

## JANUARY, 2015: BREEZE ISSUE #87

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



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Now back to the monotonous routine of life, I have had plenty of jet lag induced sleepless nights to ponder my dream adventure in Japan. The first topic being 'how was the program in Japan' which I categorized into four sections; staff, location, acquired knowledge, and free time. Starting with the program's staff, specifically at the Kansai Institute, everyone

was wonderful! From the security guards helping all us hopeless kids when we locked our keys in our rooms to the night shift desk worker who kept my spirits up after the news of my brother's death. Everyone was there for you whether it was Japanese practice help or just that extra needed hug. Next topic is location. Starting with the Kansai Institute itself, it great place to expand our Japanese. Surrounded by two bustling malls, the beauty of the sea, and the friendly locals, especially in the onsen, Osaka quickly became my home. With all the places we traveled through the JET Memorial Invitation Program, Nara, Kyoto, Ibaraki, Tokyo, Sendai, and Ishinomaki to name a few, the Tohoku tour changed my life the most. Two days before departing for Tohoku, news that my brother committed suicide reached me. Naturally, I was heartbroken and struggled with the guilt of staying and if I should fly home to be with family. In the end, I decided to stay and go to Tohoku and I'm so grateful I did! Hearing the survival and progress stories of survivors of the tsunami, such as Mr. Endo, changed my heart. He taught me so much without realizing it. Through their strength to not only endure but to carry on, helped me to accept my brother's death and ultimately brought me to terms with his death sooner than my family members. Along this topic, acquired knowledge coincides with this. As mentioned Mr. Endo taught me so much. Through his memorial, Rainbow Bridge, he explained the meanings of what it represented. Not only was it the connection between Japan and America

the place where his house once stood, but most importantly it was hope. I remember clearly Mr. Endo said, "The three poles on the end of this structure, they point to the sky. Don't look to the ground. Your loved ones are up in the sky, so look up for the better tomorrow and to your loved one's faces watching over you". The other acquired knowledge is the improvement of my Japanese! Leaving the U.S. with a pocket full of known kanji and a decent amount of vocab made a good beginning, but now my Japanese has improved so much. I am a smoother talker and it doesn't take long for me to think of replies and questions and my Kanji, just by reading advertisements and menus has improved greatly also. Lastly is free time. After a hard day of classes, it was nice to jump on the rental bikes and roam the city. With a tiny, limited detail map, we discovered family owned cake shops, our favorite places in the mall, Book-Off, and many more. Free time was when we didn't have anyone to ask for help translating, it was all on us. I believe, this is what taught us the most and helped us meet new people outside the walls of the Institute.

Next topic I will cover is, 'how has this experience contributed to my future with the Japanese language'. I have been obsessed with Japan since I was a small child and actually going there to see and take it all in only made my love for the country grow. Although in college I cannot take Japanese my first semester, I have worked out a personal lessons schedule with the Japanese teacher at my university. Then, my sophomore year I'm transferring to another school that has higher Japanese levels. I know I want my major to include Japanese with it and since I'm going into college as undecided, I have no idea where the wind will take me. Also, on the small trip to Tokyo our last day in Japan, I miraculously managed to find my host sister who lived with my family and I three years ago. It has been three years and were still sisters, only an ocean separates us. With all the people I met before, during, and after this program, I want to see them again and maybe next time I go, I won't have to speak Nihonglish. I want with all my heart to learn Japanese fluently and that is how this trip has contributed to my future with Japanese.

Naturally, I'm a very talkative person. Being such, I have told my stories of my adventures in Japan to anyone who will give me an ear. From my life changing moments in Tohoku, to the evil deer in Nara that decided my stomach tasted good, each and every day there holds some of my greatest memories. Something as simple as walking on the stone beach and breathing in the seaweed scented air makes my heart constrict and tears to come to my eyes. This trip has changed me and no matter who I talk to everyone knows it. When someone hears the passion I have in my stories, the most common responses have been, "I want to go to a foreign country now" or "That's amazing" or my personal favorite, "What's your nationality?" (An older gentleman thought I was Japanese) and with this he's not far off. I am a bridge between our countries now, a portion of each is safely tucked in my heart. Sentimental as it may seem, I love Japan and it's people just as much as America and I would jump on the next plane bound to my second home if only I could and with this, I hope everyone world wide would reach out a hand to its neighbors to have the love shared that I know I have.

The last part of our assignment, 'Write a personal message to Tayler Anderson and Montgomery Dickson'. Before I really thought this request over, I thought it was strange and honestly, a bit awkward, but the more I thought about it the more I realized, even though they have passed on we were probably closer to one another than what I first thought. So here we go, ladies first:

Dear Taylor Anderson,

Konnichiha! My name is Michelle Peterson and I was one of the participants of a program created in your memory. I really enjoyed your family, your sister and dad emanated love. When I was studying for this program and even after I was accepted, I didn't know much about you. I read your name and it didn't ring in my heart, but knowing your story made my heart ache! We could have been best friends was all I could think when we watched your documentary. The way you loved Japan! I understand! I understand what you felt straight down to my soul! I wish I could have met you and what I really want to say is thank you. Your love for Japan is what started this and even now, I know you're looking down with a smile over both sides. Your memory lives on with me and I hope I can be a person like you.

Dear Monty Dickson,

There wasn't as much information about you as there was Taylor, but even still you definitely made an impression on this girls heart. Your siblings were so nice and your sister is a doll. I can tell they still miss you and love you. The assignment where you advertised Tokyo Bananas was hilarious! I know you must be the type to make everyone laugh! Since the big super typhoon hit while we visited Japan in your memory, we couldn't visit your city for safety reasons, but I want to! I want to see the place you called home like Osaka became to me and Ishinomaki to Taylor. From experiencing Japan and all the nice people, it's not hard to see why we all fell in love with this country. In all the world, we chose Japan! I wish I could have met you. From listening to people talk about you, your Japanese was fantastic and I wish you could have taught us how you became so good! But in the mean time, I'll practice really hard to build my Japanese and hopefully some day I can speak just as fluently as you can! :) P.S I bought Tokyo Bananas, they reminded me of a twinkie...a very expensive and banana flavored twinkie lol.

## **NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION**

"Sister of Summer's Past"

My family hosted an exchange student named Aya three years ago. On the trip to Tokyo, we managed to find each other! Millions of people there but I found her. I chose this picture because our last words as she pulled out of my driveway to go back to Japan were, "See you again!" And with the Gods on our side, our wish came true.



Breeze #98



Breeze #97



Breeze #96



Breeze #95



Breeze #94



Breeze #93



Breeze #92



Breeze #91



Breeze #90



Breeze #89

Breeze #88



Breeze #87



2015 Kakehashi Project

Japanese Language Education Update 14

2014 J-LEAP Report: Hiromi Nagai

2014 J-LEAP Report: Shunji Iwasaki

2014 JET-MIP Report: Thomas O'Donnell

2014 JET-MIP Report: Michelle Peterson

2014 JET-MIP Report: Gwentyth Nicoloro

2014 JET-MIP Report: Claire Nord

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