchen table reminded me of the talks I used to have with my own mother in our home in Miami, which would fill me with all the warmth of family, sharing our ideas, feelings, and finding new understanding. I felt so distant upon arriving from all that I had once known, and yet with this family, I began to feel as though I might find a home here in Japan as well, somewhat different, but essentially the same in aspects most dear to me, tenderness and love. Rie would tell me about her children, about her life, and about Japan. She would ask me questions about my own life as well, and wanted to know what my family was like, the place I had come from, and why I had decided to move so far away from my birthplace. It was wonderful learning about her life, her thoughts and ideas, and knowing that she also had a genuine interest in mine; together we could laugh at the things we shared in common that were unexpected, and listen to one another’s hearts in the quiet of the evenings as the sun’s heat burned off into the darkness.

On the last night of my stay with the K. family, I felt sorrow at the thought of leaving this place which had so quickly and yet naturally become a home to me. There were still so many things I wished to talk about with Rie, and I had become very fond of spending time playing with her children. It seemed that Rie also had many things she wished to tell me, and these things unfolded into one of the most unexpected and memorable conversations of my life.

Until that night, I had not been aware that the family was aware of my Korean background. Had they asked me, I would have assumed it to be a natural question and may have answered comfortably, given the trust that I had begun to feel for them. In truth, the fact that the subject had not come up was beginning to surprise me a bit. I wondered if I should say something. I wondered if it might change anything. I wondered what the answers to all my questions were about what Japanese people thought and felt about Koreans, about our shared history, about the teaching of that history in Japan; as I thought more and more about these things in silence, rather subconsciously, a river of questions seemed to be building up, only to be met with a dam at my lips. This is why, when Rie herself broached the subject, I was astonished, and the river seemed to have found a quiet release.

**A copious watering**

That evening, our conversation began with her curious questioning of why I had come to Japan, what things that I knew about already had aroused my interest in Japan, and what did I hope to learn while I was there. Her way of asking me these questions and the effort she put into formulating them into my language inspired me to look deeper into myself for reasons other than those with which I had so swiftly become programmed to respond, and give her my deepest and truly personal answers. She helped me to clearly see some of the reasons
that not been obvious to me before. I opened myself up to her in this way, but for some reason I refrained from mentioning my interest in learning more about Korean-Japanese relations. She then told me that the city Board of Education had sent her some basic information about me before my arrival, so that she could have an idea of who the guest she would be receiving from America was. Hesitantly, she told me that in the papers that she had received, it was mentioned that I was of Korean descent. My heart skipped a beat, but in realizing that she and her family had known this all along, yet treated me like a well loved family member, my anxiety about the possibility of things changing because of that fell to the wayside. I could not guess what she was going to say next, or where our conversation would lead. True, I had many questions to ask, but the actual asking of them proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated.

Rie asked me what my family thought about me coming to Japan. This was a difficult question for me to answer, because their reaction to my decision was mainly negative, based on concern for my well being in a country where perhaps hostility toward Koreans might still linger. While I was aware of this possibility, and though I had learned so many things about Korea and Japan from books and speakers, my own family, and Korean and Japanese friends, I still felt like my education was incomplete. There were still so many questions within me that I felt could only be answered by actually going to Japan myself. I was also interested in visiting the homeland of friends who had traveled long and far to come to learn about mine. With my family’s reserved consent, I came to Japan. Rie seemed concerned that my parents might maintain antagonistic feelings toward Japan, as both of them had lived and suffered through the period of Japan’s occupation of Korea. Neither of my parents maintained such feelings toward Japan, although it was true that my mother worried that perhaps I might be experience some harassment, or that feelings of superiority might still exist among the Japanese.

All of this was extremely difficult for me to tell Rie. Her kindness and that of her family toward me since the moment I met her made these previous fears seem completely unfounded, much as a child’s fears of monsters under the bed dissolve into forgotten figments of their imagination when sleeping safely in between their loving, protective parents. It was also complicated for me to talk about this painful history, and I could not ignore the suffering of the past that Japan had endured from the United States, which was another subject that had been conflicting within me. However, as she listened to me tell her how I felt about these things, her face was full of emotion that I knew to be empathy, tinged with deep regret. My anxiety about being able to explain all of these things that had been going through my mind for so long, and in a way that would convey my peaceful wishes toward her country and people, began to disappear as I saw that she could clearly sense my feelings and felt what I wished to express.

Rie understood everything. She also knew, without my telling her, that there were questions that had been brimming inside of me even as I continued pouring out my thoughts. It was then her turn to respond, and I listened in anticipation to hear what was in her heart. She began by telling me she was relieved to hear about my family’s view about Japan, and that I would have no need to fear my ethnicity being known to others. She was glad that I had wanted to come to know Japan for myself, and she thought I was brave for doing so, despite my fears and those of my family. Her eyes began to grow sad, as she flipped through her dictionary, searching for the words she wanted to say. She would stop on words and point at them for me to read. Terrible. Mistake. Unforgiveable. She expressed her sorrow at Japan’s history with Korea, and how the events that had happened had alienated two countries that had originally shared so much in common in terms of culture, beliefs, and origins. She felt that had circumstances been otherwise, our two countries could have become great friends and learned so much from one another. Japanese people in recent years, she told me, were becoming increasingly interested in Korea and hoped to continue developing a stronger, more peaceful relationship with Korea. I was surprised to learn this, and felt hopeful that perhaps my coming to Japan might also be a step toward such a future. I believed that if anything, the conversation we were sharing in that moment, was one such step.

She also tried to assuage my worries about America’s history with Japan, and the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, as I had expressed my regret and sorrow for these events as well. I wondered if she might feel some negative feelings toward Americans for these atrocities of war. These things too, she said, were terrible mistakes, but she felt that they brought an end to Japan’s period of aggressive imperialism and violence, and in that sense, something good had come about from those tragic events. To her, it served as a grievous yet important reminder of the necessity for the world to work together to strive for peace. She believed that our history was something that needed to be remembered, no matter how painful, but that it should be looked upon and used in a way that would use its existence to bring about positive change for the generations to come. She also sagely reminded me that the policies of a country’s political leaders do not always represent the sentiments of its people.

For future plantings

The conversation that passed between us that evening contained such delicate topics, balancing behind them a tremendous flood of emotions. The empathy that we were able to share lightened the weight of these feelings and emotions while at the same time strengthening them, and filled me with a sense of relief that my decision to come all this way had already fulfilled a great and unforeseen purpose. The importance to both of us of knowing each other’s hearts truly solidified my faith in my newfound family, and felt like a great omen for the rest of the days that would soon unravel before me. Rie also expressed her relief at our conversation and our ability to communicate despite so many possible barriers working against us. Her children too, she assured me, would be educated about their country’s history, and that she would take responsibility for sharing those stories with them, as well as the new one we had just written together.

Since those first unforgettable days, three years full of all kinds of surprises and lessons have flown by, and the composite of my experiences in Kumamoto, Japan has become more than something I look upon as a treasure, but an integral part of who I have become. Had I not come to Japan through the JET Programme in exactly the way I had, I may never have had the chance to meet Rie, and be welcomed into such a special home or come to know all the things she taught me on that unforgettable evening. What I have learned from being here and developing personal relationships on the grassroots level with the K. family, my students, and friends I have chanced to meet, has taught me more than I would ever have imagined existed just by scratching at the surface or taking a stroll through the country with a guidebook in hand. My memories go much deeper than images that can be captured with a camera and glanced at in a photo album. I set roots in Japan, which have been nurtured and fed by the loving care of the people I could only have come to know by being here and sharing life with them. Coming to Japan was a seed planted in my life, which in these past years has come to bear a plethora of fruits that have been nourishment to my soul.
Canada

CN 1 - Ottawa Chapter
The Ottawa Chapter of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET) Alumni Association, or JETAA Ottawa, for short, began in 1991 as a small group of enthusiastic JET Alumni who were keen to share their Japanese experience with each other and the community at large.

As a group, we work closely with the Embassy of Japan in their JET recruiting, paper selection and interview stages as well as help prepare the next generation of JETs for their adventure via orientations and workshops. We foster international promotion, promote JET and Japanese culture and language through volunteering at festivals, such as Ottawa’s annual Tulip Festival, and at career fairs at local colleges and universities. The JETAA Ottawa Executive represents the interests of the Ottawa JET and JETAA community at national and international conferences. We keep our interest in all that is Japanese fresh and growing and have also been known to dine out for sushi and sake – and have lots of fun while doing it all.

JETAA Ottawa is a wonderful group of over 250 JET Alumni who live in and around the city, and who get together regularly. Our main objectives are to provide a network for former participants of the JET Programme through regular social events, a monthly electronic newsletter and our website. Throughout the year, JETAA Ottawa offers activities for everyone, such as:

- Bi- yearly Japanese Language Lessons (Autumn and Winter)
- Book Club (every 2 months)
- Re-Entry Seminar – including sessions on reverse culture shock, resume building, job hunting and networking (Autumn)
- JET Survival Cooking Class (June)
- Assisting the Embassy of Japan with their Pre- Departure Orientations and Info Sessions
- JETAA Katakana Name Writing booth at the Japanese Pavilion at the Tulip Festival
- Bonenkai
- Monthly events such as dining at local Japanese restaurants, pub nights, pottery painting, Disc Golf, BBQs and picnics, skating on the Rideau Canal and hikes in Gatineau Park

If you are an Ottawa JET, a JETAA who is new to the area, are Japanese yourself, or/and are interested Japan, contact us to get involved in our work, please contact the German National Representative. To find out more information, check out our website at www.jetaagermany.de.

Enjoy your last few months on JET and be sure to look us up when you get back. We hope NAJETAA can help you make the transition back to Canada a little easier. Send us an email to naijetaa@najetaa.ca or visit us on the web at http://najetaa.jetaa.ca and sign up for our electronic mailing list to be sure to get the latest information.

Brenda McDonald, NAJETAA President
president@najetaa.jetaa.ca

CN5-Northern Alberta Chapter
Welcome to the Northern Alberta chapter of the JET Alumni Association, covering the northern half of Alberta plus the Northwest Territories and parts of Saskatchewan. NAJETAA was established in 1995 and has been very active since 1997. Our membership now has nearly 200 members with the vast majority living in and around the Edmonton area.

If you are planning on moving to Edmonton after JET, please get in touch with us. Being an active member of NAJETAA is a great way to stay in touch with Japan, network with other individuals who share your experiences, and make great friends. We offer you a chance to meet other JET alumni and keep up those ties to Japan…plus, we LIKE to hear all those when-I-was-in-Japan stories!

NAJETAA is involved with a number of activities including:

- Monthly events such as our Japanese Cooking Party, Monthly Drop-in Curling and Annual Bonspiel, Sake Tasting, Returnee Dinner and Bonenkai;
- Participating in the JET interviews and assisting with JET Programme information sessions;
- Planning and presenting at the Weekend Orientation weekend for new JETs plus publication of the Orientation Handbook for JET participants;
- Helping JET Alumni transition to life in Canada with our Re-Entry Retreat;
- Publication of “Sensei-tion” – our bi-annual newsletter;
- Keeping members informed of Japan-related news, social events, job opportunities and other news via our active electronic mailing list;
- Extensive website packed with information on jobs, social events, Japanese restaurants and shops in Edmonton, photos, publications and other useful information for JET Alumni and future JET participants at http://naijetaa.jetaa.ca;
- Actively involved in JETAA Canada and JETAA International; and

NAJETAA is a very active chapter offering a variety of events to appeal to a variety of tastes. Over the next few months you can look forward to the annual Returnee Dinner (September), 4th Annual Alberta JET Retreat & Re-Entry Weekend (October), Annual General Meeting (November), Bonenkai (December) and the Annual Japanese Food Feast (January). Keep up to date by checking the Calendar of Events or joining our e-list (check our website).

Enjoy your last few months on JET and be sure to look us up when you get back. We hope NAJETAA can help you make the transition back to Canada a little easier. Send us an email to naijetaa@najetaa.ca or visit us on the web at http://naijetaa.jetaa.ca and sign up for our electronic mailing list to be sure to get the latest information.

Brenda McDonald, NAJETAA President
president@najetaa.jetaa.ca

Germany

GR1-Germany Chapter
GR 1 Berlin welcomes home all non-renewing JETs. The National Representative for JETAA in Germany is Frank Bender. If you want to get involved in our work, please contact the German National Representative. To join the mailing-list, please contact the German National Rep (E-mail: genkisport@gmx.de). For more information, check out our website at www.jetaagermany.de.

Don’t forget to contact us as soon as you arrive in Germany (or before you leave the JET Programme) with a contact address, phone-number, fax-number and e-mail-address.

Japan

JP2 Western Japan Chapter
Purview: Prefectures west of Aichi, including those in Shikoku and Kyushu
Officers: Aaron Isgar, Amber Walters (Co-Representatives), Barry Louie (Treasurer), Lisa Honda (Secretary)
Membership: 229 registered members (as of May 2004)
Website: http://www.jetaa.com/westjapan/en/index.html
E-mail: jetaakansai-owner@yahoo.groups.com

Goals

- Support both ex-JETs living in Western Japan or planning to move here.
- Provide post-JET planning resources for active JETs who plan to stay in Japan.
- Support the JET Programme and the agencies that run it, including CLAIR.
- Coordinate information sharing with other chapters.

Main Activities in FY 2003

- Career forum for members, active JETs and the community
- Monthly planning meetings
- Social gatherings in summer and winter
- Activation of member’s mailing list
- Revision of web page
- Fund-raising for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent

Activities planned in FY 2004

- Career Forum
- Monthly meetings and social gatherings
Japanese Cultural Festival

**United States**

**US 2-New York Chapter**

**Chapter Buddies:** Washington, DC and New England (Boston)

**Chapter Representative:** Shannan Spisak  president@jetaany.org

**Executive Officers**

- President: Shannan Spisak  president@jetaany.org
- Vice President: Rosie de Frémer  vicepres@jetaany.org
- Treasurer: Jo Sonido  treasurer@jetaany.org
- Secretary: Ryan Chan,  secretary@jetaany.org

**Philadelphia Sub-Chapter Rep:** Therese Stephen phillyrep@jetaany.org

**Webmaster:** Scott Norman  webmaster@jetaany.org

**Newsletter:** Steven Horowitz newsletter@jetaany.org

**Continuing Activities**

- **Outreach to JET alumni in Western Pennsylvania, New Jersey, elsewhere**
- **Centralization and digital archives of files from current and past administrations**
- **Development of templates for event surveys, other procedural documents for JETAANY associates, etc.**

**Key Coordinators**

- **US 2-New York Chapter**
  - President: Shannan Spisak  president@jetaany.org
  - Vice President: Rosie de Frémer  vicepres@jetaany.org
  - Treasurer: Jo Sonido  treasurer@jetaany.org
  - Secretary: Ryan Chan,  secretary@jetaany.org
  - Philadelphia Sub-Chapter Rep: Therese Stephen phillyrep@jetaany.org
  - Webmaster: Scott Norman  webmaster@jetaany.org
  - Newsletter: Steven Horowitz newsletter@jetaany.org

**New Zealand**

**NZ1-Wellington Chapter**

In recent years, JETAA Wellington has been trying to give something back to the Japanese community. As well as supporting ex-JET participants, we have made efforts to involve the local Japanese community in many of our events, with special emphasis on other Japan-related groups and visiting students from Japan.

Last year’s JETAA Wellington events included a student trip to Kapiti Island nature reserve and bird sanctuary, a dinner with two prominent Wellington-based Japan groups (Japan Society and Wellington Sakai Association), a quiz night that had a distinctly Japanese feel to it, and a barbecue/sports day to welcome a group of teacher trainees from Japan. We also helped run a series of Japanese classes that were open to the public, and participated in International Languages Week, which involved a range of school groups.

This year, we are planning some similar activities as well as introducing some new ones: we will be having monthly drinks in various Wellington bars, supporting a Japan-New Zealand schools speech competition to mark the 10th anniversary of Wellington’s sister-city relationship in Japan, and we will be having our first ever Halloween ball.

Our organisation is steadily growing in numbers, and we look forward to meeting more ex-JET participants as they return to, or simply find themselves in, Wellington. If you would like to know more about us, visit our website on www.jetaawgtn.org.nz.

**NZ2-Christchurch Chapter**

- President: Shelley Keach  s.m.k@xtra.co.nz
- Vice President: Aaron Dods  aaron@saiun
- Treasurer: Andrew Wells  andrew@unlimited
- Secretary: Vicki Southgate  kiwivic20@hotmail.co.nz
- Web Master: Sean Lowry  sean@rationaldesign.co.nz

**Mailing Address:** P.O.Box 13232, Armagh Street Christchurch New Zealand

**Members:** 100

**Consular Office:** Consular Office of Japan Christchurch.

**Committee Meetings**

**Meetings are held bi-monthly**

**Activities:**

- JET applicant interviews
- AGM
- Pre-departure seminars
- Promotion of JET Programme at university
- Promotion of JET Programme in high schools
- Mid-winter social function
- Hanami
- Trivia Evening
- Photo Exhibition
- Japanese Film Festival
Future Events
- Fall Newsletter focusing on jobs to be published in December
- Bonenkai at a karaoke box in December, Shimenkei in January
- Tentative plans for nengajo-writing potluck led by the teacher of past JETAAANY-sponsored Japanese classes
- JETAAANY Elections in February, transition in March
- Focus Group style meetings to be held quarterly
- 2004 Softball Tournament Aug. 21
- Pre-departure Orientation June 26, 2004

US11-Pacific Northwest Chapter
Greetings from the Pacific Northwest chapter of the JET Alumni Association (PNW-JETAA). The PNW-JETAA chapter operates out of Seattle, and serves approximately 300 members across Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The purpose of the chapter is to support JET alumni in the region and offer social, cultural, educational, and community outreach activities that allow members to stay connected to Japan.

Examples of activities the chapter has held over the past year include:
- Hosting the JETAA United States National Conference
- Shinnenkai Annual Meeting
- Career Day
- Volunteering at Seattle’s Cherry Blossom Festival and at Bellevue’s Aki Matsuri
- Raising money for the Asian food bank through the Asian Counseling and Referral Service’s Walk for Rice
- Monthly steering council meetings
- Quarterly newsletters
- Goraku advanced Japanese study group
- Hanami picnic
- Summer BBQ
- Bowling
- Happy Hours
- Sushi and Okonomiyaki parties

In addition, JETAA assists the JET Program Coordinator with interviews and pre-departure training. JETAA sponsors an annual JET-together pizza dinner where departing JETS can socialize with local JETAA members. Our goals for 2004-2005 include establishing stronger ties with the Japanese community in the Pacific Northwest, and creating a returnee handbook for new JETAA members in our region.

There are many leadership opportunities awaiting interested PNW-JETAA members. In addition to the four officers (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer) there are several committees which are always looking for new members. The current committees are newsletter, social, community outreach/education, technology/website, career development, and membership.

If you are relocating to the Pacific Northwest and are interested in joining the chapter’s listserv, contact the listserv moderator at pnwjetaa@yahoogroups.com. PNW-JETAA’s listserv is an amazing resource for information on Japan-related events, career/networking information, job listings, and much more. For more details on PNW-JETAA membership, please contact the JET Program Coordinator at pnwmembership@jet.org or visit our website at www.jet.org/pacificnorthwest.

Shannon Quinn, President - PNW JET Alumni Association
pnwofficers@jet.org

US13-Northern California Chapter
www.jetaanc.org

We held a tax seminar for returning JETS this year, helping them to navigate the complicated US federal and California tax code. JETASCC put us in touch with a great Japanese-American tax accountant who flew up for the day to San Francisco and taught us how to file taxes when you have spent time overseas. It was particularly effective in drawing newly returned alumni into the JETANCFold.

Our career forum also took on a new level as we invited recruiters from the state department, local universities, educational establishments and nonprofits. They considered JET to be a “target rich” environment, and allowed both old and new alumni to explore career options. The one day event at a San Francisco hotel was backed up by smaller JET alumni lead sessions on specific topics such as “Japan related jobs.” Following the successful introduction of our annual scholarship program for high school students going on to university last year, we extended the PR/marketing for the program and greatly increased the number of applications we received. Working closely with the Japanese teacher community in our region, as well as cultural organisations, we managed to get the word out a lot further this year. The board of directors selected Hank Lai to receive this year’s $1000 award.

Another follow on success is the yahooligues chat board for departing JETS. We invite all newly selected JETS and JETAAANC members to join a group, and returned JETS answer questions that the new JETS may have. This years new JETS have started to arrange pre-departure pub nights and other get togethers, sharing information and getting to know each other as they leave for Japan.

Timothy Morey - JETAAANC

US14-Southern California Chapter
This Year’s Activities:
- July:       Annual Picnic
- August:    “Through Our Eyes: Photo Sketches of JET Journeys” Exhibit at Shimeji Gallery in Pasadena
- September: Annual Golf Tournament and Transition dinner
- October:   Welcome Back at Oktoberfest
- November: Annual Member Retreat
- December: Bonenkai and gift exchange
- January:   Semi-formal Shinnenkai

Contact info is www.jetaasc.org where more info, monthly newsletters, and our calendar can be found. Officers can be contacted atofficers@jetaasc.org.

US15-Hawaii Chapter
JETAA Hawaii has an exciting year planned ahead. As the year progresses, we will be involved with numerous Japanese events throughout our communities. We are in the process of establishing a network to build a solid reputation volunteering with community organisations, projects, school visits, and charity events.

Each year, JETAA Hawaii plays an instrumental role in the Japan America Society of Hawaii’s (JASH) Japan Wizards Competition. Formerly known as the Japan Bowl, Japan Wizards brings together students from public and private high schools throughout our State to compete in their knowledge of Japanese customs, culture, language, economy, sports and leisure, literature, and history. JETAA Hawaii members assist in the research of questions, moderate and assist in judging of the competition. It is a very successful event. The winners of the competition, which include a total of four schools, three members per team, from two public and two private high schools, win an all expense trip to Japan for one week. While in Japan, the Hawaii students visit schools and share each other’s cultural differences and similarities. It is truly an “internationalization” experience. Hence, the students are essentially engaging in the mission of the JET Programme, which is why JETAA Hawaii participates in this and other events with JASH...we are preparing the high schools students in Hawaii for the JET Program.

We also assist and volunteer JASH with their “Japan In A Suitcase” programme. We literally visit elementary schools throughout our state with a suitcase filled with items a Japanese elementary school student uses in his or her daily life. We show a visual presentation of an elementary school in Japan and its students going through their daily activities; including lunchtime and soji; which the students in Hawaii always gasp at, they cannot believe the students have to wipe and clean their school...especially the bathrooms. The students then breakdown into small groups of about five students, and are then given an item from our suitcase. They then, as a group, do a “show and tell” for the rest of their classmates as to what the item they are introducing is possibly used for. It is a very successful program that is not only educational, but a lot of fun for everyone involved.

JETAA Hawaii and JASH continue to work together on various projects, including the Ehime Maru Fund Organizing Committee. We are both honored and proud to be a part of this. We are also very honored that Honolulu was selected as the sister State of Ehime Prefecture earlier this year. Our constant thoughts and prayers go out to the family, friends, and the entire country of Japan for the tragic events relating to the Ehime Maru.

Another event JETAA Hawaii will be having, is our second annual “JET Seasons”, which is a display of JET participants' collections such as photos, drawings, letters from students, memorabilia, etc., at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii (JCCCH). Our first “JET Seasons” ran for one month in the JCCCH gallery and was very successful. We had media coverage at our Grand Opening, which was attended by dignitaries such as the Consul General of Hawaii, Consul General Masatoshi Muto, members of our State Legislator, community leaders, and various Presidents and Board members of Japanese...
organisations throughout our community and State. It was extremely successful thanks in part to great media and news service coverage, in addition to basic “word of mouth”. Its success was measured by an increase in the amount of applicants to the 2004 JET Programme.

We are also heavily involved with many community organisations and their respective events/programs. Even if it is not Japanese related, we try to participate so that we can get our name, JETAA Hawaii, in their event program in addition to hanging our banner at their event. We volunteer for a variety of things that range from cooking meals for fundraisers to helping out at “Kiddie Korners”. Our primary goal is to make JET a household name in Hawaii. Yes, there are many Japanese related organisations here in Hawaii and the Japanese culture is practiced daily in our State regardless of race or nationality. Many of these Japanese related events and programs are held in various communities at any given time. However, because there are many of these organisations, it is difficult to be a participant at times, especially when larger organisations are already participating. My Officers and I go out into the communities to promote the JET Programme and our Alumni Association. Then we, as a team, volunteer to make sure we establish a good rapport with said organisations to build a solid reputation of trust and dependability.

I must emphasize that even if there are only a couple of JETAA participants at an event, the goal is to get your name out there in the community, even if you are the only person representing your Alumni Association at the event/program.

JETAA Hawaii has worked hard to build a strong foundation in our communities. But we continue to strive for greater success and recognition. We often struggle with membership and participation, as all chapters do, but if each member does his or her part to increase the general public’s knowledge and understanding of JET in a way that is easiest for him or her to convey, success will come; slowly but surely.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share some of what JETAA Hawaii does. If there is anything we here in Hawaii can do for you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Take care and Aloha,
Nadine Nishioka, President - JETAA Hawaii
nadineinjapan@yahoo.com

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share some of what JETAA Hawaii does. If there is anything we here in Hawaii can do for you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

United Kingdom

UK2—Midlands Chapter

The Midlands JET Alumni Association was founded over five years ago by Chairperson Alison Bond, and is growing in membership every year. Today it is rumoured to be one of the UK’s most active chapters. The Calendar of events for 2003/2004 certainly provided a many and varied selection of events. Things kicked off in July 2003 with a pre-departure party for new JETs from the area held at Warwick University. This was an informal event where departing JETs had the opportunity to meet both new and ex-JETs from the area and find out the answers to any niggling questions about what life would be like in Japan. The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the delicious home cooked Japanese food which was provided, including sushi and yakitori, all washed down with generous helpings of Asahi beer. The Phoenix Arts centre in Leicester was the venue for the next event which entailed a screening of Dark Water by Ringu director Hideo Nakata. The evening was rounded off with dinner and karaoke in a local noodle bar. November 2003 saw Midlands JETAA’s first ever Taiko workshop which was a huge success allowing ex-JETs the chance to learn about Taiko drumming from a well experienced Japanese Taiko expert. March 2004 gave members the opportunity to cook and eat authentic Japanese food under the watchful eye of Japanese MA student and ‘chef’ Kumiiko Kani. The calendar of events for the rest of 2004 looks like this: in June we will be holding an Ikebana Workshop and in July another pre-departure party will take place; this time in a Japanese restaurant in Birmingham. From September onwards there will be a Karate workshop, a meal in a Japanese restaurant and Kitsuke (learning how to cut on a kimono), events for 2004 will culminate with the Christmas Party in December. Anyone wishing to join midlands JETAA can subscribe to the Midlands JETAA list via sending an email to midlands_jet@yahoo.co.uk or by contacting the website www.jetaa.org.uk where you can find out details of all up coming events in the UK. For further details of any of the events listed here please also contact events co-ordinator, Catherine Ross – rosscatherine@hotmail.com. We hope to see many of you in the future.

UK3-Northwest Chapter

For a JETAA regional group that has only been up and running for just over a year we’ve had quite a busy and successful one. We have organised regular monthly events that have ranged from the usual drunken reminiscences in pubs to more cultural affairs.

The backbone of our events list has been the monthly pub nights (last Thursday of the month - Kro2 on Oxford Road, Manchester) followed by a table at the Samsi Japanese restaurant a short walk away. An informal chance for us all to get together (new & old members) for a nostalgic night, followed by some great Japanese food, and let us not forget the sake!!! These will definitely be continuing into the new JETAA year.

Another event that we hope to continue into the new JETAA calendar year will be the Japanese conversation evenings. We held 2 last year, each at the Japan Society Northwest offices and had an amazing turnout. There was food and drink laid on (just enough to bring back the Japanese language skills) and a number of volunteers from the university community were more then happy to converse about Japan to people with varying degrees of Japanese language skills!!

To continue in the cultural vein we organised a trip to Tatton Park’s Japanese Garden which included a personal tour by the Head Gardener. The garden is definitely worth a visit to anyone heading up to the Northwest of England.

Other events included seeing the magnificent Kodo drummers in concert, cinema trips, picnics in the park and a special visit by members of the Japanese Embassy and CLAIR. Next year is looking just as exciting, with a number of ideas hopefully coming to fruition, including bringing some events to other cities in the region.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to making this new chapter of JETAA a success and we hope to see you again in the JETAA New Year.

To those of you we haven’t met yet; if you would like a night out in the company of those who enjoy listening to your tales of students, enkais and raw squid, please get in touch, we would love to meet up with you!

Fiona Welch (vice-chair)

Future Events

July: Japanese Conversation Evening
August: Pre-departure party
September: Pub/Film night

* If you would like to get involved in organising any of these events or would simply like to come along, please get in touch with one of the committee members.

The Scotland and North East of England Chapter currently has 441 members, with the majority based in Scotland. In 2003 the committee members organised a varied and exciting schedule of events, some of which were directly Japanese-related such as sushi-making, Japanese classes and a get-together at a local Japanese restaurant. There were also events with a more Scottish flavour, such as hiking in the hills to the south of Edinburgh and two very well-attended ceilidhs. The year finished with a very lively AGM held close to the shores of Loch Lomond in a converted church.

One of the most successful events was the sushi-making evening in February. The event was held in Niji, a small, Japanese-owned sushi-restaurant whose owner Katsuji Honjigawa demonstrated to us how to make various types of sushi and then let us loose with the nori, prawns and rice. Interesting and delicious in itself, the evening was perhaps most memorable for Mr Honjigawa himself, a chef with the sensitivities of Gordon Ramsay, but with not quite as much cooking skills!!

In addition, many alumni attended the Reception for ex-JETS held at the Consulate General of Japan’s private residence in November. The committee attended and Pamela Gupta (ex-chair) gave a speech detailing our Chapter’s events.

The new committee kicked off the new year with a hiking trip to Dumgoyne hill outside Glasgow, followed by a well-earned dram at Glengoyne Distillery, which nestles at the foot of the hill and is reputedly “Scotland’s Most Beautiful Dram”. Despite the threat of rain in the morning, the weather remained dry and sunny. In fact, one of our main aims this year is to hold more events in Glasgow and surrounding areas, and to try to avoid being “Edinburgh-centric”. The hike to Dumgoyne kick-started our move away from the capital and in May, we followed it up with an evening get-together at Ichiban noodle restaurant in the centre of Glasgow. In addition, Eilidh, our Glasgow coordinator, is currently looking into the possibility of organising Japanese lessons in Glasgow. The Edinburgh Japanese classes have also started up again and are held every Tuesday evening for a set of 5 classes. Our plans for the rest of the year include a BBQ in July, more hiking (possibly tackling some Munros), ceilidhs in the winter and more Japanese cooking.

UK5—Scotland and Northern England Chapter

To continue in the cultural vein we organised a trip to Tatton Park’s Japanese Garden which included a personal tour by the Head Gardener. The garden is definitely worth a visit to anyone heading up to the Northwest of England.

Other events included seeing the magnificent Kodo drummers in concert, cinema trips, picnics in the park and a special visit by members of the Japanese Embassy and CLAIR. Next year is looking just as exciting, with a number of ideas hopefully coming to fruition, including bringing some events to other cities in the region.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to making this new chapter of JETAA a success and we hope to see you again in the JETAA New Year.

To those of you we haven’t met yet; if you would like a night out in the company of those who enjoy listening to your tales of students, enkais and raw squid, please get in touch, we would love to meet up with you!

Fiona Welch (vice-chair)

Future Events

July: Japanese Conversation Evening
August: Pre-departure party
September: Pub/Film night

* If you would like to get involved in organising any of these events or would simply like to come along, please get in touch with one of the committee members.

The Scotland and North East of England Chapter currently has 441 members, with the majority based in Scotland. In 2003 the committee members organised a varied and exciting schedule of events, some of which were directly Japanese-related such as sushi-making, Japanese classes and a get-together at a local Japanese restaurant. There were also events with a more Scottish flavour, such as hiking in the hills to the south of Edinburgh and two very well-attended ceilidhs. The year finished with a very lively AGM held close to the shores of Loch Lomond in a converted church.

One of the most successful events was the sushi-making evening in February. The event was held in Niji, a small, Japanese-owned sushi-restaurant whose owner Katsuji Honjigawa demonstrated to us how to make various types of sushi and then let us loose with the nori, prawns and rice. Interesting and delicious in itself, the evening was perhaps most memorable for Mr Honjigawa himself, a chef with the sensitivities of Gordon Ramsay, but with not quite as much cooking skills!!

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In March of 2001, I volunteered for a Habitat for Humanity mission trip with 19 JET English teachers from Japan in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Our purpose was to build houses for families who could not afford shelter. During a brief visit to the community school we were exposed to bare classrooms that severely lacked school supplies. Students receive two notebooks per year for all subjects, if the school has the funds. The few textbooks they actually have are decades old.

We were all shocked. “How could such happy children have such dreadful educational conditions?” we wondered. One year of tuition in the Waria Valley is only US$20, yet 25% of the kids cannot afford to attend the community school. For most students, the dream of education past 8th grade is impossible. But the kids seemed so happy, yet many had never even been to school.

As a group of English teachers, we believed that every child has a right to education. We returned to Japan with a mission, and I founded the Niigata PNG Association (www.tomorrowsforest.com) with another ALT. Since 2001 we have:

* collected over 50,000 school supplies from schools all over Japan,
* raised over $30,000,
* built 12 houses and a classroom in remote areas of PNG,
* given over 100 presentations throughout Japan in cities, schools, and churches,
* shared our mission with over 100,000 people in Japan.
* started scholarship and teacher training funds to raise the level of education in PNG.

Many schools in Niigata are reaching out to help. I have given 75 presentations at schools all around the prefecture. After each presentation, students take action. They write letters to students in PNG. They make booklets (using the backs of “recycle bin” paper from the teacher’s room) to introduce Japan and themselves in English. They collect schools supplies. Students see they can make a difference to kids on the other side of the world. This is empowering.

This project has influenced my life in a big way. To sustain the momentum of this project, I will go to PNG to work and volunteer in 2005 for a year. We have created partnerships with many schools, service organisations, NGOs and people in Japan, and the potential to keep making a difference is growing.

This project has taught me 3 invaluable things.

Although education is a right, only the very fortunate ones in the world can attend school. Students in Japan and America are indeed lucky.

Creating cultural awareness and tolerance among the young generation can bring the world together, one friendship at a time.

Our actions and decisions shape future generations. They are indeed counting on us. Tomorrow’s Forests are in our hands.
2003 JETAA Survey Results

As a JET Programme Participant

What country did you represent on the JET Programme?

- United States: 136 (43%) Last Year: 36%
- United Kingdom: 96 (36%) Last Year: 36%
- Canada: 44 (14%) Last Year: 10%
- Australia: 18 (6%) Last Year: 6%
- New Zealand: 9 (3%) Last Year: 4%
- Germany: 1 (0.3%) Last Year: 1%
- Ireland: 5 (2%) Last Year: 1%
- Austria*: 3 (1%) Last Year: 1%
- France*: 2 (0.6%) Last Year: 0.5%
- Bulgaria*: 1 (0.3%) Last Year: 1%
- Netherlands*: 1 (0.3%) Last Year: 1%
- Singapore*: 1 (0.3%) Last Year: 1%

- Not applicable: 34 (11%) Last Year: 14%

How many years were you on the JET Programme?

- 2 years: 113 (37%) Last Year: 40%
- 3 years: 104 (33%) Last Year: 32%
- 1 year: 95 (30%) Last Year: 27%
- Did not answer: 5 (2%) Last Year: 0.5%

What was your job type?

- ALT: 287 (91%) Last Year: 90%
- CIR: 26 (8%) Last Year: 7%
- Did not answer: 4 (1%) Last Year: 1%

After leaving the JET Programme

Did you experience reverse culture shock after leaving Japan?

- Yes: 191 (60%) Last Year: 56%
- No: 84 (26%) Last Year: 25%
- Not certain: 27 (9%) Last Year: 9%
- Still living in Japan: 11 (4%) Last Year: 8%
- Did not answer: 4 (1%) Last Year: 2%

If you answered “YES” to the above question... when did you experience reverse culture shock?

- Within the first 2 months: 130 (59%) Last Year: 50%
- Within 2 to 6 months: 62 (28%) Last Year: 35%
- Within 6 months to 1 year: 25 (11%) Last Year: 11%
- After 1 year: 3 (2%) Last Year: 4%

Do you still keep in contact with those people you met while on the JET Programme?

- Yes, fellow JETs other than Japanese friends: 283 (89%) Last Year: 88%
- Yes, Japanese friends: 251 (79%) Last Year: 68%
- Yes, Japanese co-workers: 198 (63%) Last Year: 66%
- No: 11 (3%) Last Year: 2%

- Not applicable: 17 (5%) Last Year: 1%

How have you sustained your interest in Japan?

- Through Japanese language study: 131 (41%) Last Year: 39%
- Other: 114 (36%) Last Year: 35%
- By meeting the local Japanese community: 88 (28%) Last Year: 26%
- Through JETAA events: 70 (22%) Last Year: 21%
- Through the study of a Japanese cultural martial art: 68 (21%) Last Year: 16%
- By working in a Japanese company: 33 (10%) Last Year: 14%
- Still living in Japan: 14 (4%) Last Year: 4%
- Not applicable: 34 (11%) Last Year: 14%
- Other: 34 (11%) Last Year: 35%

- Did not answer: 2 (1%) Last Year: 2%

Would you like to return to Japan one day?

- Yes: 126 (40%) Last Year: 39%
- Yes, but only for a holiday or short visit: 124 (39%) Last Year: 32%
- Yes, to work or live for an extended period of time: 54 (17%) Last Year: 18%
- I have already returned: 10 (3%) Last Year: 8%
- I am still in Japan: 3 (1%) Last Year: 1%

- Did not answer: 2 (1%) Last Year: 2%

Have your perceptions of Japan changed as a result of your experiences on the JET Programme?

- Yes, both positively and negatively: 172 (54%) Last Year: 60%
- Yes, positively: 118 (37%) Last Year: 33%
- No: 7 (2%) Last Year: 2%
- I don’t know: 2 (1%) Last Year: 1%
- Yes, negatively: 9 (3%) Last Year: 0.05%
- Did not answer: 9 (3%) Last Year: 2%

Regarding the JET Programme

Would you recommend the JET Programme to a friend?

- Yes, absolutely: 258 (81%) Last Year: 81%
- Probably: 47 (15%) Last Year: 16%
- Unlikely: 4 (1%) Last Year: 2%

- Did not answer: 5 (2%) Last Year: 1%

Did you enjoy your experiences on the JET Programme?

- Yes, very much: 180 (57%) Last Year: 59%
- Yes, for the most part: 119 (36%) Last Year: 35%
- It was alright: 15 (5%) Last Year: 4%
- No, not really: 1 (0.3%) Last Year: 1%
- Did not answer: 2 (1%) Last Year: 1%

Do you feel that you contributed to the aims of the JET Programme?

- Yes, I think my presence made a positive impression: 225 (71%) Last Year: 71%
- Yes, but with reservations: 61 (19%) Last Year: 20%
- I’m not sure: 12 (4%) Last Year: 4%
- I don’t feel that I made a significant impact: 14 (4%) Last Year: 4%
- Did not answer: 5 (2%) Last Year: 1%

Have your experiences on the JET Programme contributed anything to your perspective on life?

- Yes, an increased international outlook: 260 (82%) Last Year: 68%
- Yes, better personal qualities: 249 (79%) Last Year: 67%
- Yes, an ability to see beyond stereotypes: 210 (66%) Last Year: 62%
- Yes, a wider circle of friends and increased social skills: 233 (74%) Last Year: 57%
- Yes, an interest for life: 145 (46%) Last Year: 40%
- Other: 31 (10%) Last Year: 12%
- No: 3 (1%) Last Year: 1%

About your Japanese Language Ability

How would you evaluate your Japanese language proficiency prior to coming on the JET Programme?

- Reading
  - Non-existent: 184 (58%) Last Year: 57%
  - Elementary: 62 (20%) Last Year: 20%
  - Intermediate: 34 (11%) Last Year: 11%
  - Semi-advanced: 28 (9%) Last Year: 10%
  - Advanced: 7 (2%) Last Year: 2%
  - Did not answer: 2 (1%) Last Year: 0.02%

- Writing
  - Non-existent: 190 (60%) Last Year: 58%
  - Elementary: 60 (19%) Last Year: 20%
  - Intermediate: 42 (13%) Last Year: 14%
  - Semi-advanced: 22 (7%) Last Year: 6%
  - Advanced: 3 (1%) Last Year: 2%

- Speaking
  - Non-existent: 156 (49%) Last Year: 47%
  - Elementary: 65 (21%) Last Year: 24%
  - Intermediate: 47 (15%) Last Year: 17%
  - Semi-advanced: 47 (15%) Last Year: 15%
  - Advanced: 14 (4%) Last Year: 3%

- Listening
  - Non-existent: 158 (50%) Last Year: 47%
  - Elementary: 59 (19%) Last Year: 21%
  - Intermediate: 47 (15%) Last Year: 17%
  - Semi-advanced: 38 (12%) Last Year: 11%
  - Advanced: 9 (3%) Last Year: 3%
  - Did not answer: 6 (2%) Last Year: 1%

How would you evaluate your Japanese language proficiency now?

- Reading
  - Non-existent: 34 (11%) Last Year: 11%
  - Elementary: 117 (37%) Last Year: 39%
  - Intermediate: 75 (24%) Last Year: 25%
  - Semi-advanced: 59 (19%) Last Year: 18%
  - Advanced: 19 (6%) Last Year: 6%
  - Did not answer: 13 (4%) Last Year: 1%

- Writing
  - Non-existent: 41 (13%) Last Year: 16%
  - Elementary: 128 (40%) Last Year: 36%
  - Intermediate: 82 (26%) Last Year: 32%
  - Semi-advanced: 42 (13%) Last Year: 10%
  - Advanced: 7 (2%) Last Year: 4%
  - Did not answer: 17 (5%) Last Year: 1%
Did not answer       73 23% 21%
No                   39 12% 12%
Yes, slightly        63 20% 17%
Yes, extremely       58 18% 20%
Yes                   71 22% 26%

Has your experience on the JET Programme benefited you in finding employment?  

FOR THOSE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

I started this occupation immediately                                  29 9% 13%
Within a month of job hunting                                         53 17% 21%
Up to two years                                                      114 39% 36%
Six months to one year                                              48 16% 15%
I have not yet found a satisfying job                                  65 21% 15%
Up to two years                                                      22 7% 7%
Did not answer                                                      18 6% 2%

What is your current annual salary (approx. in US dollars)?

I do not know 37 12% 20%
They do not seem to have heard of it 40 13% 14%
I do not know 37 12% 11%
Only if you use it to develop your skills 26 8% 9%
No 7 2% 1%

Please feel that your standard of living is worse than as a JET Programme participant?

Do employers look favourably on the JET Programme experience?

Did you receive the lump-sum withdrawal payment from the pension refund?

ABOUT THE LUMP-SUM WITHDRAWAL

Did you receive the lump-sum withdrawal payment from the pension refund?

Do you feel that your standard of living is better or worse than as a JET Programme participant?

Do your current wages compare with that earned as a JET Programme participant?

Did you study Japanese while on the JET Programme?

Did you pass any recognized Japanese language tests while on the JET Programme?

Which of the following best describes your current state of employment?

Is your business related to Japan?

SPEAKING

LISTENING

Do you currently reside in Japan?

Do you feel that your standard of living is better or worse than as a JET Programme participant?

Did you study Japanese while on the JET Programme?

Are employers favorably on the JET Programme experience?

Which of the following best describes your current state of employment?

How do you currently reside in Japan?

How do your current wages compare with that earned as a JET Programme participant?

Did you travel after your JET contract came to an end?

Which of the following best describes your current state of employment?

What is your current annual salary (approx. in US dollars)?

Are you related to Japan?

Are employers favorably on the JET Programme experience?

Which of the following best describes your current state of employment?

What is your current annual salary (approx. in US dollars)?

Are you related to Japan?

What is your current annual salary (approx. in US dollars)?
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(Cont’d from page 14)

Approximately how long did it take for the lump-sum withdrawal payment to
reach you? %
Between 2 and 4 months 144 45% 50%
Between 4 and 6 months 113 36% 27%
More than 6 months 28 8% 10%
Less than 1 month 4 1% 2%
Did not answer 28 8% 10%

Did you apply for a refund on the tax that was withheld from the lump-sum
withdrawal payment?
I applied and received the refund 219 69% 70%
I did not apply 43 14% 13%
I do not know to what you are referring 17 5% 5%
I applied, but was turned down 7 2% 3%
I did not receive the lump-sum withdrawal payment and could not apply 3 1% 2%
Did not answer 28 9% 7%

JET Streams

JET Streams is published once yearly by the Council of Local Authorities for
International Relation. It provides information and updates about the JET
Programme and its Alumni Association (JETAA) to former Programme
participants.

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