

## DECEMBER, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #86

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



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I have spent these last few weeks tying up loose ends. Saying good bye to friends I have known well these past six or seven years, finishing my summer reading, and spending time with my sister before we go our separate ways. I have unpacked my suitcases only to transfer most of the contents to cardboard boxes, sorting through things that will stay at my house and what will follow me to college. The process is not long, but I have never enjoyed

packing.

Yet at the same time I was looking through everything that I brought home with me from Japan, I designated a place on my wall, a portion by the desk that was horribly bare, to be where I would hang everything I could fit as a tribute to the memories I had made in the last year. The wall has quickly filled up with **ブリクラ** (photo sticker prints), contact cards from a few of the other participants, senior photos, tickets from the ferris wheel at Rinku's mall and the entrance ticket from **東大寺** (Todaiji Temple), as well as other souvenirs and papers I brought home from Japan, NYC, and D.C.. The two fans, one from the airline and the other we received in Tohoku, are hung on the wall with a colorful crane (also from the airline), carefully attached to the wall. It's nothing beautiful, but I like how it's coming together.

When my Sensei had told me she had recommended me for this, I was honored but also afraid of failing like I had with my previous attempts at going abroad. I remember telling myself to expect the worst because the best was unlikely - and when I did the interview I figured I was done for. I'm still not sure how I made it past such a major road block. After that interview and my time in Japan, I realized just how much more I had to do in order to truly communicate effectively in Japanese. Upon returning home, I began to teach my friends simple little words and phrases so I could still speak a little bit here and there, and since my college did not place me in Japanese the first semester, I arranged a meeting on my move in days to adjust my schedule to accommodate it. I have decided to pursue a double major in foreign relations and Japanese, with a minor in Spanish. This trip was only a taste of Japan - I want to delve further in, and you can bet I will be among the other 31 participants of this program handing in an application for the JET<sup>+</sup> Program in the next few years, even if I have to take summer courses to make certain I get my degra time.

This program could not have come at a better time in my life - I will admit despite how much people say I sound like I have my life together, I would always hide the fact that in reality, I was better at talking the talk, and knew I had little to no idea what I was going to do after I had my degree. I knew I wanted to do something like interpretation, anything with foreign language really - but how? Where would I start? How would I pay for college? I had been considering military service, which now that I have learned of the JET Program, I will probably follow the latter path rather than entering the military.

I feel that this program acted as a turning point in my life - I have built friendships with so many people, from the United States and abroad, people with whom I have both laughed and cried alongside. I have done my best to keep in contact with them, and am emerging from my shell more as a result of it. I want to do more trips abroad, to Spain and Japan, and who knows where else? I had always wanted to study abroad, but I feel even more invigorated to do so; I have a passport, laying practically empty on the shelf by my bed - now that I have one, I may as well go out of my way to fill it up as much as I can.

Upon returning home, I felt that there was something missing from my life, and even to this point I'm not sure what it is. Over time the feeling mostly went away, but there is still a part that anxiously waits to be repaired. I feel that, when explaining to people about the trip and why we were sent abroad, I truly was able to serve some purpose, and that is probably what I lack - purpose. I have a sense of direction after this trip, and I feel that my life is going somewhere; I feel like I'm not just plodding around in circles but that rather I am forming a clearer idea of who I am and what I want to do with myself.

Now, as one may gather, I enjoyed the program tremendously. While we did not get to go to Rikuzentakata, the trip to Nara was a great alternative - it was probably one of my favorite places we visited. I loved having the resources in the study room and library available to us, and I remember being thankful for help from the two Sensei my group had. I think my favorite parts were spending those two short days with our host families, and the amount of freedom we had. I loved my host family so much - they were a welcoming bunch of people, and the grandparents were wonderful as well. They were always happy and incredibly patient, and just generally a fun group of people. It was like a good day with my own family; I plan to send them a letter after I've moved in to my dorm at Wittenberg, and to keep e-mailing Moeka, one of my host sisters.

I'm not sure how I may have affected others - maybe I just got people interested in visiting America. Quite frankly I'm not sure what kind of impression I left people with - hopefully a good one! I remember always smiling, though. I hope that through my attempts to communicate, that I was able to show that there are people in America and the rest of the world honestly interested in the culture and language of Japan, that there are people who want to learn and want to improve. Being among so many speakers of different levels, I am even more determined to improve my speaking ability - I even remember practicing with Olive and Britta sometimes, and asking about different grammar patterns I did not know or understand in the morning with my peers.

Finally, my message to Taylor and Monty. I have never met either of you, but I wish I had had the opportunity to, even in passing. The two of you are truly treasured by your friends and family, and Mr. Endo's artistically crafted bookcase in Watanoha can only give me some idea of how highly he and his family regarded you, Taylor. The people of the Tohoku region are still recovering from 3.11, but they still look towards the future, and those who knew you two personally choose rather to keep moving forward with their chins up, hopeful for the future, knowing the last thing they should do is give in to their sadness. It is a terrible loss that you left this world so early- but your memory lives on in so many people, and how

you have affected people - and myself - even to this day is amazing. Thank you for inspiring me to reach the same level of understanding that you both had with people. I can only hope to be half the person you two were.

## NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“Sunrise in Japan”

The land of the rising sun- I chose this photo because I remember being taken away by watching the sun rise so steadily one day. I woke up pretty early for this one too!

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