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A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE



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Already, three weeks have passed since I was in Japan. Coming back to normal summer break after an intense 2 weeks is something that's difficult to get accustomed to, moreover, to write about. The mix of nostalgia for the liveliness of each day with the bore of summer homework now is a feeling I keep while trying to revive my memories in Japan.

I remember initially, I aimed to have a calm mindset throughout the trip to Japan. That didn't mean I lacked expectations, though: my favorite anime, a high degree of cleanliness, modernization everywhere, and all those convenience stores I've been hearing about in Japanese class. Starting on July 5th, 2015, the moment I stepped out of the airplane from Seattle to Los Angeles, the calmness I hoped for was quickly replaced with excited anticipation.

The JET-MIP days began with long orientations. But what I saw and heard during the orientation made up for all of the sitting; the lifelong friendships I would make, legacy of Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson I would take part in, and effects of the disaster I would learn about. After that, I was pretty pumped that I could take part in this amazing opportunity and to finally see Japan. Pretty soon, I was getting off the plane that took me to Tokyo and hustling onto a bus that took the 32 of us to the Kansai Institute, a place that became my comfy second home.

Usually, I'm not much of a morning person. While I was in Japan, that somehow changed to me actually waking up to the alarm at 6AM and not feeling sleepy at all. The only motivation needed was remembering that I was in Japan, and the anticipation would do the trick. Sometimes, I would need a knock on the door from a friend, but that only added to my delight in knowing that I had made friends that cared to start the day with me.

I can't talk about my trip to Japan without talking about biking. Aside from being one of my hobbies, it was biking that gave me access to Rinku mall, 7 eleven, Familymart, Book Off, and most importantly, allowed me to solidify friendships while embarking on adventures. It's so convenient and easy to bike with already established lanes on the wide sidewalk that the dangers of cars are eliminated. Since the only place we could have bikes was at the Kansai Institute, I missed them when I had to go through Sendai's Sun Mall on foot. It was in Japan where I got the impression that biking is really a good source of transportation and saw that the U.S. should establish one on a similar scale. Another time, I went to Rinku mall with some friends, though it was by shuttle bus since it was raining a lot, and we decided to ride the ferris wheel despite worries about the rain blocking the view and such. Really, when family and friends asked me, "What did you do in Japan?" I responded: I rode a ferris wheel during a rainstorm. You don't get that anywhere, you know. As for the question, "What did you learn in Japan?" To family, my experiences have told them that going abroad alone can be scary, but the fruitful outcome-- becoming more mature, aware of the world, interactive-- is worth it. To friends, my stories wowed them and motivated them to seek abroad opportunities when they heard about my desire to do so.

Meeting my buddy at East Sendai High School is another of my cherished memories. I thought that it was cool to start off our meet with origami, where the Japanese student taught me how to make a samurai hat, crane, and ninja star and I followed his directions. This simple event allowed us to collaborate together to produce a final product, fulfilling the goal of JET-MIP to connect the U.S. and Japan together through interaction. Although conversation in the beginning was a bit shaky, we quickly established common ground and found ourselves talking like good friends. Even though I'm not naturally a very social person, the fact that I could find the familiarity of a good friend in a complete stranger across the world is something I still can't believe I had done. This serves as an assurance for myself and only boosts the worthwhileness of this experience.

With my host family, I also felt at ease because they were welcoming and willing to interact with me even though I had trouble understanding sometimes. What made the homestay better was I not only had *mama*, but I also had *niban mama*. My host mom happened to be close with one of my JET-MIP friend's host mom, so my homestay was basically spent with them as well. I guess I could say that I had a two-in-one sort of homestay experience, and I look forward to another in the future.

Prior to this program, I wasn't sure how and if I would continue studying Japanese, since had I finished the last level in school the previous year. When I heard that others had plans to keep studying in school or even pursue a degree in college, I was shocked and also

questioned myself of what I might do to further my Japanese studies. I know that JET is an out-there option, though I'm still scratching my head with this part. But, I do know that I really enjoy living in Japan. From the little things-- biking, being able to find manga easily, having rain that didn't make me cold all the time (Seattle)-- to really applying my Japanese in conversations and increasing my knowledge just like that. I didn't truly take into account how much I liked learning and interacting with Japanese language until I went to Japan myself. Maybe I can't directly apply Japanese to my goal of pursuing nursing in the future, but perhaps I could work abroad one day, or encounter a Japanese speaking patient, where I could brush dust off the "Japanese language" box and open it to find knowledge that somewhat preserved itself over the years. I'll look back to the days in Japan and find my interest unbottled again.

Dear Montgomery Dickson and Taylor Anderson,

Although I haven't had the opportunity to meet you both, I want to say that your stories and contributions have reached all across the United States to bond 32 high school students together. From the beginning, your spirits and love for Japan and teaching have inspired us to make this trip to Japan truly a once in a lifetime experience. The friendships formed on this trip would never have been possible without your commitments to teaching in Japan. Thank you for sharing the work you have done with us and allowing students from the United States to follow your footsteps for the past five years. Although JET-MIP has officially come to an end after half a decade, I am sure that your passions will continue onwards. However, I sincerely hope that your legacies will spread in another form of JET-MIP in the near future.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



"Biking In Kansai"

There was not a day where I went without biking whenever we were at the Kansai Institute. Via bike, I embarked on adventures to 7 Eleven or Family Mart, Rinku mall, Book Off, and other places. Each bike ride deepened my friendship with those I went with and my passion for biking.

Breeze #109



Breeze #108



Breeze #107



Breeze #106



Breeze #105



Breeze #104



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