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



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The JET Memorial Invitational Program gave me more than what I had expected out of Japan. I was afraid if I believed everything my peers told me about Japan, I would be put in very unfortunate situations for a gullible guy like me. I didn't want to have some false view of a place I had not been before, so I had cleared my mind of any preconceived thoughts and things I have heard that were not confirmed by people that have actually been there. This experience threw me out into a beautiful and bright and wonderful country. Every day I was learning something new firsthand, and each and every single time I was blown away with amazement. The people were the nicest I had ever met, and everyone I had met has been my favorite in their own way. A person that you can be friends with right away, a person you grow to love, and families that take you in as if you were their child. But this trip in its entirety is something I will never forget. I would love to try to make up for what has been done for me, though I feel as if I will never be able to show my appreciation to the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, or in Kansai.

My experience from this program was something I was not prepared for. I had met so many people in just a few short days; it is hard to remember every single person I had met. I had met a man who had sheltered so many people that had nowhere to go. He fed them out of his own pocket when the government wasn't able to reach everyone. He was so nice to talk to; he had reminded me of my grandfather. I had met school children who had faced the earthquake and the tsunami. And I had met people who had volunteered to live and teach in the affected areas, I was in awe of their bravery and dedication to their job and students, though I might not have shown it. The buildings and roads were always a slight test of knowledge, it had kanji, or symbols that I was not familiar with, but they had their romaji, Japanese in Latin script underneath. I used situations such as these as a chance to learn the kanji off highway, street, and factory signs. Once on my way back from a mall, I had met an elderly man who was playing with his dog. He had stopped me and we had spoken for what felt like twenty minutes. Upon hearing my last name and hearing I wasn't from Mexico, he took me for a Texan which was very surprising; we were able to understand each other, and I was able to say as much as I had meant to say with little difficulty. Times like these are reasons for studying Japanese so different people can communicate smoothly. I won't forget that man.

I had spoken to my friends and family about my experiences, and they seemed to be deeply interested. I would tell the stories of how I roamed the neighborhoods close to the institute or any place I was able to have free time, the time I thought I had lost my wallet with an absurdly high amount of money in it, and just meeting the diverse people. They would ask me questions that you would expect anyone to ask, such as whether the Japanese people really do this or that, and asking about traditions and religions. I would tell people the reason there was a program and they were interested, but I was a little disappointed when they were quick to ask more questions about the music and fashion. I have met with a Japanese conversational club, and they were very open to what I was saying, there was more interest from them than friends and family. I am still going to tell more people about what happened, and I'm going to meet people that hope to apply next year for the JET-MIP, and they will show concern. I believe actual Japanese students will show more emotion towards this than someone who is not.

If I were to have anything to say to Monty or Taylor, I would thank them for being brave, and I can't imagine how frightening it must have been first hand. It is awful that they have died, and I am sad that there was not anything that could have been done to save them. They both proved to be so likable and received well by everyone, the effect they had on everyone had quite a far reach and a great effect on people, the people of Ishinomaki and Rikuzentakata, must have been heavily influenced by having those two in their respective towns. I am sorry for this tragedy, but the events have brought our two nations closer together. And I hope we can strengthen our relationship even more in memory of Taylor and Monty.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“A Foundation For What Used to Be A House”

I took this picture because I knew there would be more areas like this, but this was closest to the shore I had seen out of all of them. I felt sad, for the person that lived here, whether they were there at the time or not, but to be the closest house to the tsunami must have been very unfortunate.

Breeze #86



Breeze #85



Breeze #84



Breeze #83

Breeze #82



Breeze #81



Breeze #80



Breeze #79



Breeze #78



Breeze #77



Breeze #76



Breeze #75



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