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



BRIANNA KNAPP

*Mountan View High School
Bend, OR*

When I look back at it all, the first time I noticed the difference between America and Japan was not even when we landed in Japan, but it was early on in the airplane on the way to Japan. The food was portioned and organized in small square boxes: the perfect bento boxes made for travel. I kind of laughed, but if anything, it is more of a jovial admiration. This excitement continued and increased even when we landed in Japan. Exhaustion

was not even a thought, not when I was that curious, that intrigued, and that happy.

The entire program in Japan, in my opinion, was very thought out and well planned. Even when the typhoon hit, other arrangements were made so quickly that if, I believe, we weren't told that we were not going to Rikuzentakata, we wouldn't have even known any better that something else was going on. It was really nice and convenient that we were given a planner of what we were doing before hand, especially for my parents so they could have a rough estimate of where I was and what I was doing. That, and the people involved with the program were all very considerate, kind, and patient with us. I never heard from anyone about there being a problem about anyone in the program, other students and members included. Our senseis were incredibly helpful with both listening comprehension of Japanese and writing. Personally, I really adored our Japanese classes: It felt amazing to be learning the language from a native in their country. It was also really generous to be given money for food, not only for traveling about but for the Kansai Institute as well. Despite there being 32 of us, I felt like all my needs were personally taken care of.

Of course, it would make sense that the most time I spoke Japanese was in Japan, but compared to speaking Japanese in Japanese class – which I took for four years – and speaking it for the two weeks I was in Japan, ranges extremely. Although I could read Japanese and understand it, and write pretty well, my listening and speaking skills were below average. Practice becomes perfect – or at least, in this case, way better – which was entirely true. My speaking and listening comprehension skills increased dramatically just in the short time I was in Japan. To be honest, for a while, I wasn't sure about continuing to learn Japanese in college, or to pursue anything in Japanese. My interest for the language was w which was really beginning to discourage me from learning it, and I started to fail as a student in my

year of Japanese. These doubts, these insecurities, they vanished quickly after arriving in Japan. Meeting the people, experiencing the culture, using the language. I fell in love with Japan all over again. This new desire has opened up new possibilities. This remarkable experience has opened new doors to my future. Many JET-MIPs wish to be accepted into the JET Program in the future, which is a possibility I would like to pursue. Another would be working as a translator, either for Japanese video games coming into America or anime as well. I would be more than incredibly happy to work for a Japanese video game industry too, and because I am no longer discouraged into doing so, I can follow those dreams and make them realities. This program has given me the courage to try once again at my hand with Japanese.

Many of my friends, and even my parents, not learning Japanese themselves, or generally being interested in Japanese things, didn't know much about Japan in the slightest, other than what they might hear on the news. They were surprised to hear about the vending machines, driving on the left side, and the sort of things that are done, like taking off your shoes at school, the clubs they have, and even the traditional Japanese toilets. One of my closest friends was on the fence of becoming interested in Japanese culture, but after going through my pictures with him, he has decided to learn Japanese in college, and if he can, study abroad there too. Many of my other friends were surprised at just how beautiful Japan was as well. One of my friend commented that no matter where one would look at the pictures, there was always something beautiful. Some were surprised that, although they couldn't read anything, that it looked like any other place somewhere around the world – which I am guessing that it wasn't so alien as they believed it was going to be. What I can say for certain is that almost everyone I talked to about my experience became interested and understood that although Japan is a different culture, it is still part of our world. I believe that they will be less judgmental towards things that aren't American, and be more willing to experience different things, especially coming from Japan. I do believe that now they are more open to things that are from Japan, and instead of approaching it apprehensively, they will welcome it with open arms.

To Taylor Anderson: I will not forget you. I don't think that will be possible. The movie made in your honor has left an impression on my heart, because afterwards, I met the people whose hearts' you left an impression on. As they said, you were reserved, you stayed back and watched, you were so caring and kind and considerate, and you were always out doing something, having fun and spreading the fun to others. I think if I had the privilege to have met you before, you would have been my role model. You still can be, and I have a feeling that you will be. In some points in my life, I should do what you would have done, stay back and watch, and approach at the best time with a natural kindness. I am eternally grateful for what you accomplished, and what it has allowed me to accomplish. Thank you for being you, Taylor, and thank you for your life.

To Montgomery Dickson: I am still giggling at the video you made. Learning Japanese would have been that much more fun if you could have made more videos, heck, if you could have been my sensei! Everyone who has met you, Monty, seems to have really enjoyed being around you. You seemed to have been a funny, witty, smart and kind man, and I really would have loved to spend some time with you. What I learned from you was that, if someone pushes you, you push even harder back. You didn't give up, and you got so far, and I want to follow in your example. I will never forget you, Monty. Your lesson, and your story will stay with me forever. Thank you for your life.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



Todaiji, a temple in Nara, shines with all its brilliance, from color to architecture. This was the first place in Japan that made my mind finally grasp the amazing concept that, hello, I'm in Japan!

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5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

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