

## APRIL, 2015: BREEZE ISSUE #90

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



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The program in Japan was indescribably amazing.

I mean, come on, if you send a teenager with an immense amount of wanderlust to Japan for two weeks, then 'amazing' should be the least of your expectations for his conclusions. The people were amazing, the food was amazing,

the country was amazing, and so the program in Japan was too, by extension.

All this has really done for me is whet my appetite to return, though. For all the amazingness of JET-MIP, it felt a little bit... locked in. It's pretty tough to escape the tour buses when you've got to move thirty-two kids plus teachers plus any shepherds that may have come along for the ride and you have to do it on a timetable. When (not if) I go back to Japan, I'm gonna do it on my terms, but that doesn't change the fact that this trip has essentially cemented in my mind that this is something I want to do. Japan and her language are a part of my future; I was pretty sure of that before I arrived and now I'm absolutely certain. There's a lot I still need to do, and a lot more I want to. Wasn't I supposed to go to Rikuzentakata? Weren't we, as a group, supposed to go there? I guess I'll have to swing by at some point in the future. What about Kesenuma? And there're a whole lot more towns in Japan, with a whole lot more to discover. *Ohhhh*, I'll be back. Maybe I'll bring one or two friends along, too, in the spirit of bridge-building.

While I was in Japan, I met a lot of kids and adults. The kids were like me in that classic teenager-of-the-future way; some were shy or modest about their talents or weaknesses but all were proud of who they were and both excited and scared of their future. “My English is not so good,” they’d say. Your English is fine! You just need to keep trying at it, like me every time I walk into my Japanese class. I know for a fact that my Japanese could be better, and I try to get better every day. I mean, come on! They do things that American high schoolers don’t even dream of as possibilities. Sure, they’ve got the ‘pure’ athletics like track or soccer or swimming, but they’ve also got *kendo* or *shamisen* or calligraphy *et cetera*, and if our educators are to be believed, even in a purely intellectual comparison they’re easily miles ahead of American students. If they can be that smart, they can learn English easily.

Then there were the adults, who seemed very excited that this was happening. They seemed acutely aware of the fact that these kids would be the Japanese and American electorates of tomorrow, and they were glad that it was us. Maybe it was just the specific adults who were willing to involve themselves with JET-MIP, though; after all, there’re always disgruntled members of bygone eras content to shout from the rarified pedestals of their longevity down at the upcoming generation about how the world will be ruined when power comes into their hands. I’m glad they weren’t involved, or else I might have gotten into an argument in a language that I’m not nearly good enough at to argue convincingly in (yet).

I really wouldn’t have an answer ready for you if you were to ask me about how I’ve affected the Japanese people I met. I got about ten or twelve *meishi* (business cards) and gave some people my own. I guess that’s pretty significant. The other Americans were all cool and I like to think I made friends with a few of them, but the truth is, as it always is with others’ opinions of me and the impressions I give, is that I don’t, and can’t, know what kind of effect I’ve had on these people that I met. I’d like to say that I helped them understand that we’re fundamentally the same; maybe their skin’s a different color from mine but we both like sushi and can speak Japanese (although one of us probably a little better than the other).

I really don’t think there’s anything I can say about Taylor or Monty that will sound right. They say ‘don’t speak ill of the dead’ but I find it equally hard to speak kindly of them because nothing comes off, to my ear, as genuine or sincere. I didn’t know them. I don’t know what their parents went through. All I know is that I was sent to Japan in their memory. I guess if there’s something I have to say, it’s this; I’d like to thank them for having the drive to chase after a dream. Those dreams have given rise to dozens more in one of the most important geopolitical relationships in the modern world, and they made me a few friends, too.

In honor of Monty, *Tokyo Banana ga ichiban ii* (Tokyo Banana is the best).

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



### “It’s In Japan, Too”

I now know there is at least one rowing club in the Osaka area. I chose this picture because rowing is my sport, and finding it in Japan was a huge deal for me! It was really exciting and gave me hope that I wouldn’t have to give up the sport for however long I choose to spend in the country in the future.

Breeze #98



Breeze #97



Breeze #96



Breeze #95



Breeze #94



Breeze #93



Breeze #92



Breeze #91



Breeze #90



Japanese Language Education Update 17

2014 JET-MIP Report: Angela Zhu

2014 JET-MIP Report: Jayson Wood

2014 JET-MIP Report: Joshua Warnick

2014 JET-MIP Report: Konou Xiong

Breeze #89



Breeze #88



Breeze #87



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