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



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I didn't think I would get this opportunity. I still think back and have the feeling of 'oh, I won't get to go on the trip' and I have to remind myself that I did get to go on the trip. I could not have imagined being chosen and getting to have this experience. While excited, I was also

terrified. I was so afraid of offending someone or making a fool of myself. Upon arriving, the Japanese people were welcoming and we were received with nothing but generosity and kindness. I cannot explain how thankful I am. They boosted my confidence immensely and truly changed my life. Being immersed in the culture and customs was something I could never have had here in the US. My two weeks in Japan were shaped and made memorable by the people I encountered. These are memories and encounters I will be talking about for the rest of my life. To be honest, I'm so sad it's over.

Learning about the disaster was heart-breaking but confirmed what I already knew to be true; I want to have a career in medicine and disaster relief. Hearing the stories from the people who survived and the stories of the people who did not, like Monty Dickson and Taylor Anderson, made the pain and loss caused by these disaster much more real. We hear sometimes about how it is easy to distance oneself from problems abroad but it is more true than I could ever have known by being told so. You must experience it in person to see how different things are from what the media portrays, or does not portray.

Before the trip, I felt I had reached my limit for learning Japanese in a classroom setting. Six years is a long time. That is, half of my school career. I was considering moving on to French. I still plan to learn French but the trip completely renewed my love for the Japanese language as well. I am now much more enthusiastic about continuing my studies. I want to become fluent in Japanese and return. I am desperate to get back to that amazing place. I can absolutely imagine calling any town or city in Japan 'my home'. What was before not really a plan for my future has been rapidly dragged into the spotlight by this trip. I want to complete my bachelor's degree as before, but as soon as I finish, I want to become a JET.

Japan and Japanese culture have become something that I want to have in my life forever. I am so grateful for the connections that I made with other people on this trip. They are people that I hope to meet again someday.

Upon sharing my experiences, I find that people are deeply interested but terribly misinformed. My family comes, for the most part, from a small town. Thus they have had little-to no exposure to foreign cultures, let alone something so far away as Japan. As with Europe, anyone who knows little of Asia often mixes up the country's people, cultures and languages.

Before returning, I dreaded the idea of telling and retelling the same stories to each new person I saw. I have found, however, that I love telling the stories and I would gladly tell and retell them each a hundred times over. It is great fun, and I feel I'm doing a bit of good by dispelling stereotypes and properly informing previously misinformed people about Japanese culture.

Personal Message to Monty and Taylor

Hello Monty. Hello Taylor, my name is Hailley. It's an honor to write to you. I wish I could speak with you. We talked with your father, Taylor; and your sister and friend, Monty. They are both very kind. They told us all about you, your love for life, and your journeys through becoming a JET and being one. Monty, you seemed, from the stories they told us about you, hilarious and great fun to be around. Did you know they made a movie for you Taylor? It's so full of admiration and love for you. It is your loved ones, your mother, father and closest friends talking about you, how you affected their lives and how much they miss you. I think it is terribly sad that two people who lived life so fully were killed. You both have so many people who loved you; still love you. It both warms and breaks my heart that you were so well loved. For one, you had a positive effect on the lives of your family, friends and your students loved you. But when someone that everyone loves dies, everyone is affected. That's terribly sad. Your loss is still grieved by those who knew you.

I never met you in person but our paths have crossed. You know a person was a good one when they continue to have an influence, even after death. I want to thank you. Though it is wrong to thank you for something that resulted almost directly from your death. Then again,

reason was because you were loving and well loved people, who had a positive effect on the lives of those around you. So, I thank you for being altruistic human beings and living a memorable life even though it was cut short. Thank you.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“The Shore in Kansai”

The ocean has a special place in my heart. So, getting the chance to visit it was greatly contenting.

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