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



AMY WALDRON

*South Mecklenburg High School
Charlotte, NC*

The JET-Memorial Invitation Program was, in the simplest of terms, life-changing. I was utterly floored by just how much I had the privilege of experiencing in the short time I was there. Every day truly felt like an adventure, and it tore me apart to leave. I met so many incredible people with even more incredible stories, both during my visit to Tohoku and while I was in Osaka, and saw so many amazing things I can scarcely begin to list them all. I could hardly do those people and experiences justice with my minimal skill with words, and I fear the quality of wonder and sheer brilliance of it all would surely be lost should I attempt it.

This being said, impressions of Japan were certainly positive. I was astounded by the resilience of the Japanese people in the disaster zone, the hospitality of my host family, and the kindness of the everyday people we met, it seemed that everywhere we went we were surrounded by incredible good-will. Store clerks' faces would light up when we spoke to them in Japanese, and were delighted to help us understand the language and culture better. People like us that we encountered while out in the cities were the same way, and high school students in the schools we got to visit all generously shared their time with us to teach us about their culture and to get to know us. In America, I have never experienced anything like that on such a widespread scale.

Having such an overwhelmingly positive experience certainly makes me want to return to Japan in the future. I definitely wish to continue studying Japanese, so that I can communicate more smoothly if I do get the chance to go back, and learn more than I did this time. While I certainly feel that I experienced a lot and gained a lot from this trip, I feel that had I studied Japanese more in depth before going to Japan with this group, I would have gained even more. So, by placing more of a focus on my studies and practicing the language, I think I will be ensuring that the next visit to Japan I make will be something I can make the most out of. I want to not rely on English as a crutch, but to be able to communicate exclusively in Japanese. This trip has given me the motivation I need to really increase my efforts to attain fluency in Japanese. This all applies to reading and writing too, not just speaking. I found myself struggling to read some things in Japan because of the abundance of kanji there, so I will certainly be focusing more heavily on studying kanji as well.

One of the things I loved the most about being there was that even though there was a slight language barrier, the fact that I was making an effort to communicate seemed to make the people I spoke with all so happy it took away nearly all the stress of trying to speak with them. They all seemed so surprised that I could speak Japanese, and so happy that I was willing to try to use it instead of English, which I was shocked by. I would have expected such a small thing not to mean so much, but it seemed to have a big impact on the people I spoke to. They all seemed so excited to talk to me, and excited that Americans were learning to speak Japanese. I think, and hope, that I had a positive impact on the people I spoke to who all seemed so happy to speak in Japanese with me and teach me. I might have helped improve their opinion of America and American citizens, and perhaps even helped create bridges between Japan and the United States.

The latter is something I really do hope I accomplished. This whole trip was to celebrate the memories of Montgomery Dickson and Taylor Anderson, and their life's work. They both worked enthusiastically to help draw Japan and the United States closer together, and I admire them both greatly for that. I want to thank them for their work, and for allowing us all the honor of continuing their work in their memory. They will not be forgotten no matter how many years go by, and I hope that with this program and what comes of it that their work will also live on.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

“In Memoriam”

I thought this monument was a beautiful way to memorialize the lives of those lost in the disaster.



Breeze #110



Breeze #109



Breeze #108



Breeze #107



Breeze #106



Breeze #105



Breeze #104



Breeze #103



Breeze #102



Breeze #101



Japanese Language Education Update 28

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Rachel Resnick

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Tulika Srivastava

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Jacqueline Tayra

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Amy Waldron

Breeze #100



Breeze #99



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5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

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