

AFWJ



**ASSOCIATION OF
FOREIGN WIVES OF
JAPANESE**

**THE AFWJ GUIDE
AND SELECTED ARTICLES FROM
THE AFWJOURNAL**

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Published by the AFWJ Guide Committee

AFWJ extends a warm thank you to all members who gave consent to have their articles, photos and quotes included in this guide. Without them, such a guide would not have been possible.

All photos, quotes and articles have been included with the consent of the members concerned. No full names have been used without the permission of the authors of the articles or quotes. Some authors have chosen to be credited by pen names, while others, just initials.

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Testimonials

I was born into a sociable family (brother, aged 6, famously invited tramps in for tea—even my mother didn't go that far) but I was the loner of the pack. I hated social gatherings, couldn't wait to go back up my tree with my book or incarcerate myself with my piano. I had a few good friends and that was enough. So when I came to Japan I didn't rush to find a group of soul sisters. In fact, I was eventually hauled in by a powerful person.

It turned out to be the best decision ever made for me. It was a bit like joining the United Nations instead of being just a struggling Brit in a rather strict and at times unfathomable Japanese environment. My horizons widened dramatically! I had moved from one small island to another, and in the AFWJ environment I found I could expand a great deal more. And the idea that I am complete just with my beloved Japanese husband and family was, I came to realise, limiting, and rather a heavy responsibility for aforesaid husband. Now I have my own *dosokai!* Without worrying about what people might be thinking behind the polite smile, I have an infinite resource of extraordinarily talented and positive people who also committed to marrying into Japanese society, who have ready answers to the silliest or most important questions, who have an extraordinary wealth of talent and knowledge (especially now we have Internet groups) and are always ready to share it, or share a laugh or a cry, or, simply, a glass of wine or coffee.

I have been a member for most of my 40 years in Japan, and as I look around I realise I have a lot of really precious deep friendships here thanks to AFWJ. I've grown much braver and even become, dare I say, quite sociable!

Naomi Arimura



It is said that friends are the family you choose for yourself. AFWJ is a part of my chosen extended family here in Japan. When I have an experience or thought to share, I know that there will be fellow members who understand. In recent years I've become busy with my kids in their first years of school, but the online AFWJ groups keep me connected when I can't attend the large variety of local events as often as I'd like. AFWJ is great because it connects me to a body of women who understand me, both in person and online!

Marie Okamoto

I have lived in Japan for almost 24 years, and have been married for 15 of those. I had no idea this group even existed.

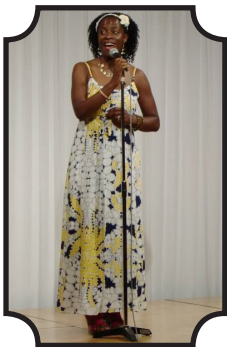
I was in the disaster zone for the earthquake and tsunami, and have been involved with the relief work here since. After the tsunami, one of the members read a blog that a church who came to help me wrote, and she contacted me and from there she was able to introduce me to AFWJ.

I never knew just what I was missing. I feel like I have a huge support group of sisters now. I love the support and love that this group shows. Whether it is a small problem, or a huge one, everyone is so good at providing help.

Recently, my computer crashed and I was without one for about 2 months. It has happened before and I was fine, but this time around, I was almost in pain. I missed all my friends and sisters in AFWJ so very much. Several called to make sure I was o.k. and it was so sweet.

For me, AFWJ has been a life-saver. It has reminded me just how important girlfriends are to laugh and cry with. I had forgotten until AFWJ.

Joni Owada



I was a member of MIJ (Married In Japan) for years. After I made the move to Fukuoka, I wanted to get connected with other ladies in my area.

AFWJ did just that. I am looking forward to the weekend away mini convention. I also like synergy of the local Facebook group too.

Lottie M.



I heard about AFWJ a number of times over the five or so years before I joined. I was already a member of different online foreign women's groups and thought the money seemed expensive when other groups were free.

After a friend convinced me to join I was immediately welcomed by a great group of women. AFWJ being organized into districts and chapters meant I felt a connection with these women almost immediately and the use of real names and the information in the membership Directory gives me a feeling of trust and security that I sometimes wondered about on more anonymous forums.

I am 100% convinced that the jewel in the AFWJ crown is the annual National Convention. A convention is so many things—a get together, sleepover, a way to see some more of Japan, an excuse to get as dressed up (or not) as you want, a chance to learn something new or connect with those with common interests at a workshop, a breather, a refreshing, rejuvenating and revitalizing respite from normal life—and much much more!

And that 7,000 yen I thought seemed so expensive? I never questioned it again and now consider myself in for life!

Heather Fukase



I am excited about meeting some people who are in similar situations to mine. I find that other English teachers I meet are not only planning to go home in a year or so, but they are also single and have no idea why I would ever marry a Japanese.

Amanda Yoshida

I've been a member for a few years now and it has definitely made my highs higher and my lows more bearable. E-groups and Facebook groups are great, but the sisterhood of AFWJ always warms my heart. And it helps to have a few *sempais* to guide you through Japanese life!

Tammy Campbell-Eto





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Many thanks for your invaluable help!



AFWJ

ASSOCIATION OF FOREIGN WIVES OF JAPANESE

WHO WE ARE

AFWJ has around 500 members from more than forty countries in Japan and abroad and aims to provide members with friendship, support, mutual help in adapting to Japanese society, and opportunities for social, emotional, educational and professional growth.

AFWJ assists women in networking with other women who have many of the same experiences and concerns such as family relationships, children's education, professional career development, personal growth, and cross-cultural problems and solutions.

Joining AFWJ will give you opportunities to build new friendships with other foreign wives coming from all over the world. Once a member, you can attend meetings or events held in any AFWJ district or chapter.

ACTIVITIES

Members organize workshops, lectures, book discussions, luncheons, playgroups for children, coffee mornings at members' houses and other similar activities. You can do all kinds of creative organizing and be a leader yourself. Of course there are times in your life when you can't do as much, but AFWJers have so many talents to share.

Annually, a national three-day convention is held, and districts also sometimes hold their own mini-conventions.

AFWJ runs various e-mail groups that members are entitled to join. Some e-mail groups provide a forum for the announcement of local activities and for exchange. Others feature information on a national level, and yet others cover more specific areas such as new mothers, education of young children, dieting, speakers of languages other than English, political issues, and others. Members are welcome to create their own interest groups inside AFWJ.

PUBLICATIONS

AFWJ members receive six English-language Journals and one membership directory per year. The Journals consist of articles written by the members for the members, and cover a wide area of member-related issues on life in Japan and abroad. The annual membership directory is a tool by which you can contact other members at any time, anywhere in the world.

WHO CAN JOIN?

The Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ) welcomes any woman of any national or cultural origin (other than a Japanese born and raised in Japan) who is engaged to, is or has been married to, or is, or has been in a de-facto relationship with a person of Japanese national or cultural origin.

HOW CAN YOU JOIN?

For information on membership fees and on how to join, please contact us at:

E-mail: *membershipsecretary@afwj.org*

Website: *www.afwj.org*

The AFWJournal

AFWJ's publications are as old as the association itself, and content has always been by, for and about members. Since AFWJ's establishment in 1969, members have been keeping in touch with each other through the AFWJ National Newsletter, a publication later renamed the AFWJournal.

Being in international relationships and sometimes far from their own countries may be factors that inspire many AFWJ members to share their experiences in writing. The AFWJournal gives members a forum to express themselves. The more than 200 issues that have been published up to now are a real treasure trove, not merely reporting events, parties or meetings and providing information on living in Japan, and also featuring life stories, shared emotions and images both in photos and text that reflect what members are and how they live.

Journals up to now have included a wide range of topics such as living in Japan, career, legal issues, identity, marriage, family, children, education, bilingualism, housing, travel, fashion, health, cooking, housekeeping, life-long learning, advanced age and even death—you name it. Articles are submitted to the Journal Editor who edits, formats, and compiles them into a cohesive unit. The Journal Editor is one of the many AFWJ volunteers elected by the membership who make it possible for AFWJ to sustain the network that has assisted so many over the years.

The following pages show a selection of articles published in recent Journals. While the AFWJournal takes different forms as it evolves with time and with each editor, AFWJ members never run short of good stories to share.

Enjoy!

"I take it for granted that, when due, that little Journal will magically appear in my mailbox packed with great stories and loads of ideas on a whole range of issues. To all those members who have contributed over the years a very big THANK YOU—you've no idea how some of your contributions and personal revelations have stopped me from taking the first flight out when things get tough; it's comforting to know that I'm not alone."

Frances Morii

"When I joined AFWJ we were living in a smallish city in Hiroshima-ken. For two years, the Journal was my only link with AFWJ, and it was such a help to me to realize that there were other women out there, sharing the same frustrations, problems and joys of being a foreign wife in Japan."

Louise George Kittaka

"Writing articles for the Journal is a pleasant challenge for me, and it's a thrill to see my work included with articles by other foreign women."

L. Kawaguchi

"Living in Tottori means that I cannot participate in a lot of the activities offered by AFWJ. However, I can say that I am proud to be a member! I love receiving the Journals, they let me know I am not alone. It is reassuring to know there are other women out there who have similar experiences."

Diane Aoto

"As the end of the month approaches I start thinking that it will be coming soon. As the first few days of the new month go by I am eagerly awaiting and anxiously checking the mail. Finally it arrives! The AFWJ Journal."

Now that I'm living in the US, I appreciate the Journal even more. When it arrives, everything is pushed aside as I skim through its pages and then sit down to read it in greater depth. As I read I feel like a very special treasured dear old friend from Japan has come for a visit. There is much catching up to do: news of what's been going on and current issues, news of old friends and introductions to new ones, advice and shared experiences, recipes and remedies, tips for making our lives easier and more rewarding, tears and laughter. It's all in there."

Betty Ogawa

Topic

This section contains the submissions from members in response to our call for articles on a chosen topic.

Neighbourhood Involvement

Monkey English and Japanese
By Diane Loveday Kunimoto

Neighbourhood Involvement over the Decades
By Catharine Huws Nagashima

If It Wasn't For My Neighbours (In Fuchu)
By Birgit Zorb-Serizawa

Meet The New Neighbour
By Naomi Arimura

Great Expectations

The Renewal of Life
By Linda Matsui

Some Practical Gynecology Terms
By Linda Matsui

Monkey English and Japanese

By Diane Loveday Kunimoto

About two weeks ago I participated in the Amagasaki City Speech Contest for foreigners. It was primarily for University students but four housewives also participated. At the request of my Japanese teacher, I was one of the extra participants. As I told the rest of my class, we may have only received 500 yen as a token of the school's appreciation, but as I told my daughter, I got so much more out of it. My husband helped me a lot with this speech, and I learned a lot about Japanese. But, I also hope that my listeners also learned something about international communication. I translated my speech as best I could into English and hope you will enjoy it.



same. We all eat different things for breakfast, but everyone eats with their hands. No one eats with their feet. If you eat with your feet, then you must be a monkey.

Since we are talking about monkeys let's take a look at a banana. Just like people, there are many kinds of bananas: green, yellow, brown and so on. If you look at a banana from the outside you can't tell which one is sweet or which one is rotten. To tell the truth, I prefer brown bananas, but in reality you can't tell unless you peel it.

Good Afternoon, my name is Diane Kunimoto. Today I would like to talk about how people around the world are not that different.

I come from Canada. So far, I have lived in four countries. Other than Canada I have lived in Korea, America, and Japan. People from these four countries are all different. For example, in Canada when we wake up, we say, "Good Morning". In Korea, they say "Anyong Haseyo". In Japan, they say, "Ohayo Gozaemasu." For breakfast, in America, they often eat cereal. In Korea, they eat *Kimchee*. In Japan, they eat *Miso* soup. So, as you can see, there are a lot of differences. But in actuality, there are many more similarities. For example, Good Morning, *Anyong Haseyo*, and *Ohayo Gozaemasu* all sound different, but what we all want to say is the



Diane and family at Elvis' mansion, USA



Diane and husband at Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada

So then I have a question for you. How can we tell what is inside a person? Can we peel a person like a banana? No, we have to meet with people and peel back their hearts in order to know what their insides are like. Just like you peel and then eat a banana, you have to speak with people to find out what kind of people they are and what they are like inside. It doesn't matter which country you are in, that is the most important point.

Next, when it comes to peeling a banana, how do you do it? Do you peel it from the bottom up? Do you use your feet? If you do, then you must be a monkey. Of course, everyone holds it at the bottom and peels it from the top. This way of peeling a banana does not vary that much from country to country. And neither does it with people. If you smile and speak politely, you will be able to peel away a person's heart more easily.



Diane with students in Korea

So please do not hesitate to take a chance and try to peel away a person's heart.

こんにちは、わたしは、国本ダイアンと申します。きょうは、国によって、人はそれほどちがわない、というはなしをします。

さて、わたくし、カナダからまいりました。いままで、四つの国にすんだことがあります。カナダがいはいは、かんこく、アメリカ、そして、日本です。どの国の人もみんなちがいました。たとえば、あさおきたら、カナダでは、Good Morningと申しますし、かんこくでは안녕하세요と申します。日本ではおはようですね。そして、朝ごはんには、アメリカではシリアルをよく食べますし、かんこくではキムチを食べます。にほんではおみそしるをのみますね。このようにちがうことは多いのですが、じつは、おなじことのほうがずっと多いのです。たとえば、Good Morningも안녕하세요もおはよ

うも、おとはちがいますが、いいたいことはおなじです。あさごはんは少しちがっていても、みんな手でたべます。だれもあしはつかいません。あしをつかったらおさるさんです。

さて、おさるさんのはなしがでたので、バナナをみてみましょう。にんげんのようにバナナにもいろいろあります。みどり、きいろ、ちゃいろ、と、いろもさまざまです。そこからみただけでは、どれがあまくて、どれがくさっているかわかりません。こじんてきには、ちゃいろのバナナがすきですが、ほんとうのところは、むいてみないとわからないのです。

では、ここで、ひとつしつもんです。にんげんのはなみはどうすればわかるでしょうか？バナナみたいにむきますか？はなしあいをして、このころのかわをむくことだとおもいます。バナナもちゃんとむいてはじめてたべられるように、にんげんもしっかりはなさないで、どんなひとなのか、なかがわかるようになりません。これはどのくにでもおなじですし、いちばんだいじなことです。

つぎに、バナナをむくとして、どのようにバナナのかをむきますか？下からむきますか？それとも、足をつかいますか？もしそうだとしたら、あなたはおさるさんです。やっぱりみなさんはバナナの下の方をもって、上からむきますよね。このむきかたも、国によってそんなにかわりません。えがおでせつする。やさしくはなす。そうすると、むきやすいのと同じです。

ですので、えんりよせずに、おたがいに、このころのかわをむきあいましょう。



The 6th Annual Japanese Speech Contest

Neighbourhood Involvement Over The Decades

By Catharine Huws Nagashima

This morning I donned black and joined my neighbours in paying our last respects to the gentleman over the road who would have been eighty-eight next week. I will miss his company sweeping the street. We had heard the ambulance arrive just before dawn yesterday (Saint Valentine's Day). The wake and funeral will be for close family only. These are not my original neighbours, but people who moved here in the early 1970s when what used to be a large *besso* was broken up into small plots, where new detached houses were built.

OUR STREET

When I came here in 1965 our street was known as “*yashiki-dori*” because of its many *besso*. I arrived in October, when most of them were firmly shut up with *amado*, deserted until summer. The road was lined on both sides with pine trees, forming an attractive tunnel, shedding needles. The elderly winter residents got together early every morning to rake the road and catch up on the gossip. They accepted young me into their circle. We exchanged garden plants. I made marmalade with their *natsu-mikan*. They gave me samples of the day's *okazu*.



Yashiki Dori 1966 (the road that Catharine swept, her mother-in-law holding baby Yasuko, with father-in-law)

They are long gone, but memories of their attitude to life remain. For many years Kuromon-no-Ito-san single handedly collected for the Red Cross. She made a hobby of it. We would invite her in, and she would sit and entertain our children (eventually six of them), teaching them how to tie knots in the corners of handkerchiefs, holding the baby while I got on with the cooking. It was one of her ways of not being lonely.

Takada-san, twice widowed, who had buried both her children, liked to make *ohagi*, and then she would go around inviting all the neighbourhood children to her house to enjoy them. They set an example of positive thinking.

After Zushi acquired a sewerage works, it was *manshons* that gradually replaced the *besso*. They have their own separate organizations. We of the detached-house community now take it in turns to go round to collect donations for Red Cross, red feather and *nen-matsubokin*, but we skip the *manshons*. This year is my turn, I will be away for the spring, a neighbour will take my place. I will do my autumn turn, and possibly next spring too.



Catharine pushing her pram became a familiar neighbourhood sight.

ROAD TO SCHOOL

Over the decades I have rung doorbells wearing a variety of hats, such as “district PTA representative” explaining the summer holiday pool agenda or allocating turns at a busy crossroads for controlling the truck drivers when children are walking to school. I did it so often myself, yellow rain-coated, officially arm-banded, that my husband was once asked whether he lived next door

to the foreign *midori-no-obasan* (and confessed that he actually lived **with** her)!

BEYOND NEIGHBOURHOOD

What became by far the largest hat was “citizen activist”. It began in 1982 when drilling was observed at the Ikego Ammunition Depot; land expropriated from local farmers by the Japanese Navy in 1938 and still used by the U.S. military. Like Nagai in Yokosuka and Honmoku in Yokohama, the citizens were expecting this site, which had become a rare nature reserve of scientific interest, to be returned to the city. Unfortunately the drilling heralded a U.S. Military Housing Plan that would involve chopping down large tracts of forest and bulldozing hills. We were aghast when we realized our Mayor had done an about-turn and accepted the Plan. So one hot August, there I was ringing doorbells to collect signatures to make it possible to hold a Referendum. We needed two-thirds of the electorate to sign. Not having a vote, I was not even eligible to officially collect signatures, so I had a good excuse to rope in various neighbours to accompany me. (One of them later became one of Japan’s first female mayors.) At first we were much maligned by the mass media, alleged to be survivors of the Red Army. When we made it, a first in Japanese history, the media finally realized ours was a completely new type of movement.

Three of our women visited Washington, formed “Friends of Ikego” with people from Sierra Club, Audubon Society and other environmental NGOs. They came to a Symposium in Zushi, where we also

had speakers from organizations such as the Japan Bird Society, WWF and Friends of the Earth. For thirteen years we believed ourselves to be “acting locally and thinking globally”. I wrote letters, helped create bilingual pamphlets, collected “Written Opinions” (to submit to Kanagawa Prefecture) from all over the world, studied local flora and fauna, learnt about giant white clams (subject of another international symposium), paid visits to the U.S. Embassy, took my turn canvassing, marched in ribbon parades, baked for fund-raising events, attended meetings and could be seen bicycling late at night through the quiet residential streets of Zushi. Most neighbours supported us, some tacitly, but a few stopped greeting us, unable to agree to disagree. During that time there were ten “referenda” including mayoral and city council elections, every time a majority against the Plan, but the Government of Japan went ahead regardless, with only minor modifications. We reached burnout. The children who grew up watching us, and knowing how the mass media could get things very wrong, are now taking over.

OTHER PEOPLE’S NEIGHBOURHOODS

Meanwhile my experience as a citizen activist stood me in good stead in my work as a *machizukuri* consultant, especially when it came to people-participation projects, other people’s neighbours. At the turn of the century I “retired” into teaching, and I endeavour to raise awareness about environmental issues, always looking out for positive examples of projects that can inspire us to create a better world.



Catharine’s Horigotatsu, 1984, Choosing the Mayoral Candidate (Kiichiro Tomino, representing the Citizens’ Movement, went on to win the election)

BACK HOME

Superficially, my neighbourhood involvement may appear to have shrunk back to its rather domestic origins. I still sweep the road, usually alone, but invite people to join me in making marmalade; I exchange recipes and support local food production. Once a month I “knit and mend” with company. While this Journal is being edited, I shall be initiating “*tsukuroi no hi*” in the lobby of the City Hall. An enterprising former City Councilor has made it possible for us to take along anything we no longer need and deposit it for anybody to pick up. She organizes appropriate 3R classes—how to make bags out of broken umbrellas. She wants me to teach her how to darn socks in full view of anyone who turns up! I continue to make new connections.

Spring, I shall be revisiting the neighbourhood of my childhood, on an island in North Wales. My parents are buried in the local cemetery, where each gravestone brings back fond memories of former neighbours. I

grew up there, evacuated from London due to WWII. We had no electricity, carried drinking water from the wells and managed with rainwater collected from the roofs for other purposes. We walked everywhere. I knew what grew in every hedge and who lived in every house. My mother sent my sister and me with offerings from the tea and sugar rations to smallholders who always welcomed us, let us watch the milking and churning and help collect the eggs. We would go home with a present of farm butter or eggs. Children were cherished by the community—and I never realized we were bartering, just thought everybody was so kind!

The local language was Welsh, threatened by English, and as a teenager I became a language campaigner. When my friends went on hunger strike so that Wales could become officially bilingual I had moved to Japan. What I failed to contribute towards linguistic diversity in my first home, I tried to make up for in defending biodiversity in my new home, where I have transplanted some of the neighbourly lessons I learnt as a child.



Catharine's Horigotatsu, 2013, Neighbours Making Marmalade (including Nancy Kobayashi, Ryoko and Yui Hirayama—Anne's granddaughter)



If It Wasn't For My Neighbors (In Fuchu)

By Birgit Zorb-Serizawa

In September 1985, I first arrived in company housing in Kamagaya Green Heights in Chiba, a very brisk walk of almost half an hour from the station. It was green alright, but still an immense shock to this newly married woman, just arrived from Frankfurt, Germany.

The apartment was big and nice enough but very far from everything (only one supermarket open Monday through Saturday from 10-6!), and as I didn't know a soul, neither in this neighborhood nor in all of Tokyo, with only one exception, I felt pretty lonely after my husband Toshi left for work in Shinjuku.

I had no Japanese language ability, no job, no family other than my busy husband, and not a friend in sight. There was no baby to help me make connections with other mothers; no dog to walk and discuss with other pet owners. And what a shock every morning to see the *okusans* sweeping in front of their apartment with tiny brooms and outfitted with identical little ruffled white aprons! Little did I realize in those early, confusing, disappointing, lonely days that my neighbors were socializing under the guise of keeping things neat and clean. I took my new, strange life at face value and felt so out of place! What had I gotten myself into? What was I to do? To be?

Luckily, a neighbor came to my rescue.

She lived in the apartment right next to mine, and I had noticed her tending the little garden plot that came with all first floor apartments. Michiyo was at once very Japanese and yet also experienced in foreign ways. She spoke good English and had lived overseas for a number of years, with and without her husband. We were of similar age, and she didn't have children either. Not only did I have someone with whom to talk during those long hours Toshi was at work or on overseas assignments for weeks, but she also taught me "Japan survival skills": how to make *miso* soup, what to shop for in the supermarket, what to do or not do with a gift brought by a visitor...

So it really was Michiyo, who translated things alien to me not only literally from Japanese to English, but also helped me to build bridges and relate what seemed chauvinistic, conservative, and conventional here to what I knew from growing up in rural Germany, where no "office ladies", a term and a concept that luckily

seems to have died out by now, existed, but where there were also very prescribed do's and don'ts that I had thrown overboard and (almost) forgotten—and wasn't willing to re-visit, much less conform to again at my age!

Michiyo knew both worlds and seemed to have no problem accepting her role. I could go on and on about this formidable, adaptable neighbor of many talents and skills, who made the transition from unmarried to married woman in Japan so much easier for me...

After less than six months in this quiet suburban outpost, we moved to a one-room apartment in Higashi Koenji, where I had to learn to make do without the help and companionship of a friend and neighbor. In the meantime I had learned some Japanese, had secured a part-time job, and met some other foreign women in similar circumstances. It was a pleasant old neighborhood, but the only people I got to know there were the ladies at the local supermarket, the bakery, and at my favorite ramen shop. Even after three years in the same apartment, I was in no way engaged with my neighborhood: my home was convenient to commute to work, which was in another part of the city, but nothing else connected me to the place.

We left the country for a few years and when we came back for about a year before moving overseas again, it was with our daughter. Mine was too young for *yochien* or school, but old enough to want to play in the sandbox in the local park. Sure, there were plenty of kids with their mothers, but no one seemed interested in talking to this foreigner (sensing I was about to dart off again...?). Of course, now I had company and I enjoyed exploring the world with Mine, and I had some friends from my first time here with whom I would meet up, but I still missed feeling connected.

At our next destination in Berkeley, I had a great sense of neighborhood, of shared child-raising, shared meals, shared resources, shared holidays, and shared disappointments as well as successes. And then in 2004, just before an epic birthday ☺, we moved back to Tokyo—presumably for good!!!

Much had changed in the almost 15 years we had been gone, but again, I had no work, no friends in the neighborhood and no baby or toddler to anchor

me in the kids-and-mummy community. Mine was a teenager starting to go her own ways, but for a while I found a community at her international school around the corner from our apartment through volunteering with the parents' organization and substitute teaching.

We had chosen to live close to the school, and Fuchu turns out to be the best choice we could have made: it has become the home that I had been looking for! I knew I had to think long-term in order to truly make this my home. I was without a job, my husband had only just started at a new company, which had him go overseas for long periods of time, and Mine would eventually leave altogether to study overseas. I had found some friends through work and some through AFWJ, but they did not anchor me to this particular neighborhood.

After some investigating, I started *Book Ideas* in August 2006, a story told in a past issue (11/06) of the AFWJ Journal. One condition for making this my home I had fulfilled: I knew my city and I loved its location along Tama River, its green spots such as Tama Reien, the shopping area of its downtown that

is prettily bordered by *Zelkova* (*keyaki*) trees, the small fields that yield vegetables sold by the wayside, and the rice fields within city limits.

Back in the early days of *Book Ideas*, I cycled all over Fuchu to visit *Bunka* Centers and find places where I could put up my flyers, and later, to hand-deliver flyers to all of the users who signed up. And most important of all: to visit people I met and became friends with through this book-lending service; mostly women who are also readers, who are interested in travel and things foreign, and who speak English and/or German (Yes, sadly enough my Japanese never progressed past the basic daily living and conversation stage!) Soon I would be meeting familiar faces on the street or in shops, and spend time catching up, busy schedules permitting.

Now I have a long commute to work in outer Yokohama, my husband's new job is several hours commute away in Omiya, and Mine no longer lives with us, but for nothing in the world would I want to give up my neighbors and neighborhood in Fuchu. It has truly become my home!



Birgit and her Fuchu Friends

Meet The New Neighbour

By Naomi Arimura

It's about 11 o'clock. I can tell because a small blond dog is sitting to attention in front of me fixing me with his hypnotic big black eyes, daring me to look anywhere else if I can. I try, as I have an interesting book. Intermittently he utters the softest low murmur deep in his throat. After a while he will inject a plaintive note and if I manage to still hold out and not respond he will calmly, without moving, crack the air open with one single ear-splitting bark, the shock of which propels me to my feet. As intended, of course. It's time for his walk. This is our morning pattern in the outer reaches of rural Karuizawa where I tend to leave my watch in the bathroom: telling the time by the dog.

Coat on, lead on, we set forth. My outfit is topped by a woolly hat, Chris's by his lead's frayed end. We cut the loop off to make sure it doesn't get caught in any rocks. The lead does have a noticeable psychological effect on him, even though I don't hold it. He knows we're connected, however ephemerally.

First we must cross the "main road". It isn't a main road really but a fair amount of traffic passes because it's a well-known local back route to our local metropolis, Saku city. Chris checks the garden next door (owner works for the Metropolitan Art Museum in Tokyo and is more often in Italy than Karuizawa), and the building site next to it on the corner, and stops at the road. He's not allowed to cross without us so he waits, while I do my laborious (to him) right-left-right thing and as I open my mouth to say "OK, Chris" he shoots off.

Walks, to Chris, are what a good novel is to me. Instantly his nose is to the ground, tracing plot lines, deciphering meaning, characters and apparent interactions, spending a lot of time where these lines intersect. He follows these invisible lines with a passion. Clearly he is mapping all the recent activity in the vicinity. I have no awareness of or interest in that at all. I would much rather just walk at a regular pace and maintain some sort of rhythm, an anathema to Chris. He doesn't do rhythm. He does race and stop. Sometimes he is so engrossed in a featureless patch of grass that I can be bawling down his ears that a truck is coming and he'll take no notice until the last moment when he moves his bottom but keeps his nose to the fascinating scent.

Our morning walk is in the pattern of a capital 'D'. We do the rounded curve from the first bridge, curve round to the river, then back in a straight line along the river to home. I suspect my Nagano Neighbours are very

different from Heather's; I imagine hers are relatively indigenous. None of ours are. They have come, from other parts of the country, to establish a lifestyle more to their liking than the city rat race and all except three households came after us, a consequence of the Nagano bullet train, built to bring the Nagano Winter Olympics nearer to Tokyo.

We come to two of the near-original households as soon as we're across the road; the ground of the first house on the corner and fronting the river (we take the path behind) belongs to the headmistress of an elementary school in the Kanto area and at the moment she can't come up more than about three times a year because her mother is now staying with her, too old to be left. About once a year she comes with her sister, who lives in America. We sometimes have tea and her home-made cakes on the veranda, while our dogs exercise their own version of communication. Her dog is also a foundling (as are nearly all in our close neighbourhood, around six or seven)—short, shaggy and totally undisciplined. They are not there on this day, so Chris doesn't linger in the glistening moss of their garden.

M-san is next, and if he's in the garden (he isn't), we all greet each other warmly. He is the most indigenous resident, having lived there for over 40 years, since the time the whole area was farmland and cows wandered around his property. The farmer retired to a small holding the other side of the river, the cows went and larches were planted, destined to be telegraph poles, but wooden poles went out of fashion soon after and the larches were left to do their own thing and give people hay fever. *M-san's* official house is in Niigata where he has retired from an industrial job though retains a school governorship, but he rarely goes there and his wife rarely comes here. He's my organic gardening mentor and rescuer from sticky situations, like trying to tease the end of the plastic whippy thing from the machine that cuts the grass, or reminding me how to prime the chain saw, or taking me to hospital when I fell in the river and broke my knee. He is an expert at cutting logs, raising crops, making jam and buckwheat noodles and brewing beer, and our New Year neighbourhood *mochitsuki* rice bashings are held at his house. Also around that time we have Games Day, when many neighbours gather at his house to play Scrabble while he and Yuske play Go. We usually fix this up at our Christmas party, which grows every year—this year we had 17 guests, all local.

On with our walk. Woodland separates us from the next houses along, Chris will check them out as we walk back along the river. One household is occupied by a retired civil servant, his violinist wife and their daughter, who visited me in hospital when I broke my knee, bringing me a perfect lemon meringue pie—my first in Japan—that so reminded me of my mother that I wept and refused to share it. She is in India now, with her half Indian daughter, who at the age of 8 dreamt of Sai Baba and insisted on going to his ashram.

Meanwhile, on our right we are passing the home of the T family, a comparatively ‘new’ couple with a little boy. They had been part of the Scrabble circle until their child was born. Mr. T writes Japanese sub-titles for French films.

Opposite him on the other side of the path is O-san, who built their Swedish log house when he retired, and now cultivates alongside M-san in an adjacent plot. His wife and I attend an *ikebana* group in the Church guest house when we can. They are also part of the Scrabble circle.

We usually walk on past O-san’s and past Catharine Nagashima’s daughter’s so far untouched plot to turn left at the next corner. But I’m feeling tired on this occasion and say, “Chris, I think I’d like to turn to the

river here if you don’t mind, is that all right with you? We can do the longer one this afternoon.” This is not the way one is taught to talk to dogs, one is supposed to issue short sharp commands, but somehow I only feel to do that with Chris when I really want to exercise authority. Otherwise, this is one of the areas where we negotiate.

He always understands. When he really wants to take the longer route he lifts his head from the blissful cornucopia that constitutes a smelly path and deliberately walks on looking back at me over his shoulder. Right, very clear, he doesn’t care for the short route this time. If it’s a time issue, I insist, if it isn’t I’ll probably give in. But on this occasion, his nose glued to the ground and apparently oblivious, he walks ahead of me around the corner, content to give in this time.

We are now walking towards the river and the second bridge with the TV producer’s house on our left. They have two boisterous young boys and an even more boisterous terrier, and life being what it is, especially in Japan, they rarely have time to be here. They manage a few days here and there in the summer and sometimes play on our swing, and they have given us permission to play on their lawn. Chris adores their lawn; he can run and run, ears back and wind blowing through his whiskers. This is a large plot originally combined



Chris by the riverside

with that of the A's next door divided and shared with them. The two men have been friends since primary school, and I can't imagine two people more different. It shows in their gardens: the A's is tumbling mounds of flowers and trees, pergolas and arches, with paths of thyme weaving around them. They have more time, of course, they live there all the time and run a pension in central Karuizawa, they haven't got children and from time to time, when we can't, they look after Chris who adores them. They chase Chris round and round the K's featureless lawn, which, along with a few evenly spaced trees like sentries down one side, is the entirety of their garden.

It was here, a few years ago, that we met Hana the whippet and her master. Chris was racing around the lawn, quite unaware in his abandoned joy that there was a watching whippet. The dogs then greeted each other in a friendly fashion, but for Hana it was instant love. Chris, never having met anything like a whippet, went back to showing off. Hana wanted to join so badly that her master let her off the leash. Chris had the shock of his life. No matter how hard he ran, enchanted Hana was devotedly trotting at his shoulder. He had thought he could outrun anything on the planet, up until now he had, and he couldn't believe it. He ran and ran, first whimpering then crying until I swept him up in my arms at the point where he looked like he might have a heart attack and the man led away a very reluctant besotted Hana. We met them once more some months later at the same place, Hana spotted us from 50 yards away and barked and jumped with joy. The man said, "She really loved your Chris." Who was—where? He had completely vanished. I called, he wouldn't come. The man had to lead a very reluctant heartbroken Hana away. Once they were safely gone, Chris emerged quite close by from under a bush and would not meet my eyes.

The A's are gifted homemakers as well as gardeners, clever with their hands and creative with wood and flowers and good cooks. They are geographically and temperamentally well placed to be community leaders, and they are central when we all get together for river clean-ups, with tea on their deck afterwards.

Yuri A's mother's home is adjacent, the next house along the river. Alone now, she is a very sprightly octogenarian and one of the three residents pre-dating us. She took me off to an *onsen*, some ten years back I think, She asked me if I would like to play Scrabble, much to my surprise, for I had never, and have never, talked with her in anything other than Japanese. Yes, I'd love to play! She was spritely with the bathing too, out towelling down and out scouting a place to set up a

Scrabble game while I was still immersed and admiring the view of Mt. Asama. She had everything set up and ready when I emerged. As I'm younger and a native speaker, I went easy on her; big mistake. She thrashed me. I never let that happen again, now I play for my life! I learned she played regularly with her daughter and son-in-law next door and even by herself, and now we all get together for a game as often as we can. It has caught on in the neighbourhood, you can find a Scrabble set in most households around us and we often have two sets going simultaneously.

But I digress. It happens on a walk. We are walking down the side of K-san's garden towards the river, and suddenly Chris's head shoots up, ears pricked. Something is afoot. We are approaching the new large Italianate villa on our right erected on a 10–12 meter hill they built up over months and months of importing truckloads of earth, and when the neighbours protested they could never find anyone to listen, riverside walkers now have to engage a large stone wall instead of the gentle bank of trees and wild flowers, while the new house has a commanding view of the whole river. And today, for the first time, there are signs of habitation. Another neighbour! "Chris, we haven't been introduced, you shouldn't go," but too late, he runs off to investigate.

Suddenly there is a loud shout and Chris comes running. Oops, Together we dive through the bushes on the left to the lawn. We run around the lawn largely invisible and I'm hoping trouble is averted. It isn't.

The strident voice of a woman cuts the cool bright air: '*Sumimasen!*'

I walk out to the river path and a woman is striding towards me and stops a little way off.

"A white-ish sort of dog just came into our garden, did you see it?"

I look round for Chris, then realise he is in front of me, exactly level, on the other side of the path, next to the river.

"Like that dog?" I ask.

She stops and takes a step backwards. "Maybe..." she said. "He came into our garden."

"I'm very sorry about that. You are new to the area and he wanted to say hello."

Chris is lying facing her, calm and unthreatening, but very alert. I am proud of him. He has accurately gauged the threat, read the situation perfectly, and is waiting for my lead. We are partners, protecting each other.

“Do you live there?” she said aggressively, indicating K’s house and lawn.

“No, we live up there, at the top end of the river.” I gather myself up for a formal introduction, but she sweeps irately on.

“Do you know these people?”

“Yes of course. We know everyone up to this bridge.”

“Do people mind him going into their gardens?”

“No, no. They’re all friends of his and they all welcome him. Up to here,” I add pointedly.

“He’s not on a leash,” she goes on. Well, he is, it’s just that I’m not on the other end of it. But it doesn’t seem a good thing to mention.

“He loves to be free,” I say. “He loves to run; I don’t.”

“According to the law,” she begins—immediately I raise my arm and bring it down sharply across my body past my left leg. Instantly, like a streak of lightning, Chris leaps across the path and sits erect and at attention by my left heel. He looks up at me questioningly and I nod approvingly. It’s years since we’ve executed that command. I wait, gazing across the river to the mountains and hold my breath. Has it worked? Have I stopped her in her tracks?

She has backed off a few more steps. “I am not good with dogs,” she says.

Slowly I let my breath out. If she completed her

sentence and said ‘according to the law all dogs should be on a leash,’ I would not be able to stop myself saying ‘according to the law we are not supposed to build on more than 30% of our land in this area,’ and that would mean war. And Chris and I both need not to be tied to each other all the time. He needs to run as well as walk.

“He has never, ever, come close to attacking anyone,” I say instead. “He thinks our neighbours are our friends.”

Chris, presuming my sudden summons is mission accomplished, has resumed his station directly opposite me, lying quietly vigilant, facing the woman, awaiting his next cue.

She has run out of steam and is suddenly aware that she rushed out of the house without a coat and it’s cold.

“Well, if you know those people I suppose it’s all right,” she mutters grudgingly, and turning round retreats back to her house.

We make our way home, me along the path, Chris through the trees and gardens, greeting anyone who might be in their gardens or walking their dogs. This is the most popular route for walking and people come from miles around. As usual, at the end of the path he runs to me through M-san’s trees, where I give him a treat and take hold of his lead as he jumps off M-san’s wall to cross the main road back to our house.

Since then he has never wanted to visit the grounds of the huge Italian villa again.



The Renewal of Life

By Linda Matsui

Where do I begin with my story? Certainly there is a lot of back history to what leads up to my “Great Expectation” date of April 8, 2012. But, where, oh where, do I begin? Do I start with the fact that this date was Easter Sunday and talk about dying eggs, chocolate bunnies, and all the other old nostalgic traditions of this holiday that symbolize a re-birth and renewal of life? Oh, but it’s long past early Spring-time days and we are moving into Rainy Season. So, let’s save that for later in this piece as this is actually a story in many ways totally unrelated to Easter and more about the renewal of life.

Around the age of 40, I was diagnosed with endometriosis during a routine check-up when an ultrasound showed a massively enlarged ovary covered in “chocolate cysts”. As I got closer to “the change of life”, I developed a new problem. I started having extremely heavy bleeding during my periods and spotting between them. Rather than having a normal period of 5 days or so every month, or shorter, lighter, more distantly spaced periods as is normal as one grows closer to menopause, I would bleed heavily for 2 weeks and sometimes even up to 7 weeks non-stop, only to start again a week or so later. I started having massive cramps, too. My doctor told me the excessive bleeding was due to hormonal imbalances associated with perimenopause after checking thoroughly for cancer. I received a new additional diagnosis of adenomyosis which is similar to endometriosis but rather a condition where endometrial tissue, for unknown reasons, starts growing deep within the muscle of the womb. Both endometriosis and adenomyosis are benign problems that resolve at the time of menopause but until then each month they can be the cause of a lot of pain. Finally, at age 53, I went 9 months without a period but was greatly disappointed when 5 days of light spotting meant I’d need to restart the countdown to a full 12 months period-free to count myself post menopausal.

December 24, 2010 was the date of yet another follow-up gynecology appointment for me. I was nearly 54 at the time. I was to get the results of what had become routine invasive exams, procedures, and endometrial biopsies over the past 6 years. But I expected to breeze in and out and get on with the holiday festivities. By that point, I no longer felt any nervousness over the now routine tests that followed my symptoms but always came back with nothing much to worry about. Four years before, I’d been through this exact same

routine when I was told I had the symptoms of uterine cancer and was to get the endometrial biopsy test results on Christmas Day! At the time, I was relieved when the doctor said the test results were ok but on the other hand annoyed when my Christmas dinner consisted of some waxy tasting, overly processed turkey legs that I got at a Japanese supermarket because the day was taken up seeing the doctor for that rather anti-climatic appointment. So imagine my shock when I walked into the exam room to be faced by an unfamiliar doctor on duty that Christmas Eve, who in a matter of seconds changed my life by saying the results were bad, we couldn’t wait another 6 months to retest, I’d need more invasive testing immediately after the New Year holiday, good-bye, go pick up your next appointment slip at the front desk! What?!

In the first few months of 2011, I had progressively more extensive and invasive tests that involved scraping the walls of the uterus in procedures that were both out-patient and in-patient. Suddenly the doctor who had held off for 6 long years from even suggesting surgery said that multiple tests confirmed I had pre-cancerous cells in my uterus, known as complex atypical endometrial hyperplasia, and would need a hysterectomy and removal of the ovaries. The problem could already be full-on cancer, he told me, as even with a D&C the actual cancerous cells might be missed and these atypical cells are either the precursor to cancer or coexist with cancer. I’d now had several years to read and research the pros and cons of surgery when other doctors had suggested it for my benign problems and had arrived at the conclusion that I really wanted to avoid surgery, and especially losing my ovaries, and would rather wait out my problems until menopause if possible. Now there was no choice as in endometrial cancer the ovaries and the estrogen they produce fuel the growth of this cancer. Another upsetting thing for me was that the doctor who had followed my case for so many years, and whom I’d come to respect and feel confidence in, was set to leave the hospital. So I was being signed over to a new doctor for my surgery and follow up.

I found I needed to keep myself occupied between the shocking news of Christmas Eve and the early April surgery date. Knowing I’d be laid up for several weeks to months after surgery and needing to find a way to relax and get my mind away from unpleasant realities, I started deep cleaning my closets. I arrived

in Japan during an era when people wrote letters to keep in contact and I had saved more than 30 years of correspondence, as well as even older letters and cards that had sentimental value. Maybe thinning down all those old letters might keep me occupied, I thought.

First, I pulled out the letters and cards written by my grandparents that I'd been saving since childhood. Well, I'd never part with those but they were precious to reread! I'd started collecting postcards in childhood as my grandfather would send them every time he'd travel and the memories are special. Nor would I part with birthday cards from my grandmother that have quirky messages written in them. As I pulled out more boxed letters to sort through, I discovered some 3 decades' worth of Christmas cards, birthday cards, and other assorted holidays, besides various postcards sent to me from friends and family traveling far and wide. It was fascinating to see how Christmas card designs had changed or remained the same over the years. In every decade, I'd receive the same Currier and Ives scene from at least one person!

What if my surgery didn't go well? What 5 year statistic would I be? Will my husband and children unceremoniously just put this mountain of cards and letters in the burnable garbage as my brother-in-law did to his mother's kimonos after her death? What a waste that would be of this hidden treasure! Having grown up in a multi-generational home myself, the house where my grandmother and mother before me were born, I remembered the thrill of peeking into the mysteries of life before my time when I'd open old dresser drawers used by my ancestors and try on their granny glasses, look at clipped locks of hair, sniff the musty smells of their fur hand muffs and crazy quilts, peek at Victorian-era postcards, and otherwise snoop in places off limits to the kids in the family. At the Chiba AFWJ Convention, I had attended the scrapbooking workshop. What if I used a bit of what I had learned in that short lesson to put together a scrapbook of these mildly vintage Christmas cards so they wouldn't be tossed out so readily when I'm gone? Perhaps one day my granddaughter would find them as fascinating as I found those of my grandmother's and great-grandmother's. How about sorting out these picture postcards and organizing them a bit better, especially as the previous summer I had discovered my old postcard albums were disintegrating with time? In that manner, I found a project to keep myself occupied and my mind in another place through the bitterly cold January and February days filled with anxiety and loneliness but which came to an almost complete standstill during the horrible days of March and up to my surgery date in early April. In the process, I put together three

Christmas card scrapbooks—one per decade—and one multi-holiday scrapbook.

I'd had no time to build a rapport with my new doctor as I'd only met him very briefly the week before the operation. I'd been instructed to bring my husband along for the surgical consultation and had felt like a pet at the vet with little chance to speak for myself then. He made eye contact with my husband and spoke to him, ignoring me in the process for the most part. I was able to warn him that I was born with a double set of ureters, on both sides of my body, when he was going over possible complications of surgery, though. He scheduled me for extensive testing to reconfirm that the day before surgery.

Finally, the countdown to the surgery date started. I'd had to arrive at the hospital very early in the morning the day before surgery. Once tests were completed, I wasn't even allowed a bite of food and only water up until a certain time. At long last, the morning of the surgery arrived. It really wasn't like an episode of ER by any means. The surgery was scheduled for 2 pm but I had to be up at something like 5 am to begin the preparations. I was in a room with 5 other women who were all having hysterectomies on the same day as me. As the day grew on, I became more and more nervous. Two pm came and went and the woman in the bed next to mine had long since returned from her operation and started in on a steady stream of moaning and groaning in pain and pleading for pain relief. I became more and more terrified of what awaited me! I developed a massive tension headache that lasted until I was finally knocked out for the operation! Finally, I was called for my operation at 6 p.m. and I started the long walk down the hall, down to another floor where the nurse bid me farewell and told me to walk down a long hallway and enter the operating theater where the door was open. It felt like "dead man walking", heading off for execution! Oh dear, what if I go into the wrong room and end up with the wrong surgery? No worry, they check and recheck several times before finally entering the actual operating theater. But, I was more than ready to sneak out and off to a park to enjoy a cherry blossom festival and forget about the whole thing!

Although I'd always envisioned a hysterectomy as an embarrassing ordeal, I was never made to feel uncomfortable. Indeed, by the time I awoke, I wondered how they even accomplished it as I'd gone to sleep on a long narrow operating table, which was comfortably outfitted with long thick sponge padding, and nothing at all like an Ob/Gyn examination table. My surgery ended up being much more complicated

than planned. What hadn't shown up in CT scans and MRIs was that endometriosis had fused my intestines to my uterus and that was only discovered once I was under the knife. I awoke in the operating room past 11 p.m. and to several doctors peering down at me and speaking amongst themselves in rather scary terms about my condition post-surgery. They probably assumed I couldn't understand a word they said! I learned from my husband immediately after surgery that indeed they had found cancer. I felt relief that I hadn't lost my organs for naught. Tests confirmed it was early stage.

I ended up spending 15 days in the hospital, most of them hooked to an IV, as I wasn't allowed to even sip a drop of water due to my bowels being thinned from the process of separating them from the uterus. They needed time to heal before risking any stress on them. I spent much of my time reading books that had been gifted to me from various AFWJ friends on my new Kindle. I walked up and down the hallways for exercise once I was mobile. I chatted with other women on the floor and compared notes on our surgeries. Amazingly the woman who had frightened me so much on the day of our operations was the first to rebound and even checked out of the hospital ahead of schedule with a big smile on her face! I sorely missed seeing the annual cherry blossom display during my hospitalization as my bed was next to the hallway and without a view. Instead, I spent the entire stay with fluorescent lights blazing in my eyes day and night, either from overhead in the room or the hallway. When I entered the hospital, Mr. Edano was a daily feature on any TV channel. I made the decision not to watch TV while in the hospital as I worried that a steady non-stop diet of post-March 11 news would hinder any chance of remaining upbeat about the future and delay the healing process by sinking me into depression. Imagine my dismay that 15 days later, when I saw the TV for the first time again, Mr. Edano was wearing the same clothing and holding yet another news conference! Nothing had changed in that regard but unlike so many others in Japan I was still alive and had a home to go back to. How could I even begin to feel sorry for myself?

Endometrial cancer (also generically known as uterine cancer) is the most common form of gynecological cancer affecting Caucasian women in first world countries, although in other regions of the world cervical cancer is the more prevalent type. The rate of this cancer is increasing in Japan although in 2010 only 8% of all surgeries in the gynecology department of the hospital I used were for this type of cancer. It develops slowly and is usually found in an early stage as the first symptom is often post-

menopausal bleeding (although only about 20% of post-menopausal bleeding is actually cancer). Most cases occur to women between the ages of 60 and 70 but a few cases occur in women younger than age 40. It is a bit harder to diagnose in pre-menopausal women, such as I was. It generally can't be picked up in a pap smear which is designed to screen for cervical cancer so needs the more invasive endometrial biopsy for a cell sample. Risk factors include a low number of births, infertility, estrogen replacement therapy, tamoxifen use for breast cancer, polycystic ovarian disease (PCOS), hypertension, obesity, starting menstruation before the age of 12, or starting menopause after the age of 50. Symptoms can be abnormal uterine bleeding either by bleeding between periods, bleeding or spotting after menopause, extremely long, heavy, or frequent episodes of vaginal bleeding after age 40, lower abdominal pain or cramping, or a thin white or clear discharge after menopause. Although the exact cause is unknown, increased levels of estrogen appear to play a role by stimulating the buildup of the lining of the uterus and eventually leading to cancer. The 1-year survival rate is about 92% for all stages. The 5-year survival rate for endometrial cancer that is early stage is between 87 to 95%. If the cancer is found at a later stage, the 5-year survival rate drops to 23%. If there is a recurrence of the cancer, it is generally considered incurable, chemotherapy is only palliative and there is only an 11% chance of surviving one year.

Although every Western source of information I came across stated that 6 weeks to 2 months was the standard time to recover from this surgery, here in Japan I was told 1 month. I found that a bit surprising considering hospitals stays tend to be longer in Japan than in my home country. My husband did an admirable job of cooking, shopping, laundry and whatnot during that first month, although the vacuum cleaner never once left its storage spot until I was finally able to manage it some months later. I gradually grew stronger and step by step was able to resume normal life although it took about 6 months to fully recover. As I grew stronger and more bored lying around, but not yet able to lift anything heavy, I started work again on the organization of postcards I had been saving for decades to pass the time.

Although I had vowed I'd just get on with my life and not worry too much about an early stage cancer diagnosis as I'd already been struggling for years with an autoimmune disease that currently has no cure, life without ovaries and the hormones they produce does present problems. I'd been in peri-menopause for a number of years so had already experienced hot flashes and night sweats. I didn't immediately notice

bigger changes due to the lack of estrogen after surgery, but as the months passed the hot flashes increased in intensity and, more troubling, I started to notice memory problems, quickly aging skin, irritability, and signs of depression. Well, who wasn't depressed after the events of March 11? Just the year before, in June, my hometown had been obliterated by a two-tailed tornado that swept away the business district and with it 6-generations of my family's memories and I still felt heartbroken about that, as well. I really needed to find a positive way to deal with so much upheaval. Looking at the calendar, I noticed that my one-year date post-surgery would be Easter Sunday, although due to Leap Year the actual one-year mark since surgery could also be Good Friday. Maybe I could look ahead to the renewal of life by focusing my attention on creating a special Easter celebration. My granddaughter would be 2 1/2 by then. Wouldn't it be great to begin teaching her about the Easter traditions that I recalled from childhood? With a historically great exchange rate, I started looking online for things to add to my holiday collection to make the Easter celebration special. In the process, I took my mind off of problems in the here and now and looked towards the future.

Good Friday arrived and I had the day to myself. The night before I had mentioned to my husband that the first anniversary of my surgery was coming up and I was still feeling a bit huffy in regards to his response. Just like he'd do when he'd tell the children the story of their birth—starting with how he'd been sound asleep when the nurse had called to tell him he'd soon be a father, and as if I played no part at all in the story—he maintained that he'd sure had a rough time of it with my surgery. Why? Well, he'd had to sit alone in a special room during my operation and a sign was posted that the TV had to be turned off at 9 pm. So, he followed the rules but then my surgery had lasted two hours past that! Also, he'd taken the train to the hospital that day to avoid parking problems. Since my surgery had been scheduled for the early afternoon, he expected to be home hours beforehand but became stranded at the hospital with no way home because the trains had stopped running for the night. He ended up sleeping in a little consultation room on a cot. Somehow those inconveniences didn't measure up in my mind to outweigh what I'd been through, though! What about my 20 cm incision and the Frankenstein-like staples that had held it together? Hey, I'm now missing FIVE body

parts from that operation too! Somehow I think that trumps missing TWO hours of Japanese TV programming!

Between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, I worked frantically on the preparations of the holiday while feeling a bit melancholy and mulling over the events of the past year. I dyed eggs, arranged Spring flowers, made decorations, looked over my collection of old Easter cards, then I took a long walk to see the cherry trees on a high hill that looks out on Mt. Fuji in my town remembering how I'd missed that so much the year before. I baked bread and hot cross buns, a pineapple upside-down cake, and various other dishes I recalled from childhood to make the holiday meal special. Still six weeks away from a CT scan that would hopefully show there was no recurrence of the cancer, my mind did drift to worries about my surgery. I haven't had enough time to feel complete trust and confidence in my doctor. Had he done a good job with the surgery? His follow up exams sure seem a bit haphazard, especially compared to the one exam I got by the head of the department when he was gone one month. He is a cheerful person and easy to talk to, though. But, is that enough? I still have follow-up appointments every month or six weeks. In the pre-surgery consult, he'd said I'd need to decide if he should remove the lymph nodes from around the aorta and pelvis unless he found cancer and then there would be no choice. But the day of my surgery he was running so late and he told me he wouldn't take the lymph nodes when I got on the operating table before he started the surgery. I hadn't really wanted him to anyway. How would that affect my recurrence chances in the long run, though? Was that a slipshod decision?

My daughter and granddaughter finally arrived for a visit a few days past Easter. I had made the one-year post surgery mark without a snag! We dyed eggs together, using my props I introduced her to the Easter Bunny, and the next morning we had an Easter egg hunt in the backyard. Best of all, I had a chance to dress my granddaughter in the dresses her mother and I had each worn when we were about her age and got photographs for posterity. The circle of life continues. Oh, I can hardly wait to celebrate my five-year remission day with her in 2016! Perhaps by then I'll have mastered how to mold chocolate Easter Bunnies too!



Some Practical Gynecology Terms

By Linda Matsui

ENGLISH	JAPANESE	ENGLISH	JAPANESE
Gynecology	<i>fujinka</i>	Oral contraception	<i>keiko hinin yakul/piru</i>
Gynecologist	<i>fujinka-i</i>	Hormonal medication	<i>horumonzai</i>
Obstetrics	<i>sanka</i>	Abortion	<i>ninshin chuzetsul/jinko chuzetsu</i>
Obstetrician	<i>sanka-i</i>	Side effect	<i>fukusayou</i>
Obstetrics and gynecology	<i>sanfujinka</i>	Ovulation	<i>hairan</i>
Pelvic examination	<i>naishin</i>	Ovum	<i>ranshi</i>
Ultrasound	<i>choompa</i>	Morning sickness	<i>tsuwari</i>
Pap smear	<i>sumea tesuto/ shikkyu saibo shin</i>	Contraception	<i>hinin</i>
Vulva	<i>gaiin (bu)</i>	Pregnancy	<i>ninshin</i>
Vagina	<i>chitsu</i>	Fetus	<i>taiji</i>
Cervix	<i>shikyukei</i>	Ectopic pregnancy	<i>shikyuu gai ninshin</i>
Uterus	<i>shikyuu</i>	Miscarriage	<i>ryuzan</i>
Endometrial lining	<i>shikyuu naimaku</i>	Labor pain	<i>jintsu</i>
Ovary	<i>ransou</i>	Water breakage	<i>hasui</i>
Fallopian tube	<i>rankan</i>	Delivery	<i>osan/bunben</i>
Pelvis	<i>kotsuban</i>	Placenta	<i>taiban</i>
Vaginal discharge	<i>taige/orimono</i>	Cervical erosion	<i>shikyuu chitsubu biran</i>
Bleeding	<i>shukketsu</i>	Chlamydia	<i>kuramijia</i>
Hot flash	<i>hoteri/nobose</i>	Genital herpes	<i>inbu herupesu</i>
Painful	<i>itai</i>	Pelvic inflammatory disease	<i>kotsubannai kansenshou</i>
Anemia	<i>hinketsu</i>	Venereal disease	<i>seibyou</i>
Infection	<i>kansen</i>	Ovarian cyst	<i>ransou noshu</i>
First menstruation (menarche)	<i>shochou</i>	Fibroid	<i>shikkyuu kinshu</i>
Menstruation	<i>gekkei/seiri</i>	Endometriosis	<i>shikyuu naimaku shou</i>
Menstrual cramps	<i>gekkeitsul/seiritsu</i>	Adenomyosis	<i>shikyuu senkin shou</i>
Heavy flow	<i>seiri no ryo ga ooi</i>	Menopause	<i>heikei/kounenki</i>
Irregular menses	<i>seiri fujun</i>	Menopausal symptoms	<i>kounenki shogai</i>
PMS	<i>gekkeizen shokogun</i>		
Infertility	<i>funin</i>		
Hysterosalpingography	<i>shikyuu zoei</i>		

ENGLISH

JAPANESE

Benign	<i>ryo-sei</i>
Chronic	<i>mansei</i>
Malignant	<i>akusei</i>
Atypical complex endometrial hyperplasia	<i>fukuzatsugata shikyuunaimaku ikei zashokushou</i>
Uterine cancer (general wording)	<i>shikyuu gan</i>
Uterine cancer (endometrial)	<i>shikyuu tai gan</i>
Cervical cancer	<i>shikyuu kei gan</i>
Hysterectomy	<i>shikyuu teikishutsu-jutsu</i>

My apologies for any difficulties in the rendering of *romaji*, as words such as “*shikyuu*” may be easier read as “*shikyuu*” or “*shou*” as “*sho*” to an English speaker. They will, however, be more difficult to find in Japanese to English dictionaries under the easier to spell style so in many cases I have left them as a Japanese person may spell them.



"You have your choice of treatment centers."



Photo by Tammy Campbell

Columns

This section contains columns from regular contributors.
Columns taken from various issues of the AFWJournal:

BACK IN THE DO-INAKA:

Guilty Little Pleasures
(Or, Some of the Times I've Been a Bad Girl)
By Rebecca Otowa

Literary Lives of Foreign Wives: Harlot's Sauce
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Flick Picks: 80's Movies Part I: 1980-1984
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BACK IN THE DO-INAKA

Guilty Little Pleasures

(Or, Some of the Times I've Been a Bad Girl)

by Rebecca Otowa

It's really cold here right now, so I'm hoping to warm myself up with a few belly laughs. When I was in counseling, quite early in the treatment my counselor said, "I want to meet the bad girl." I admit she's there, deep inside, though I don't often let her out. Here are a few examples of times when I've just lashed out and done something strange, weird, bizarre or downright bad—and not regretted it afterward, in fact I laugh out loud remembering them. Most of these have very little to do with things Japanese, but what the hey. I've enjoyed compiling them.

1. **Cookies make you do strange things.** When teaching at a primary school about 15 years ago, I let myself in for making over 200 cookies for a Christmas party. By the end of that day, I had the 200 cookies, and I also had a smidgen of dough left over—about the size of a walnut. In a fit of "What the hell, I'm done!!!" instead of baking that bit of dough or putting it in the trash, I hurled it up to the ceiling. It stuck, and was still there ten years later when we had the kitchen remodeled.



2. **Take THAT.** Last year I was cleaning out some shelves in one of our sheds. It was a hot, sweaty job and I was getting fed up. Suddenly I came upon a very ugly mass-produced ceramic mosquito coil holder that I had always hated. An evil grin spread over my face, and I took the thing out to our brick patio and flung it as hard as I could. It made a most satisfying crash. Then I picked up the larger pieces and hurled them

too. Woo hooo!!!! (By the way, that ceramic item had been given to us years before by my sister-in-law, whom I was extremely angry with at the time. Icing on the cake.) Since then, I save broken and chipped ceramics that I'm going to throw away anyway, and have regular smashing sessions. Very therapeutic, and well worth the cleanup time afterwards.

3. **Tequila sunrise.** Once after a drama performance, a friend and I had a tequila shot contest at a bar. I spent the entire night on the floor of my hotel room, unable to get up. (I was 52 years old at the time.) Are you amazed I was able to get back to my hotel? I am! And I felt pretty rocky the next day, too. This is one of only three times in my life that I've "taken a load on". No, I'm not telling you about the others!



4. **Anything but the whip!** Recently I was doing a University English seminar class—topic, Crime and Punishment. I had divided the class into four groups and was having them act out various types of punishment—standing in the corner for "Imprisonment", having their wallets collected on the front desk for "Fines", etc. I approached the "Physical Punishment" group, unfurled my imaginary whip, and wailed on them for several terrifying seconds while shouting at the top of my lungs. Going back to my podium, I called out "Damn, that felt good!" The kids were fine, though startled, and we all had a genuine laugh.

4. **I needed therapy.** This happened quite a long time ago. It was summer, and my husband and I were sitting on the lawn. I was elaborating on my dissatisfaction with things in general, and mentioned that I really

wished I could spend some time in my native Australia doing some therapy. He said, “Why not take a week’s vacation?” I said I could hardly complete a therapy course in a week, whereupon he said “OK, go for two weeks.” That’s when he received a third of a glass of iced tea, complete with ice cubes, in the chest. Fortunately for him, I found a therapist in Japan a short time later.



5. **Bet your bottom dollar, they were gobsmacked!** (I didn’t actually mean to do this one.) A few years ago, late at night, on the way home from picking up my sister at the airport, we stopped at a ramen shop for a snack. My sister and I went to the toilet. It was a rather strange configuration—the Japanese-style, hole-in-the-ground toilet faced directly away from the stall door, so I had my back to it and didn’t notice that it had swung open. I heard giggles and comments in Japanese and realized that I had been baring my all to a couple of Japanese ladies who had come in. I turned around, laughed, and said “Oh, gomennasai!” They ran like rabbits. I have never seen anything so funny. My sister and I were in hysterics all the way home.

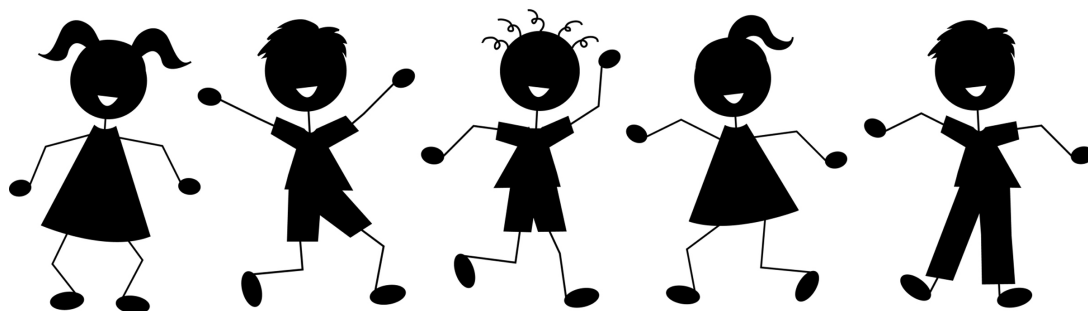
6. **A little Christmas cheer.** This same sister (you can imagine we make a wild pair when we get together, which fortunately for humanity isn’t that often) and I

had been Christmas shopping with our partners at a local mall near my home. I went out into the covered parking lot several steps ahead of the others, and decided to give them a scare. I hid behind a pillar, and when I heard footsteps, jumped out into their path shouting “YAAAHH!” I almost died on the spot when I realized that instead of my family, I had just terrified a small middle-aged Japanese lady. (This time, we saved our hysteria for when she was out of earshot.) I bet she is still telling that story.

7. **It took the stuffing out of them.** This isn’t mine, but I just have to share it—my sister (yes, the same one) told me about it recently though it happened years ago. She was playing in a string quartet, and the other three members were men who really fancied themselves great musicians (we have both known these guys since we were all teenagers together). One evening she hosted a casual concert at her home where they played a Bartok quartet, duly recorded by her friend, an amateur acoustician. Afterward, the men in the quartet insisted on playing back the recording immediately so they could do a post-mortem. My sister, heartily sick of their stuffed-shirt conceit, decided (with her friend’s connivance) to play a trick on them. The recording that was played back was not them at all, but a professional recording of a world-famous quartet playing the same piece. Unbelievably, the guys never batted an eye, but listened with great seriousness, commenting occasionally on “their” performance. Meanwhile my sister quietly went around to her other guests and told them what she had done. Gradually all the guests gathered around to watch these emperors with their new clothes. It took an entire movement for them to notice the suppressed giggles all around them. When they found out they’d been had, they never spoke to her again. (I laughed till I cried when I heard this story!)

Just to let you know, I have refrained from mentioning the REALLY outrageous ones!!!

How about you? Shall we have a column of other’s Guilty Pleasure moments? Email me and I will compile them for next time—as long as they aren’t unkind or illegal!



Literary Lives of Foreign Wives: Harlot's Sauce

By Suzanne Kamata

Like many of you, I've always been interested in travel and in learning about other cultures. That's what brought me to this place. While I once had dreams of roaming the world, I got sidetracked by a guy, and here I am, twenty-four years later, still living in Japan. My curiosity continues, however, and although hopping on a plane or train whenever I feel like it is not an option, I am a frequent armchair traveler. I love reading about the lives of expatriate women and foreign wives. I often feel that I have more in common with a foreign wife in Dubai, say, than my old friends back home in South Carolina. In this column, I will share some of my reading with you. I also hope to keep you abreast of the literary doings of our members, and supply you with a few book recommendations.

Long before Yuki Yoshi, the man who became my husband, there was Dimitris, the god-like Greek student who sat in the back of my language class at the *Faculte des Lettres* in Avignon. Although our foreign study love was not strong enough to withstand my remaining two years of college back in the States and the miles and miles between us, at times of extreme boredom or exasperation, I sometimes wonder "What if?" What if I had married Dimitris, and gone to live in Athens? After reading *Harlot's Sauce: A Memoir of Food, Family, Love, Loss, and Greece* by Patricia Volonakis Davis, I feel like I have a pretty good idea: My life would be much the same as it is now, but with more olive oil. And donkeys!

Although Davis was born and raised in New York City, she never felt quite American. As the daughter of immigrant

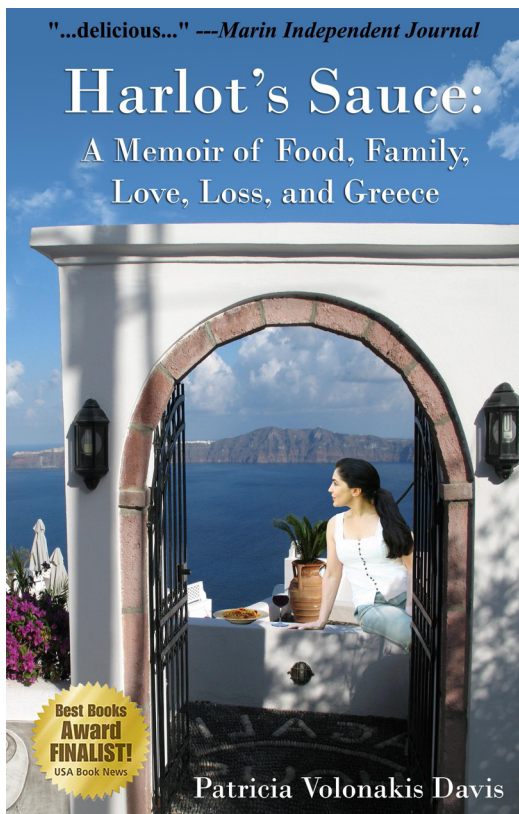
Italians, she was raised with Old World values. For example, she was taught to beware of the "evil eye," and that daughters must listen to their parents. While she was a good student—college material, by most standards—her Italian parents didn't see the point of paying for a university education. Her grandmother suggested that she get a nice little job instead, and buy a car, like her cousin. They expected her to live at home.

Davis had a hard time explaining her family to her previous boyfriend, WASP-y, upwardly mobile Kurt, but in Gregori, the Greek whom she met at a disco, she found a kindred spirit. Or at least she thought she did.

Gregori had been living in the United States since he was thirteen, but he was steeped in Greek tradition. His parents, too, seemed completely impervious to mainstream American mores. Even Italian-American ways were a bit too extreme for them.

For instance, Gregori is shocked when Patricia tells him that her spirited grandmother has been married four times. (My own grandmother was married three times!) He's also scandalized by the fact that Nonnie's specialty is a recipe for spaghetti sauce first created by prostitutes (the "harlot's sauce" of the title). His father is outraged when he sees Davis' father help her mother clear the table after a meeting of the in-laws. "That's women's work!" he declares. None of this bodes well for Davis' marriage, but as they say, "love is blind."

From the title, I expected that this book would be centered around food, with recipes for *moussaka* and *avgolemeno* soup thrown in. While there is one



recipe, at the end of the book, think of this more as a letter from a close friend. Davis has a lively, chatty style, and you can imagine her telling all over a bottle of red wine. She spills about her sex life (“good-looking” does not necessarily mean “good in bed”), her overbearing mother-in-law, and the machismo of the males in her extended Greek family.

Things heat up when Davis gives birth to a boy-child. Her mother-in-law, now widowed, has nothing to do but dote upon her precious grandson. She insists that baby Nicky always be dressed up, in case a relative should drop by, and wakes him from naps just to play with him. Of course she ignores everything that her daughter-in-law says. Davis is especially outraged when her mother-in-law Demetra and her sister Marina take little Nicky out on an outing in the car and don't bother to use the safety harness:

Marina had him on her lap in the front passenger seat.

The whole block heard me screech.

My mother-in-law giggled. “Don't lose your shirt. It was just one time.”

The world turned red. They'd endangered my child on a whim.

To which I wanted to say, “*Girlfriend, let me tell you about the time when my mother-in-law took my feverish six-year-old son to the grocery store to buy snacks on the back of her scooter. Without a helmet!*”

Technically, *Harlot's Sauce* does not qualify as a book about a foreign wife until about two-thirds through. It's actually the story of a foreign husband, until the three of them move to Greece in an attempt (on Davis' part) to save their marriage.

For me, the most interesting parts were about Greek culture and customs. Some of it was familiar. Davis writes about the funeral of her father-in-law, Niko, which reminded me of my own experiences:

The bereavement obligations Niko's family felt they needed to adhere to were as exacting as the decorum we'd followed on Papa Elias' name day. Those had been taxing, but in their own way, fun. However, the requirements for this circumstance meant we'd only be allowed to truly grieve after every trifling remembrance specification had been satisfied.

These specifications apply to everything from clothing to the kind of *biscotti* served to mourners. I could also relate to her struggles to help her son Nick with his third-grade Greek school homework while her husband was working out of town, and her search for friends among other foreign wives. There are also many

intriguing differences—the name day celebrations, the red license plates, the protocols for dealing with stray dogs.

As an English teacher in Japan, and the mother of a two children in the Japanese school system, I was also especially interested in reading about Davis' career. Having put herself through college, Davis was a successful and popular English teacher in New York City before arriving in Greece. After moving abroad, she is hired as an English teacher at her son's Greek school, but she quickly becomes frustrated with the emphasis on grammar and repetition. (Sound familiar?) Davis introduces literature-based learning to her fellow teachers, eventually quitting her job to start her own business promoting foreign English books to teachers all over the country, and conducting workshops in how to use them. She and her business partner persevere in spite of political protests, xenophobic dog owners, and red tape.

In spite of her difficulties, Davis' affection for Greece shines through. Her descriptions of the country and its people are detailed, respectful, and vibrant. For a bit of commiseration, a quick trip to the Mediterranean, or a dose of inspiration, *Harlot's Sauce* is a worthwhile read.

What we're reading in Shikoku:

Keri Cromb: “Last book I read was *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. A very moving read about the American civil rights history that intrigues me as a Canadian. For my little girl, I have been reading, *Little Witch Goes to School* and *Little Witch's Big Night Out* by Deborah Hautzig. Cute stories about a good little witch that should keep bad witches such as the evil Queen in Disney's Snow White film from intruding in on my daughter's innocent dreams.”

Maz Carmichael: “I just bought a Kindle a few weeks ago and almost immediately got gripped into the *Hunger Games* Trilogy. They were the most unputdownable books I've read in a long time. Was quite relieved to finish the trilogy in the end for two reasons. Firstly, it was so gripping I kept staying up late to read it and secondly, when I did go to sleep I ended up having some seriously disturbing dreams based on the book! Not a book I'll forget in a hurry!”

Luisa Gioffre: I recently got into the *Sookie Stackhouse* books by Charlaine Harris (read the whole series and am waiting on the last book from the library here).

For more on what I've been reading, take a look at my page on GoodReads:

http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/303669.Suzanne_Kamata

Flick Picks:

80's Movies Part I: 1980 - 1984

By Stella Starstruck ©

The Eighties, what a decade! It was a time of change: Reagan became president in the US; Canada, Australia and New Zealand gained independence from the United Kingdom. There were disasters: Bhopal India, Japan Air Lines Flight 123, the Challenger Shuttle, Chernobyl and the Exxon Valdez. John Lennon, Anwar Sadat, Indira Gandhi, and Olof Palme were assassinated. Gaming equipment became more popular for at-home use, as did home computers.

Movies changed too. The Eighties brought us “high concept” movies where plots could be summarised in one or two sentences, the “Brat Pack” became popular and horror films were on many movie screens. It was the start of many of the franchise films that we still watch, and the time when actors Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis and Eddie Murphy became superstars.

The 80's were an interesting decade in my life too. I graduated high school and college, I lost my mother, I started working and made lots of new friends. And, there were the movies. Glorious movies. Once I was working or in university, I had time, money and ability to see them.

The last film I saw with all of my family together in a theatre was



Airplane! (PG/1980). After my father finished work one night, we piled in the car and drove 40 miles to the nearest theatre to see it. Sadly it wasn't the greatest experience as my father hated it. However, my mother, sister and I laughed ourselves silly at the film. Ever since, it has been a film that I can watch over and over again and find something new to laugh about every time. After I married, I bought the DVD and played it for my husband. He loved it, and we continue to watch it at least once a year. There's always something that we can laugh at, it is one of the funniest films ever made.

The film tells the story of Ted Stryker, a fighter pilot and Elaine Dickinson his flight attendant girlfriend.

They live together until Ted's problems drive her away. He tries to win her back by buying a ticket on her flight. It wasn't the best flight to catch as many people, including the pilots, come down with food poisoning. The story isn't really important, what is important are the crazy sight-gags, the comic timing and the genius of using famous “B” movie actors giving their usual performances a twist.

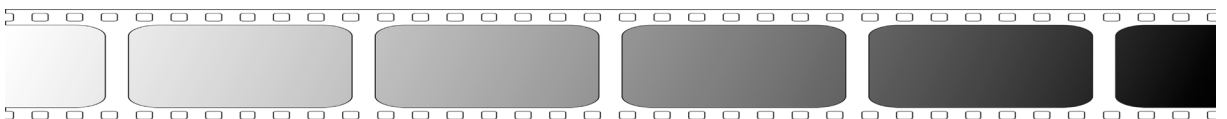
There are some adult scenes in this film, but they go by very fast. This is one of the few movies that can be watched and re-watched and you'll find something new to laugh at every time. This film stars Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, Lloyd Bridges, Leslie Nielsen, Robert Stack and Peter Graves

Another film that hit our screens in 1980 was *The Empire Strikes Back* (PG/1980). The second installment of the original Star Wars films is widely considered the best of the films and has something for everyone. The story of Luke, his friends Leia, Han and Chewbacca as they continue their fight against the evil Empire has romance, derring do and sacrifice. It is a great film, well worth watching as a part of a Star Wars themed night.



I didn't see this film until a few years later, but *Diva* (R/1981) is one of the most stylish films I have ever seen. This wonderful French film has something for everyone. There is amazing music, incredible chase scenes, and intriguing characters. The plot would take too long to explain, but it involves two tapes,

one a bootleg recording of an opera singer, the other a tape incriminating the police chief in a sex-slavery ring. There's a young postman who loves opera, a Vietnamese girl who lives with a French Musician, and the Paris metro. I bought the DVD of this film in Canada on one of my trips home and love it for its craziness and the look of the film. The music is a huge



bonus. The film is in French so depending on your Japanese/French ability, you may have to find a version with subtitles in your own language.

Directed by Jean-Jacques Beineix it stars: Frederic Andrei, Thuy An Luu, Dominique Pinon, and Richard Bohringer.

Raiders of the Lost Ark

(PG/1981) was directed by Steven Spielberg and also released in 1981. It made a huge star out of Harrison Ford and introduced us to a new hero in



Indiana Jones. Looking back at this film, I remember having so much fun at this movie that has rarely been equalled since.

The film tells of the trials of Indiana Jones, professor and archeologist and his quest for the Ark of the Covenant. The quest takes him from the US to Nepal to Egypt and we are along for the ride. Indy must find the ark, rescue the girl and defeat the Nazis. All in a day's work for Indy.

See this film again and revel in the joy of good film-making and story-telling. You'll be glad that you did.

Stars include Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, John Rhys-Davies and Denholm Elliott.

1982 saw many films, including *Tootsie*, *48 Hours*, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *First Blood*, *Victor/Victoria*, and *Gandhi*, but the films I want to look at today are all about the look of the film and special effects.



Blade Runner (R/1982), also known as the film with 100* versions, is a science fiction noir. It was not a successful film, but it was a very stylish one. It has inspired the look of many other films in the years since it was made. Deckard, a blade runner, must hunt down and kill

four replicants that have escaped and found their way back to Earth. The film is slow moving, especially by today's standards, but for those people who persevere it is rewarding.

Blade Runner stars Harrison Ford, Sean Young and Rutger Hauer.

*slight exaggeration

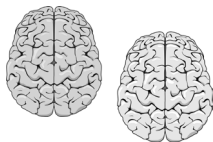
The other groundbreaking film of 1982 was *Tron*.

Tron (PG/1982) tells the story of a man who is captured and digitised. He is brought to a new world inside a computer and must fight in order to get back to his life. Looking back on this film now, the special effects seem a little dated, but for the time, they were absolutely groundbreaking. I remember seeing this at a theatre and being amazed by what I was seeing for the first time. This movie could even be thought of as a forerunner to *The Matrix*. Worth seeing again.



Tron stars Jeff Bridges, Bruce Boxleitner and David Warner.

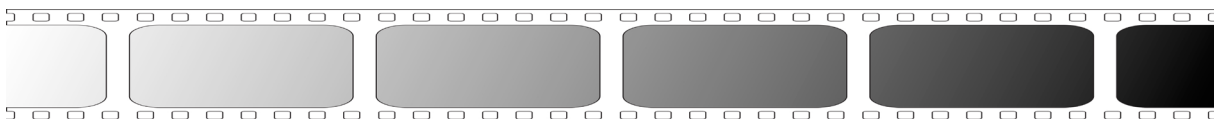
The next two years in Hollywood were big ones. 1983 saw films like *Trading Places*, *Flashdance*, *The Outsiders* and *Terms of Endearment* lighting up our screens. Of the films that I saw that year, I remember three quite well. **The Man with Two Brains** (R/1983) I mentioned in the Steve Martin column I did a few years ago. It's the zany comedy tale of a surgeon who marries a patient and then falls in love with a brain. This is quite an adult film, but very funny.



WarGames (PG/1983) is a film very much of its time. Looking back at it now, the computers seem clunky and we are all much more aware of what computers can do, so there may not be the same sense of wonder about the movie.



However, it is a great story, so watch it for that. David is a young computer genius, still going to high school. He changes the grades of a girl he likes and shows her what his computer can do. He has found the dial-up number for a games company and starts playing a computer game. Unfortunately, he doesn't realise that the number he found wasn't for a games company, it was for a top secret military system designed to respond in the case of an attack by the Soviet Union. The computer game David thought he was playing was called Global Thermonuclear War. Once the computer begins playing the game with David, things start to get quite serious. The military arrests David and then the story really gets interesting! This film is probably fine



for teens and up, as there is quite a bit of bad language, but other than that is fun and interesting.

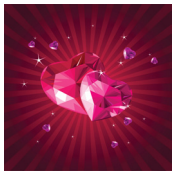
WarGames stars Matthew Broderick, Ally Sheedy, John Wood, Dabney Coleman and Barry Corbin

The Big Chill (R/1983) was a revelation to me. It was one of the first “grown-up” movies that I saw with great actors and a poignant script. Old college friends from the 60’s get together for a weekend after one of their number dies. They have moved on from college, but none of them have changed the world the way they planned. There’s a TV star, a writer, a bored housewife, and a few more characters, thrown together. It is a fascinating weekend, and one that I hope I never have to have with my friends.



The Big Chill stars Glenn Close, Kevin Kline, Jeff Goldblum, Tom Berenger, JoBeth Williams and William Hurt. Incidentally, it is also infamous as the film that Kevin Costner was cut out of, robbing him of an early shot at stardom. He played Alec, the man who died.

I could probably have written an entire column about films that were made in 1984, because it was a bumper year. How many of these films have you seen? **Sixteen Candles**, **Beverly Hills Cop**, **Footloose**, **Ghostbusters**, **Gremlins**, **Purple Rain**, **The Terminator** and **This is Spinal Tap** were all released in 1984.



In 1984 I was living in Edson, a small Albertan town. I would go shopping on my time off work, usually for books. I bought a lot of science fiction novels because they were cheap, but one day I saw a romantic paperback novel with an interesting cover. It had Kathleen Turner and Michael Douglas on it and the blurb on the back cover was interesting too. I bought it, took it home and read it in almost one sitting, then gave it to my mum. She read it in one sitting and the two of us couldn’t wait for the film. **Romancing the Stone** (PG/1984) arrived in theatres in 1984 and was just about as good as the novel. This is a film that takes us from New York all the way to South America. It is worth the journey. Turner plays Joan Wilding, a romance novelist. She is nothing like her heroine in her novels. Joan is timid, shy, and lonely. Her sister lives in South

America and has just lost her husband. Joan receives an envelope from her now deceased brother in law and then a phoned plea from her sister to bring it back to her. The sister’s life depends on it. Joan flies to South America, and through a set of misadventures meets up with Jack Colton, an American adventurer. He agrees to guide her to civilisation and the screen lights up with their chemistry. Turner has the amazing ability to look better and better the more dishevelled she becomes. The film has been compared to **Raiders of the Lost Ark** in that it doesn’t stop, the action keeps going and I think it is a fair comparison. Do Joan and Jack rescue her sister? Watch it and find out!

Romancing the Stone stars Kathleen Turner, Michael Douglas, and Danny DeVito

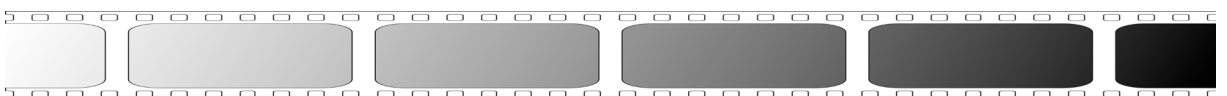
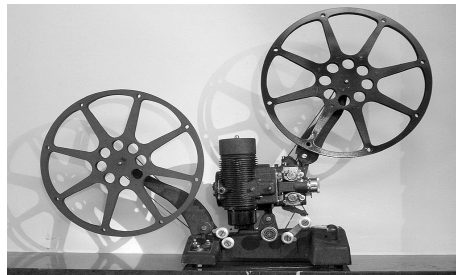
Another one of my favourite films from 1984 is a romantic science fiction film called **Starman** (PG/1984). This tells the story of an alien who comes to Earth in response to the Voyager space probes greetings. He is thought of as an invader and is shot down. His craft lands in Wisconsin and he takes on the body of a recently deceased man. The man’s widow is forced to drive the alien to his pick-up point. The Starman starts out as a stranger in a strange body and over the course of the film becomes more at home in it. This film sounds like it has the potential to be a standard alien on earth movie, but the performances and the script elevate it. It really is a much better film than it sounds!



Starman stars Jeff Bridges, Karen Allen and Charles Martin Smith

Well, there you have it. The first half of the 1980’s was a marvellous time to go to the movies. I was lucky enough to be able to see many of these films during their first run at the theatre, and I haven’t forgotten them. In a future column I will bring you films of the second half of the 80’s. How do you feel about 80’s films? How many of these have you seen? Did you like them? For comments about these films, this column or suggestions for films or future column topics, please email me at journaleditor@afwj.org.

Until next time, save me a corner of the chesterfield and pass the popcorn!





Pages From an Old Diary: Echoes of Sōmi: Remembering Mabel Ogimi

By Joan Atoh Burk

Most of us will agree that in Japan, full acceptance of a son's foreign bride is usually the stuff of high drama. Nevertheless, when a Japanese man and a foreign woman married, whether it succeeded or failed, all had love stories. For members, past and present of AFWJ, I like to think that all our stories are woven into our long-standing, written and unwritten, history.

Surely, one of the most remarkable of such stories belongs to Mabel and Yosoe Ogimi. Their successful marriage thrived during the good times and survived the terrible years of World War Two. Mabel was a private person, never wanting to be in the news. Actually her personal story was a saga with roots that reached back into nineteenth century global history.

Mabel Lilian Jones was born in 1899 in London when Queen Victoria was still on the throne and much of the West was infatuated with things Japanese. Western women, who could afford silk, wore kimonos for dressing gowns and people went to cry with Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* or laugh at Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. Japanese lacquered furniture became stylish. Liberals like Mabel's father, a prominent businessman in London, were active in London's Japan Society. In that atmosphere the Jones family often became friends with and entertained visiting Japanese dignitaries. Not surprisingly members of Mabel's family had strong desires to visit the exotic land of the rising sun. First her elder brother went.

After two years when he came home for a visit, Mabel announced that she wanted to travel with him back to Japan. Her brother said no but her spirited insistence chipped away at his resistance. Finally he gave in but only on the condition that Mabel learn typing and shorthand. And that is how the



tenacious nineteen year-old Mabel Jones learned these skills and went to Japan to work for Reuter's in Tokyo. In the meantime her brother, a foreign correspondent for Reuter's, had moved on to Shanghai. Mabel wanted to live with a Japanese family as he had done. As it happened, the family that was found for her to live with was named Ogimi.

Ogimi Yosoe was born in 1894 into a high-ranking samurai family who had been direct retainers to the last Shogun. After the Black Ships nudged long-isolated Japan into the nineteenth century, the Japanese government chose some of their brightest young men to sail to foreign lands in a quest to catch up with the rest of the world. Yosoe's father was one of those elite. He was the man who was to one day become Mabel's father-in-law. He was to live twenty years in the United States, graduate from Princeton, become a Christian, become a scholar and work for a time as a missionary. When he returned to Japan, he taught at Tokyo University, raised an unusually progressive bilingual family and one day welcomed a young English woman to stay in his family's home. One of his sons happened to be a tall (destined to be a diplomat) handsome young man. If you look at the early photo portraits of Mabel and Yosoe, it is no surprise that these two intelligent and beautiful young people fell deeply in love. Their families did not object but Mabel's father warned that "in an international marriage, one of you will

live in exile for the rest of your life." Mabel took those words seriously and accepted her fate, knowing that as the wife of a Japanese diplomat, she would have to become a Japanese citizen. They married in 1927. He became a diplomat specializing in the Spanish language which took them to Mexico, Spain,



Colombia and Venezuela. They had a son, Kaoru and a daughter, Ayame (Amy) both born in Spain.

Although long distance travel was slow in the years that the Ogimi family lived abroad, Mabel returned to England when her mother was ill and dying. When her husband's mother died, he couldn't go to Japan because of his diplomatic duties. Mabel took her two children to Japan to honor her mother-in-law's memory and to give her father-in-law the comfort of seeing his grandchildren.

When she was there, the war started and they could not leave. Yosoe was now an enemy diplomat interned in Venezuela. They had to wait until Yosoe was part of a diplomatic exchange before they could be a family together again. On April 13th 1945, their Tokyo home and all their possessions were completely destroyed by American bombs. Mabel always said that the Japanese people were kind to her but there were serious food shortages and everyone suffered. When the war ended inflation was out of control. Because they had lost everything they had nothing to trade or barter for necessities. Her

family was hungry. She had to get a real job. With her language ability and skills she was soon working in the American Central Motion Picture Exchange as an administrative assistant to the Director. In the process she recovered her British citizenship. She once told me it was the hardest decision she ever had to make. It meant that her husband could never go back to the diplomatic service with an alien wife as Japan didn't allow dual-citizenship in those days. On the other hand, it would give her family the resources to build

back their good health and good lives. She did what she had to do.

Amy Ogimi Flint told me that in 1969 her mother read that a few foreign wives of Japanese were having a luncheon in an effort to start an organization of peers. Mabel was not sure she wanted to attend. She was afraid it would be a whine. But Mabel was always curious and fortunately she was delighted with the joy and positive energy of that first meeting. As far as I remember, no

one in that room guessed that she was already seventy years old, that she had been a widow since 1962 and had lived in Japan through the war. Mabel marched into that room wearing her signature hat and sensible shoes. Displaying a good sense of humor, she rolled up her sleeves, made suggestions and suddenly our fledgling group had a senior advisor who stayed connected with AFWJ for the next twenty-six years.

Mabel died on October 8th 1995, almost to the day her beloved husband died thirty-three years before. She was 96 years young and died peacefully in her daughter's arms in her lovely home overlooking

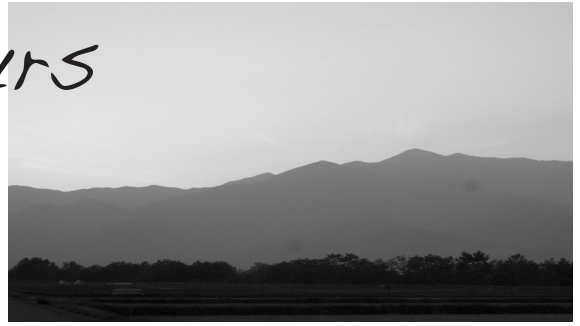
the Pacific Ocean in Ninomiya. The following night many gathered to bid her adieu, including long time friends from AFWJ. I was not in Japan but was told that on that night, an incredible full moon rose over the pine trees as though lighting Mabel's way. There are many of us who still miss her. It was a privilege and honor to have had Mabel Ogimi as a cherished friend and mentor.



Nagano Neighbours

*Living La Vida Local
in neighbourly Nagano*

Heather Fukase



What the Duck?!

I arranged to meet my friend S at the JA garden shop.

She left before me.

I stopped for petrol.

I arrived and her car wasn't there.

I called: "Hey, where are you?"

"I'm looking for a carpark."

I looked around me. It's a huge place and there were maybe 10 cars in the carpark...

"Are you at the JA garden centre on the corner?"

"Yes, the one with the farmers market."

Aghhhhhh, we were at an intersection housing the JA garden centre on one corner, the JA grain silo on another, the JA supermarket on the third and rounded off with the JA farmers market on the fourth. I can see how that mistake could be made.

"Don't worry, I know where you are. Stay there and I'll walk down and get you."

I was waiting at the lights when I noticed a duck standing in the middle of the insurance office (JA of course) carpark.

Hmmmm, a whole two years into rice farming with ducks I am now (of course) a self-proclaimed veritable expert on the ways of all things duck so I naturally sucked some air in across my teeth, screwed up my forehead and decided that was a very unnatural place for a duck to be considering this is a busy intersection on a main

road and there are ample quiet and relaxing rice paddies and farms just one block either side of this street.

Curiosity trumped the promise I made to my friend and the worries I had about being caught trespassing and I wandered into the JA insurance carpark to see if the duck was injured.

Nope.

It was mad though.

It rushed me.

And then returned to stand in the middle of the carpark again.

Hmmmm. I retreated to the sidewalk to consider my next step when my friend S happened upon me—I guess when "I'll come get you" morphs into "I'll stand on the sidewalk of the building next door and stare into the empty carpark" you decide to see what's going on, hey?

I explained to S what I was doing and she said that sounded like a mothering instinct.

(Out-duck-knowledged by a non duck farmer?!?! Ouch!)

But there were no ducklings anywhere in sight....

We approached together (safety in numbers) and found the ducklings. At least a dozen of them. They had somehow gotten themselves into a stormwater drain.

A stormwater drain with a grate on top.

A grate that was bolted on.



The duck was quite disturbed and the ducklings were peeping and obviously stressed. I knew that each city has a wildlife control division (they come to hunt rogue bears in our neighbourhood) but we were in the neighbouring city and I had no idea where city hall was. We decided to start at the insurance office and see if they knew the wildlife control phone number or even if they had a wrench to remove the grate and help free the ducklings.

We walked into the cavernously empty office of the insurance agent with all the stealth of ninjas, I guess, as no one noticed us and we had to call out to get someone's attention. The poor woman who eventually looked up did a double take and then quickly tried to hide her horror. I'm guessing two white women who have been mistaken for mother and daughter before are not the usual farm insurance customers.

We eventually got her to come over and talk to us and I explained there was a duck standing in the carpark looking over her ducklings that were stuck in the stormwater drain.

Eh?

A duck. In the carpark. Ducklings. In the stormwater drain.

Ehh? Two men came over to check things out which of course required a repeating of the problem which brought on another round of "Ehhhhh?" Then the woman nodded slowly and said that she'd noticed a duck standing in the carpark for a while now. (She was obviously way less curious than I am!)

One of the men said we needed to go to the city hall sub-branch "just back there" and they would go out and check things out while we were going.

As we headed "just back there" wondering why it was necessary for us to walk over rather than the JA guy just call, we watched an older guy standing over a defensive mother duck and talking as you do to the hard of hearing "OKAASAN, YOU NEED TO GO OVER THAT WAY!" Rolling our eyes we started looking for the city hall sub-branch. The first building was all windows and was very obviously a community centre being used for ballroom

dancing practice so not that building....

The next building had no sign post whatsoever but looked decidedly administrative and had a manhole cover on display in the glassed-in *genkan* leading me to guess this was city hall as who else would be that proud of a manhole cover?

We walked in and surprised a few more bureaucrats—too easy, no need to even speak! And the relief when I spoke to them in Japanese was palpable.

After a few more repetitions of the story and a lot more "Ehhhhhing?", someone was assigned to our case and back we went around the ballroom dancers with a cool-buzzed up middle-aged man in tow.

We got back to the insurance office carpark to find all five staff out there with cardboard boxes, a rice seedling growing pallet, the hand pump from a kerosene container and a golf club.

They were all walking up and down the stormwater grate banging at it with the golfclub and blowing air (kerosene gas?) on the ducklings to make them move to the end of the drain where there was an opening. It was all making a huge noise as everything was echoing in the chamber of the stormwater grate causing the ducklings to get disoriented and the mother duck to get even more defensive.

It looked like a success though—all the ducklings swarmed to the entrance of the drain, everyone stood back and—watched as the ducklings raced right passed the entrance and down the other side of the drain.



Yup, this was not only a traffic intersection but a water one as well.

At some point the mother duck got in the drain as well.

Then someone brought over a produce basket and scooped a huge group of ducklings up and covered the basket with a piece of cardboard. The noise of the frightened ducklings was enough to lure the mother duck out. Ahhhhh... success, all's well that ends well...

peep peep

Hang on....

Five heads cram their way into the entrance of the drain.

One mobile phone makes a dash for freedom from a shirt pocket and lands with a plop in the water to be fished out with the golf club a little worse for wear (does this count as a job-related expense?).

One lone and very lonely duckling was spotted half way down the drain.

A dozen more ducklings were trying to escape from the basket.

A frazzled mother duck was torn between rushing to the side of the two groups of kids and making dashes at the people looming around.

Drivers in cars stopped at the lights on all sides of the intersection were watching this pantomime with

undisguised interest and bewilderment.

And...?

How did it all end?

Sorry to disappoint you but I can only guess as I had been hanging out at the over JA-ed intersection for nearly an hour now and I had to get back to work. My friend S did eventually find the JA garden shop (on her own) and, after browsing awhile, returned to her car past the JA insurance office and reported no sign of people, duck or ducklings so we can only hope all went well and duck, ducklings, JA employees and city hall representative all got home safely with a rather unusual tale to tell over dinner.

Japan Rant!

By Rantie McGee with a special appearance by Ravette

The Safety Rant & Rave

Dear Ravette,

So, I've heard that Japan is a "safe" country. Maybe no average Jojis here have guns in their homes, but there are so many car safety violations here that I would love to see people arrested or at least ticketed for.

EXAMPLE ONE (as seen in tons of cars throughout Japan): I can't tell you how many times I've seen toddler car seats in the **FRONT SEAT** of cars around the area I live in! Don't Japanese parents know that an airbag is extremely dangerous for toddlers and children under 13? In Japan, I might even change that to 15 because Japanese kids are generally smaller. Airbags are made to save adults and explode out of the dash at speeds of around 200 miles per hour! I know most people try to be safe drivers, but accidents happen. And when an accident happens, then it's too late.

EXAMPLE TWO: I've even had a student who drove with his infant daughter on his **LAP!** I tried to mention it to him, but he didn't even blink. I wasn't in the car with them, otherwise I would have insisted that he put her in her car seat.

EXAMPLE THREE: A friend of my husband's drove us to a BBQ party at his home one time (before we had had children). In the car with us was his wife and six month old baby who was sitting on her mommy's lap in the front seat! Then, the mother passed the baby back to me and I buckled her in her rear-facing car seat, which had been pointlessly taking up nearly half of the back seat. The baby started to cry and I was **TOLD** to take her back out of her car seat and pass her back up front! I couldn't believe it!

And it's not just babies and toddlers whose safety is compromised here.

EXAMPLE FOUR: One of my husband's coworkers drove us to a summer company event (also before we had kids) with his two kids in his van. I couldn't believe that he and his wife let their kids **RUN UP AND DOWN** the center of the van while we were driving.

EXAMPLE FIVE: My brother in-law's kids are **NEVER** buckled in! We went to the beach with my brother in-law's family (separate cars) and when we got back to their place



afterwards, they thought it was so *CUTE* that their three kids were asleep all over the car—over the center hump on the floor in the front seat; half on, half off the back seat; and on the floor of the back seat. I shuddered and shook my head. I mentioned my discomfort to my husband and he just said, “That’s their way of doing it.”

I know kids are hard to force into their seats and crying and screaming is annoying, but wouldn’t it be worse to see your child dead due to your own negligence? It would even be better to just not go anywhere until the kids are buckled in or not go anywhere at all as punishment! I’ve forced my older son into his car seat more times than I can count. And my son is an expert at going rigid, at flopping around, at being as slippery as an eel among other temper tantrum tactics! I, however, am an expert at wrangling my son into his stroller and car seat. My husband has been told that he better not do any of those unsafe things with our children or else!

And don’t even get me started on how unsafe most Japanese car seats are! No chest buckles so kids can escape from the shoulder straps! I ordered our baby seat and toddler seat from America. Honestly, though, when I was a kid, car seats were not the norm. My parents were in a car accident with my brother and I asleep on the back seat (no seatbelts on). We were a little bruised but okay because we were asleep, but I wonder if that would have been the same if we had been awake.

*Lots of love from your terrified friend,
Rantie*

Dear Rantie,

Ooh, just reading about these incidents has left me trembling in fear for what could happen to these kids—and in anger at their parents’ negligence! You grow the baby inside for nine months, go through what seems like another nine months (at the time) of pain to actually bring it into the world, and then spend untold time and money to raise your precious kid.... And yet you risk losing everything in a split second every time you take the kid out in the car unrestrained!

I guess every foreign wife can relate with similar stories. The saddest part is that none of these parents mean to be neglectful—they *just*don’t*get*it* about the child seat safety thing! Oh, sure, now they have laws about restraining small kids in the car but do the police enforce them? Have you ever heard of a family being fined or prosecuted in Japan for not using a child seat? I sure haven’t. They have public service ads on the TV overseas about it, but never seen anything like that here.

However, they certainly have tons of unwritten rules

about keeping your child safe, and they don’t hesitate to tell us *gaijin* moms about them, do they?

I’m sure you’ve been hearing about these since you had the kids, Rantie. When I had my second baby, I took the older kid to kindergarten and was walking through the grounds with the baby asleep in the stroller. The baby was maybe about 10 days old and it was a nice morning, sunny with a slight breeze. This mother in the same class came over to admire the baby and expressed surprise that I was already out and about. (Well, someone had to take the older kid to kindergarten. My mother had already gone home, my mother-in-law lives too far away to be of much help, and my husband had already taken a day off when I had the baby—heaven forbid he should ask for more!) Then this other mom notices that it is a little breezy and chastises me for walking through the kindergarten grounds with the baby because “some of the dust might blow on her”. She said I should have left her in the car—or at home! What the heck?

A few months later, this mom had her second baby. One day at pickup time, I met her in the kindergarten’s parking lot. She was putting her kids in the car. Her older kid was sitting in the backseat—no seatbelt—and was holding the baby. Yes, a preschooler was holding the baby on the drive home. “She likes to help,” said this mom, as she drove off. It took me about five minutes to pick my jaw up off the ground.

There are other things we’re supposed to do to help keep our kids safe here. We’re not supposed to let their little bellies get exposed when they’re sleeping so they won’t get a cold. We’re supposed to make them gargle when they come inside so they won’t get sick. But we’re not supposed to put sunscreen on them when they go to the school pool because it will wreck the filter system. And we’re not supposed to let them wear a sweatshirt in the middle of winter when they do PE because they are supposed to toughen up and just wear their T-shirt and shorts.... (Shaking head).

But I guess these things are minor compared to the road safety rant. I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve refused a ride with friends because there weren’t enough seatbelts for all the kids in the car (and no, two kids trying to ‘share’ a seatbelt doesn’t count!). And I certainly wouldn’t give a ride to someone with a small kid in my own car unless they had a suitable car seat.

“Aren’t you being a little paranoid?” one Japanese friend remarked. Maybe so. But better paranoid than exposing a kid to potential danger, wouldn’t you say, Rantie?

*Love from your equally terrified friend,
Ravette*

Mama Baka: Thinking Outside the (Bento) Box

By Louise George Kittaka

Sooner or later, most mothers in Japan are going to have to master “the way of the box”—the honorable art of *bento*-making. When I started out on my quest to learn the secrets of the art, it seemed like a long and painful road was ahead of this slap-dash Kiwi Mama Baka.

Before I had kids, a packed lunch was a cinch to throw together: a sandwich, some fruit and yoghurt, maybe a bag of chips if I was feeling decadent. DH could eat cheaply at the company cafeteria, so I only had myself to please. I occasionally made picnics if we went out on the weekend, but there was no time constraint involved. I couldn't begin to imagine the stress of making a Japanese-style *bento* on a busy weekday morning.

Most mothers in Japan probably hit the *bento* wall for the first time after their first kid starts *youchien*. Mama Baka lucked out in this respect, since child number one (our son) went to a *youchien* that was *kanzen kyushoku*—hot school lunch served daily. (Actually, luck had little to do with it: When choosing a *youchien*, Mama Baka went through the list and immediately crossed out all those that required a *bento*.) Children number two and three (our two daughters) went to *hoikuen*, which also served a hot lunch, so once again I was off the hook.

Well, not *totally* off the hook. There were still *ensoku* (outings) a few times a year when a *bento* was required, but somehow I muddled through, although I completely forgot the first time that my son had a *youchien ensoku*. When I got to the kindy bus stop and discovered my error, I asked one of the other mums to watch him and my oldest daughter while I dashed to the *conbini* to get some *onigiri*.

“Oh, no, don't do that! I have some leftovers! Let me see what I can do,” she said, rushing off to her house, which was right by the bus stop. In less than five minutes, this Good Samaritan came zooming back with a *bento* for my son, and *she* was apologizing to *me* that it wasn't very neatly put together!

You've Got Character

In recent years, “character *bento*”, or “*kyara-ben*”, have become very trendy in Japan. They take the concept to a whole new level, turning a toddler's packed lunch for *youchien* into true edible art. Popular cartoon

characters, animals, flowers, trains... it seems there is no end to the things that can be portrayed in a *kyara-ben*. Contests, blogs and books have been dedicated to the topic. Personally, I can think of nothing worse than getting up early to cut umpteen little shapes from nori, sliced cheese and ham, or fiddling round with minuscule pieces of boiled egg, olives and red pepper on toothpicks for your child's *bento*, when it is only going to be eaten in a few hours.

A *kyara-ben* making “Charisma Mama” was interviewed on TV a few months ago. When asked what motivates her, she replied, “Imagining my child's happy face when she opens her lunchbox.” Naturally, this illustrious Mama takes a photo of her creations before sending them off with her kid, and uploads them on her popular blog. One design that got a lot of attention had a spring motif, with an adorable white rice bunny peeping out the top. His tiny wee paws, molded from rice, were actually sitting on the rim of the *bento* box. For the life of me, Mama Baka can't work out how you could close the box without cutting off the little guy's paws. Imagine the kid's shock at lunchtime: “Waaaaaah! The bunny has no hands!”

Public elementary school offers *kyushoku*, so I was good there. Then when my son entered sixth grade, Mama Baka read the very welcome news that all the public junior highs in our city would start offering *kyushoku* from the following year, too. “What perfect timing!” I rejoiced. My son had such a hearty appetite that his nickname was “*Kyushoku O-sama*” (the Lunch King). Making a *bento* to please such a kid would surely be more than Mama Baka was capable of. At the last moment, however, he ended up doing *juken* for a private junior high. Amid all the joy when we found out he was accepted was the unwelcome thought that morning *bento* would soon become a part of Mama Baka's daily routine.

A Bento Fit for a King?

For starters, we had to find a *bento* box that was big enough. We went through three until we found one that he declared held enough food. Still just 12 years old, my new seventh grader left the house before 7 a.m. and didn't come home till 7 p.m. after a long day of school and then basketball club or Boy Scouts. He was also a vegetarian at the time, and as anyone who has

perused the *reitou shokuhin* (frozen foods) section at the supermarket will tell you, the majority of the *bento* helper foods contain meat. Luckily, while he didn't eat meat or fish, he did eat just about everything else under the sun. Whatever vegetable dishes I was making for dinner could usually be added to the next day's *bento* with no complaint. Some egg or cheese for protein, some fruit, a few raw veggies for garnish and tons of rice with *furikake* or several mega-*onigiri*, and he was satisfied. With boys, the key seems to be "*shitsu yori ryo*"—substance over style, or volume over quality.

After a few weeks of Japanese-style *bento*, Mama Baka tentatively moved into Western styles. The trouble with many Western-style packed lunches is that they can't be neatly fitted into dinky little Japanese *bento* boxes. Luckily for me, my easy-going son didn't give a hoot if his *bento* was packed in a honking great Tupperware container. Mama Baka started with triple-decker sandwiches or Mexican-style wraps with shredded lettuce, salsa, cheese and guacamole, garnished with vegetable pickles or sticks with dip. When these met with approval, I threw caution to the wind and started sending him to school with slabs of quiche, veggie lasagna and even leftover pizza. He didn't seem to mind if it was cold. Add some pretzels or goldfish crackers in a ziplock bag, a muesli bar and a piece of fruit, and he was good to go.

It's Different for Girls

Not quite so simple when the next Kittaka child entered the same junior high. Mama Baka's old adage of "*shitsu yori ryo*" went by the wayside when it was my oldest daughter's turn for *bento*. Girls have much higher standards: Not only must it be tasty and filling, but it must also look nice AND still fit into a dinky *bento* box.

Sandwiches are acceptable if they are precision cut and lined up in a row on their sides (a feat in itself, believe me). It took a few attempts

to work out the best way to fit them into the small, cute Tupperware container that my oldest daughter deemed suitable for sandwich *bento*. (Honking great triple-deckers don't work!) And you have to be careful to choose fillings that will behave themselves in the process: Ham, lettuce, sliced cucumber, water-packed tuna (drained well), and sliced cheddar cheese work well. Egg salad, made with mashed up hardboiled egg and mayonnaise, often used to fall apart in transit. Now Mama Baka uses lightly scrambled egg instead.

Sticking to the Formula

My oldest daughter also likes pasta salad now and then, with chopped-up salad vegetables, cubed cheese and a tangy dressing. However, her *bento* are generally Japanese-style. By trial and error, we have worked out a formula:

- A) One item left over from dinner OR from the homemade stock in the freezer
- B) One item freshly-made that morning
- C) One *reitou shokuhin* item
- D) A mini tomato—always

E) Rice (of course)

F) Cut fruit (packed in a separate mini-container, NOT in the main *bento* box)

A + B + C + D + E + F = a *bento* that satisfies the recipient without reducing the maker to a quivering wreck each morning!

If Mama Baka plans it right, quite often I can salvage Item A) from the night before's dinner. (While I say "leftovers", I actually have to take out a small portion and put it aside, or I forget and we eat everything.) Stir fries with a bit of beef or pork generally work well, as do *niimono* type things, such as *niku jaga* or Japanese-style pumpkin. However, there are limits: *Kinpira gobo* is out since my oldest daughter doesn't



This is the first bento I made for my oldest daughter for junior high. The tamagoyaki isn't very well made, and putting the fruit in the main bento box was "wrong". Although I tried to make cute onigiri, she prefers just rice.

like *gobo*. Mushrooms of any kind are also *bento* rejects—she likes mushrooms, but not cold the next day. (I tend to agree on this point). If there is nothing suitable on hand, then I turn to my stock of homemade items which I make in bulk and freeze: tiny hamburgers or *croquettes*, mini-*gratins* in foil cups, a few pieces of *kara-age*, etc.

Item B) is Mama Baka's one concession to "make it fresh" *bento* convention, and about all I can cope with on an average of five hours sleep. It is typically *tamagoyaki*, or some tinned corn sautéed in a little butter, or spinach sautéed with a little chopped up bacon and *shoyu*. (All these items win *bento* brownie points for being colourful, too.) On bad days, it might be just a couple of sausages (cut to look like *tako*) or a slice of ham wrapped around a stick of cucumber. Item B can also double as part of my husband's breakfast.

Item C) rotates from Mama Baka's commercial frozen *bento* foods stash. A small foil cup of spaghetti, a meatball or two, a miniature *tonkatsu*, maybe a few frozen French fries (sprinkled with salt and *aonori*, they're pretty good). When the subject of bento-making for teenagers comes up, Japanese mothers often say, "My child doesn't like it when I used *reitou shokuhin*," or "My kid says 'sabishii.'" If the whole dang *bento* was *reitou shokuhin*, Mama Baka could understand. But one item, even now and again? Get a life, Japanese teens! While the idea of the colourful, healthy *bento* homemade by Mama with love is a very nice one, it just creates extra pressure on women who are probably also holding down a job as well as raising a family. If my kid ever turned around and made a comment like that, she'd be making her own damn *bento*! There must be plenty of mothers who DO use the stuff, as there is an ever-increasing range available. Warms a Mama Baka's heart.

Mini tomatoes! Healthy, colourful, cute and small. Was there ever a more perfect *bento* food than Item D)? Lucky for Mama Baka, my daughter loves them.

Honestly, Mama



Here is a recent bento for my oldest daughter that follows Mama Baka's formula. Note separate fruit container, neater tamagoyaki and plainer rice!

Baka has tried to be creative with Item E). Really. I have lovingly rolled *onigiri*, or tried variations like an *omeraisu bento*. But my daughter said she really just wants rice with *furikake* or *goma-shiyo*, nothing fancy. She is fond of *takikomi gohan* in her *bento*, however, so I save some if we have it for dinner.

Almost any kind of fruit will suffice for item F), except maybe sliced banana. (Wouldn't relish that after six hours in a Tupperware container and no refrigeration.) Aside from things like grapes or strawberries, fruit must be peeled and cut into chunks (pineapple, melon, kiwifruit) or wedges (apple, *nashi*, orange). At a pinch, even tinned fruit salad will do. Don't forget to lightly salt apple or *nashi* to stop it turning an unappetizing brown by lunchtime, and include a plastic pick to spear the fruit with!

My son's *bento* was usually just wrapped in a 100 yen shop bandana, but my oldest daughter has several cute little drawstring bags and matching luncheon mats for hers.

Sometimes Mama Baka also tucks in a sweet surprise, like a chocolate chip cookie or a Snickers Bar. This always pleases my oldest daughter!

While making the daily *bento* is a pain, it isn't quite as big a pain as Mama Baka once thought. And it is definitely satisfying when your teenager brings her empty *bento* box to the kitchen, saying, "Thanks, Mum! That was a great lunch."

I do see problems on the horizon, though. If our *juken* goes well, our younger daughter will start at the same school as her sibs from next April, and she is pickier than a toothpick. Many of her pet peeves are *bento* staples. I find it easier to list the vegetables she likes than ones she doesn't like. She doesn't even like mini tomatoes. An all *reito-shokuhin bento* may still yet emerge from the kitchen of Mama Baka. If my younger daughter doesn't like it, there are always *conbini onigiri*. Bon appetite, kiddo!

This Embodied Life:

How to Make Your Own Handmade Dream Journal: Five Hole Pamphlet Stitch

By Sheila McNellis Asato, M.A., E.I.C.



Sheila McNellis Asato, (MA, St. Mary's University) is a visual artist with more than 25 years experience teaching and exhibiting in Japan, England and USA. Sheila is also a certified embodied imagination coach and the founder of Monkey Bridge Arts. She regularly leads workshops internationally on the relationship between art, dreams and healing. A past board member of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Sheila currently serves as a provider at Pathways—A Health Crisis Resource Center and is the Healing Arts Program Assistant at the Penny George Institute for Health and Healing at Abbott Hospital. Sheila currently resides in Minnesota, USA with her husband Satoru and their sons Hiroshi and Satoshi.

Have you ever gotten ready for bed only to discover that there were no pages left in your dream journal and you had forgotten to buy a new notebook? Once you know how to make your own dream journal that will never happen again! Making your own notebook is simple and really fun. You can use whatever materials you have on hand—even old brown paper bags, if necessary. The act of slowing down to prepare a book especially for your dreams can also nourish the creative spirit in a way that enriches dreaming tremendously. So let's get started!

Supplies

Use what you have on hand for your first journal and then, if you enjoy the process, go out and buy some of the tools specifically made for bookbinding.

1. Paper (4 sheets)
 - Twice the width of your intended book
 - Text weight (printer paper will be just fine)
2. Cover paper (1 sheet, same size as text paper)
 - Card stock or any heavier weight paper OK
3. Awl—piercing tool
4. Linen bookbinding thread
 - 3 times the length of the spine
 - Waxed linen thread preferred
 - Embroidery thread or dental floss OK
5. Beeswax (if your thread isn't already waxed)
6. Bookbinding needle
 - Bookbinding needles are rounded on the end so they don't pierce the paper
 - A regular sewing needle can be substituted, if used with care
7. Scissors

8. Metal ruler or straight edge
9. Cutter knife or Xacto knife
10. Self healing cutting mat
11. Bone folder
 - A spoon is a good substitute for creasing folds
12. Pencil
13. Paper clips (4)
14. Glue stick

Vocabulary—Anatomy of a Book

Folio: One folded sheet of paper (like a greeting card)

Signature: 2-4 sheets of paper folded together to create one signature

Spine: The back of a book, which faces out when on a shelf.

Fore-edge: The front edge of the book, where the pages open

Head: The top of a book

Tail: The bottom of a book

Text block: The signatures inside of a book that make up the pages

Overview

1. Determine grain direction
2. Assemble signature and cover
3. Pierce holes
4. Sew pamphlet
5. Attach title label

Grain Direction

Before you make any book, it is very important to make sure that you are folding your paper in line with the grain direction. This will prevent the book from

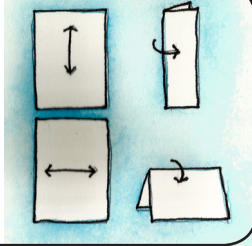
warping in the future, as humidity and temperature change.

To determine the grain direction (the direction in which the paper fibers lie), gently fold the paper over and press down lightly. Repeat in the opposite direction. Whichever direction folds down most easily will show the grain direction. Once the paper is folded, the fold will show the direction of the grain.



Press down lightly to determine grain direction

Example—If the paper is folded in the way that folds most easily, the crease will go along the line of the grain. ALWAYS make folds in line with the grain direction.



Assemble Signature and Cover

Once the grain direction of the text paper and the cover paper have been determined, stack them together and fold according to the grain. Run a bone folder or spoon along the fold to crease well. You will then have one signature with a cover.

Historical Tidbit—Signatures

When several sheets of text paper are folded together (2-4 sheets), they make one *signature*. According to master bookmaker Janna Pullman, a cluster of folded sheets is called a *signature* because in early times, in bookbinding workshops, the person who folded each signature would sign their name to let the bookbinder know who had folded that section. If the work was sloppy, the bookbinder knew who was responsible for the work. It was an early form of quality control!

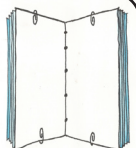


Tip—If you place the fore-edge against your cutting mat and then fold, the pages will line up nicely.

Pierce Holes

Open the booklet to the center fold, which is also known as the gutter. Attach paper clips to each side, to hold the pages and cover in place. Use an awl to pierce 5 evenly spaced holes in the center fold.

For a single signature pamphlet, it's ok to pierce your holes without careful measurement.



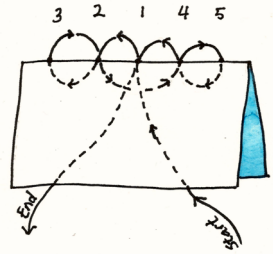
Sew Pamphlet

If the thread is not already waxed, apply beeswax by pulling the thread between the wax and your finger. Repeat 2-3 times. Waxing the thread helps to keep the thread from getting tangled up as you sew. It also helps to keep knots tight.

Sewing Tip

At first this may look complicated, but it is actually quite simple. Imagine that you are making two figure eights with the thread. The first one will go to the left, and then skip over the center hole to make another figure eight on the right.

When completed, you will return to the center, tie off the threads and snip to your desired length. Don't clip too close to the knot. It is considered attractive to leave a bit of thread here, showing that it is a handmade book.



Sewing

Cut a piece of thread 3 times the length of the spine of your book.

Go left

1. Start at the inside, center hole. Go through the hole to the outside, leaving a tail of thread inside your book, about 1 ½ -2 inches.
2. Go left, on the outside, and enter hole #2.
3. Go left on the inside, and enter hole #3.

Go right

4. Loop around to the right, on the outside, and re-enter hole #2.
5. Continue right, on the inside, and skip over the center to enter hole #4.
6. Continue going to the right, on the outside, to hole #5.

Return to the center

7. Return to the left, on the inside, to hole #4.
8. On the outside, re-enter the center hole (#1).
9. On the inside, loop under the loop to the left (between #1 & #2) and then tie a knot with the tail remaining inside.
10. Trim the threads, leaving about ½ inch.

Attach Title Label

Cut out a paper label. Place on waste paper to apply glue, then attach to the cover and you are finished!

Variations

There are many fun variations that you can make, starting with a basic pamphlet stitch.

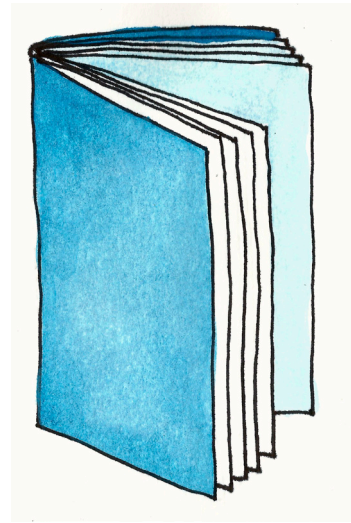
- Three holes, instead of five—good for smaller books
- Decorate the spine by adding beads to the thread on the outside stitches while sewing.
- Start on the outside and tie off outside of your pamphlet, leaving a pretty bow on the spine.
- Start with 4 lengths of thread. Begin sewing at the top of your book. Leave a long tail. When you tie off at the end, add beads to the long tails to make a fun bookmark.

In future articles, I will teach how to build on this form to create a Dos-a-Dos booklet, two-signature pamphlet, and more! Here are some examples of books I have made, starting with a basic pamphlet stitch. The possibilities are endless! Please send me images of books you make for use in future articles. If you have any problem following the instructions, please send me an e-mail with questions and suggestions! You can reach me at SheilaAsato@comcast.net

Happy bookmaking!

Anatomy of a book

Head



Spine

Fore-edge

Tail

Supplies	
1. & 2. Text paper & cover paper	
3. Awl	
4. & 5. Thread & needle	
6. Beeswax	
7. Scissors	
8. Metal ruler or straight edge	
9. Cutter knife or Xacto knife	
10. Self healing cutting mat	
11. Creasing tool—bone folder	
12. Pencil	
13. Paper clips	
14. Glue stick	





Okaasan's Heartful Recipes

Niku Jaga

By Tammy Campbell



Okay, so I have a confession to make: I don't cook Japanese food at home. Ack! I said it! I find that there's just too much chopping involved. And too much *dashi*! Yuck! Okay, so I'm not a huge fan of *wafu* (Japanese flavour). Sure, I've made a few dishes: *Shoga Yaki* (yum! No fish *dashi* necessary!), *Gyu Donburi*, and most recently *Niku Jaga* for the first time. Thanks to the three lovely women who sent in their recipes and stories! However, my *Niku Jaga* was made a little differently: I thought I had a bottle of *sake* and a bottle of *mirin*, but didn't, so I ended up replacing those ingredients with dark rum and extra sugar! My husband said it smelled like his childhood and tasted just like his mom's. So I guess it was fine. Oh, and I didn't use any *dashi* nor any *konnyaku*—that stuff just grosses me out!

Marie-France Baril-Yatsuda's *Niku Jaga* Anecdote and Recipe

Niku Jaga is the first Japanese dish I ever cooked. When



I met my future husband, I couldn't cook, but I sure could bake sweets which he didn't like (ha!). So how did fiancé put up with my then non-existent cooking skills? He bought me an English language Japanese cookbook (I still use it!!! It's titled ***Quick and Easy Japanese Cooking for Everyone*** by Miyoko Sakai and Motoko Abe) and he taught me how to fix Japanese dishes. At first, he went through every motion with me, and once I was on my own, I admit to making mistakes and thus producing inedible messes. Future hubby was ever so patient with me, eating everything I cooked without uttering one single complaint. The first time he ever said a meal was truly delicious was *Niku Jaga*, so it has a very special place in my cooking repertoire.

The recipe: Beef and Potato Stew (*Niku Jaga*)

Ingredients

300g sliced beef
3 medium-sized potatoes
1 onion
1 tbsp vegetable oil
2 cups water
3 tbsps *sake*
5 tbsps sugar
1 tbsp *mirin*
5 tbsps soy sauce

- 1) Peel potatoes and cut into six and soak in water for 5 minutes. Cut onion in half and slice. Cut beef into 7 cm pieces.
- 2) Heat 1 tbsp oil in a saucepan. Sauté beef until light brown, add potatoes and onion. Continue to sauté for 2 minutes.
- 3) Add 2 cups of water and boil, skim off any scum that forms. Add *sake*, sugar, *mirin* and 2 tbsps soy sauce. Turn heat to low and cover ingredients in saucepan





with aluminum foil and a lid. When potatoes are done, pour in remaining soy sauce and cook for 1 minute.

I usually add a carrot and “*shirataki*” (*ito konnyaku*) to the recipe.

Lottie Murakami’s *Niku Jaga* Anecdote and Recipe

I just had to write because it made me laugh when I saw that the first theme is “*Niku Jaga*”.

I had recently arrived in Japan. One of the older male students who had taken a shine to me presented me with a bilingual Japanese cook book. I guess it was his form of prepping me for a potential role in his life—one that I did not take up.

Anyway, I flicked through it one weekend and thought I would give *Niku Jaga* a whirl. It had been weeks since I had eaten home cooked food. I was anxious to eat something wholesome.

I went through the ingredients—beef, potatoes, carrots, onions—until I got to *konnyaku*. “*Konnyaku*?” I thought, “What on earth is that?” I checked the glossary at the back of the book. *Konnyaku*. Devil’s tongue.

“Devil’s tongue!” I exclaimed. I was none the wiser.

Armed with my book, I went to the store. The recipe was accompanied by a black and white photo of the dish, which did not help as to its identification. Unable to speak Japanese to the store staff, I simply perused the shelves and chill units until I found what looked just like a devil’s tongue. Eureka!

Upon returning home, I set to making the dish. Proud of my efforts, I rang around and invited Japanese friends over to join me for supper. They arrived, and they sat around my small *katatsu*. I dished out the rice, and placed the serving pot in the middle. In turn, they ladled the *Niku Jaga* into their bowls.

“What’s this?” enquired one guy, inspecting a sliver in his bowl with his chopsticks.

“Oh, that’s devil’s tongue,” I beamed back at him.

“Devil’s tongue?” he queried.

“Yes, it’s *konnyaku* in Japanese,” I replied proud of my new knowledge about Japanese food.

All three began to prod more excitedly at the slivers in their bowls.

“*Moshikashite...*” muttered the lady, “*Mentaiko!*”

“*Mentaiko!?*” exclaimed the two men “*Eeee!?!?*”

This is how I learnt that *konnyaku* is a grey slab of hard jelly, and not *mentaiko*, which looks way more like a devil’s tongue than *konnyaku* does. At this point, you are probably wondering why *konnyaku* is called Devil’s tongue in English.

The name refers to the tubular looking plant, which is also known as the Voodoo Lily (scientific name: *Amorphophallus konjac*). Reaching a height of five feet, the plant’s flowers are known for their very distinct signature scent—dead rats. Lovely! The bloom is pollinated by flies, so be sure to grow it in your garden and not inside your home. I have included a drawing of this stupendous plant.

Amorphophallus Konjac

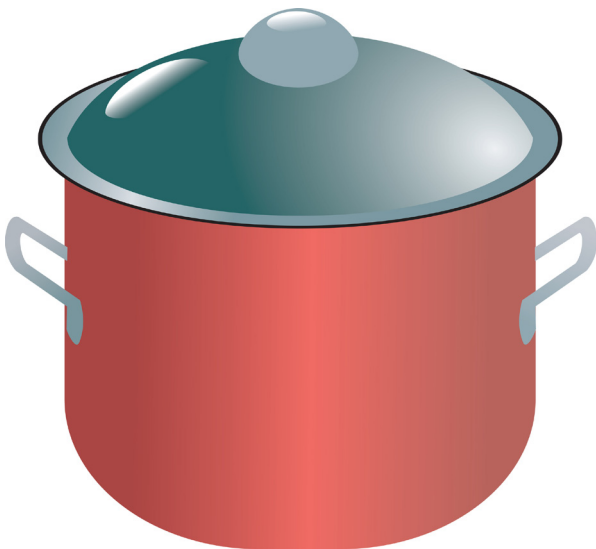




To finish, the way I cook *Niku Jaga* these days is:

Thin strips of beef with a bit of fat on them
 One or two onions—sliced
 Potatoes—roughly chopped
 Carrots—roughly chopped
 Devil's tongue—stringy variety is best
 Beef & Vegetable stock cube
 Seaweed stock sachet
 Soya sauce
Sake
Mirin

I do not braise the beef with the onions. I just put all the main ingredients in a nabe pot with water and a very good slosh of *sake* to stop the beef from hardening. I take the 'scum' off the top when its boiled, and then turn the heat down for it to simmer. I add the stocks, *mirin*, and soya at the end. That's how I cook *Niku Jaga*, and the kids eat it down so fast there is no time to prod at anything.



Tia Kubota's *Niku Jaga* Anecdote and Recipe

This is one of the first dishes I learned how to make after I was married. A few times, my mother-in-law would ask my husband and I to take care of Sunday dinner as she was held up somewhere and couldn't make it home for dinner or out of town. *Niku Jaga* was one of the easiest meals to do and didn't take many ingredients. I usually use a Japanese cookbook that my

husband bought me during our first year of marriage called *Aji tsuke Numon* (Flavors for Beginners?) with a few tweaks of my own.

Ingredients

1 Tbsp salad oil
 1-1 1/2 cups *dashi* soup
 (you can make *dashi* with water and a bit of *dashi* powder OR water and a splash of *Tsuyu* [soup stock for *udon* or *somen*])
 2 Tbsp soy sauce
 2 Tbsp sugar
 2 Tbsp *sake*
 1 Tbsp *mirin*
 150-200 gm Beef
 500 gm (4 or 5) Potatoes (*Mei* queen works best)
 1 Onion (or more)
 1 small package string *konnyaku*

(The original recipe mentions a bit of ginger root cooked with the meat as you brown it before adding to the main soup, but I never have time to cook everything separate and throw it all together in one pan. The recipe also says you can add green peas. I've used carrots before when I've wanted a bit of color. It also doesn't call for string *konnyaku*, which is good because I often forget to add it!)

Peel and cut potatoes into quarters, or eighths if they are large potatoes. Cut up the onion in thick slices (smaller pieces tend to cook down and disappear!) In a medium sized saucepan mix the soup with the other ingredients. Add the potatoes and onion. Cook on medium to high heat. Before it actually comes to a boil, add the meat and stir so it doesn't clump together. Drain and cut the *konnyaku* a few times. Add to the vegetables and soup. Bring to a boil. Remove the foam from the top if you can. When the potatoes are about half way cooked, turn off the heat and let it sit on the stove with a lid on until everyone has come home for dinner. Heat to a boil before serving. Serves four to five people.

Send me your recipes and anecdotes:

journaleditor@afwj.org



Features

This section contains the features:

Recipes, fiction, opinion and articles on various subjects,
with some semi-regular contributors.

Please write about anything you like to contribute to this section.



(MEMOIR)

Last Date

By Edith Muta



(REVIEW)

Hafu

Reviewed by Sue Conolly



(INTERVIEW)

When Our Children Grow Up

A Conversation with One of the Makers of "Hafu"

By Sue Conolly



(POETRY)

March

By Winnie Anne Inui



(PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

*Have You Misplaced Your Mojo? Ideas and
Activities to Help You Get It Back*

By Hershey Wier



(MEMOIR)

The Boy Who Came Through

By Winnie Anne Inui



(POETRY)

Cool Take on Winter Lake

By Winnie Anne Inui



Last Date

By Edith Muta



Summer in Germany, a town in the northwest, situated by the river Rhine. Residents and tourists passing through the old part of the city, street cafes at every corner, endless eating and drinking. Old and young, old and new, more fat than thin, breasts swinging and nipples showing through clothing, bare skin unprotected from strong rays. Walking in all directions, seemingly towards an aim, yet aimlessly. Dogs know their way even without a leash...

After finishing my little volunteer job, I too enjoy a big cup of coffee at a popular corner café. We sit there and look at the endless flow of passers-by. 'People watching', that's what they call it here, in fact this is a popular pastime for many, me included.

An old tired looking gentleman—all clad in black—sits down at my table. He got himself a portion of french-fries at the shop near-by and proceeds to eat.

Does he lack the money to buy himself a coffee? Possible. In an inkling something inside me decides, and I ask him if he'd care for a cup. "Yes, please," is his answer, and I go and get him one. He eats and drinks hungrily. Then under tears he starts talking, saying something like "...there in India they came and brought their babies to our door."

"Sorry, what did you say?" I asked.

"All these poor people there in India... but we raised them, so many babies," he said again. "You did a great job then, didn't you. May I know why you were in India?" Judging from his black attire I had an idea...

Then he told me his story. He was 87, a retired Father of the Divine Word Missionaries (Steyler Missionare). I noticed his southern accent, and he told me that he hailed from Munich. "I'm Father Andreas," he introduced himself. Most of his life he had spent in India and in South East Asia. Decades full of prayer and work for the needy lay behind him. Although he thought of himself as a man of God, his question of "why?" had never ceased. In his early years in India it was "why does God allow this endless row of women to come in the dark of the night and lay a baby at the doorsteps of the missionary house?"

At the end of the war in May 1945 he was given some time off to go to his hometown Munich to see his parents and brother.

The city in rubble was a terrible sight. When he came near his parents' house, a former neighbor rushed by recognizing him. "Oh Andreas! Don't you go to your house! You won't be able to stand it!" the neighbor called out. Andreas rushed on through the ruins and blackened walls, around the last corner.

A hole was there where his parents' house had been. "Why, oh why did you, God, do this to them?" he uttered in devastation. Obviously a big blast had hit, not even bones could be found.

Somehow his life went on, he returned to India to work among the poor.

I asked him, how he spent his days nowadays. He lived in a senior home for retired fathers, a few kilometers from the city. The home was run by nuns, and I learned that there are the 'blue sisters' and the 'pink sisters'. The blue ones do all kinds of jobs and the pink ones pray all day. Aha, I thought.

"But it's not easy, you know," he told me. "There are some senile fathers who always try to get their hands on my meals. That's my daily fight now."

Why can't the pink sisters besides praying not better watch out what's going on? I thought to myself.

"Now I've arrived at another big 'why'," Father Andreas said. "I'm in town for radiation treatment because I've got a brain tumor!" he said with desperation in his voice. "Why did the Lord send me this? Haven't I seen enough suffering so far?" He started crying again. I tapped his arm. "That's not easy, that's certainly not easy," I said repeatedly.

His tears stopped and with a sudden light in his eyes he said "But I'm still allowed to hear confessions at the home, I've still got a task to do. I'm grateful!" He paused, then again accusingly, "And yet, why did the Lord make me have this tumor?"

Father Andreas came to town every Thursday to have radiation treatment at the near-by university hospital. A couple of young doctors would always mill around him and be very kind.

"Can my meager retiree health insurance cover the costs of this treatment?" he would wonder.

"Don't you worry about that," they assured him. This

old Father with his tumor in his head was probably an interesting case for the hospital. And with his kind and reassuring ways he was still listening to confessions. How could God possibly call him home? His body was a bit tired but his spirit wasn't bent. I had seen the light in his eyes.

It was time for him to take the train home, and he asked me what I was doing there. And so he learned that I lived in Japan. Now he was amazed at this

coincidence as he had been here briefly many years ago to meet fathers at the Sophia University.

"I'll be at this café next week again", he said. "Will you still be here?"

"Oh yes, let's meet again. I'll wait for you", was my answer. Thursday came and I waited with my coffee for Father Andreas. I waited for 30 minutes, for 60, and for 90. But he didn't show up.



Hafu

A full-length documentary film by our kids and for our kids

Reviewed by Sue Conolly

<http://hafufilm.com/en/>

Premiere run starts from October 5 in Shibuya, Tokyo

<http://www.uplink.co.jp/movie/2013/12408>

It must have been three or four years ago when I first heard of the documentary “*Hafu*”. Life was a bit crazy for me, having been tipped off the deep end after a decision to switch our two girls from Japanese school to International School.

Since that time, we were unexpectedly transferred to the United States. Who knows what the future will bring from

here—we send our kids to Japanese school on Saturday to minimize the damage to their language and make other educational opportunities possible for them again when we return to Japan.

So three or four years ago, when we were in the very first years of International School, I was contacted by the daughter of AFWJ member Kate Brady (Kansai) to see if someone in AFWJ might be suitable for their first big film-making project—to tell the stories of five bicultural Japanese individuals.

As soon as I heard about this movie I thought of my friend and former AFWJ member Gaby Oi. She lived close to me and even just one year earlier both of us had talked about our decision to keep our kids in the Japanese education system for now. International school wasn't for us, we reasoned. After all, neither of us was from America so sending them to what we saw as an “American school” made no sense from a cultural point of view. Gaby was from Mexico, so in addition she was thinking about Spanish, and how best to bring up balanced children in a family where three languages exist at home.

My own unexpected decision to send my daughters to



The Oi Family

International school had more to do with digging them out of a mono-cultural rut than providing them with my Australian culture. I would have been quite happy to keep taking or sending the children to Australia each year had that been possible without messing up their Japanese school life. An argument I had with the vice-principal at the Japanese school about

whether Sachina would be allowed to participate in the band at all if she missed summer practices had me thinking of other options. My reasons for not sending them up until then fell like a house of cards, and to my own surprise we borrowed the money and applied for a scholarship for what we thought may end at one year. One year, we figured, was enough to get them out of the mono-cultural railroad.

However, by the time the *Hafu* documentary filmmakers, Megumi Nishikura and Lara Perez Takagi contacted me, the girls were at a very interesting turning point in their education where it seemed to us that we'd made the right decision, even permanently. The girls still struggled in their every school day, but it was because of these struggles we could see their growth. The students around them were all from different cultures—Japanese, Korean, American, Australian and a really good chunk of each class was half Japanese. We realized at this stage they felt more accepted in this land where more kids were like them.

Filmmaker (and AFWJ daughter!) Megumi Nishikura's original request was for a family that was facing the decision of whether to send their child to Japanese school or International school. I thought of Gaby

immediately, as she had confided in me she too had begun to think about International school for her son Alex. Megumi writes “We were actually looking for a family right before their kid would start school at the age of 5 or 6. However, when you introduced us to the Ois we felt their story was very compelling and that while Alex and Sara had already started attending Japanese school, we could still capture the challenges and joys of raising multicultural children through them.”

Alex shares Sachina’s birthday but is exactly two years younger, and I remember an AFWJ event at Gaby’s house where the two of them played happily on the living room floor. Both of us knew, as mothers, we were blessed with these little lives and it was our responsibility to find their happiness somewhere in our chosen culture of Japan, without sacrificing our own cultures and families in doing so. Both Sachina and Alex are our first born children, and as such we “work out the kinks” on them as best we can while also making decisions for our younger children.

It took no time at all for Gaby to agree for her whole family to be filmed as Alex made his transition from Japanese to International school. As you can see in the documentary (which is premiering from the 5th of October in Tokyo for an initial run of two weeks), Alex is a thoughtful and beautiful little boy who was unfortunately picked on and ostracized as a “*gaijin*” in his early years of Japanese school. His teacher was less than helpful, suggesting that he just work it out for himself.

By the time Alex started at International school, I had already gained employment there in the ESOL

department and I was very glad to have Alex in my class. Though every day was not easy for him, I could see his struggle and relate it to my own girls’ issues. Although they were out of the ESOL program by this stage, their academic English was still not grade level and the negative feelings that plagued them at that time still plague them today. I could see Alex struggle, but I could also see him happily running around in the sport field, or dedicated in his work at the cooperative classroom desks. Very clearly in the documentary you can see this dichotomy between Japanese and International school classrooms. What is more difficult to film are the ongoing struggles over time that occur in bicultural families.

Alex and his sister Sara have since moved on again in their education, as have my girls. They have moved to Mexico to attend a different International school where English and Spanish will be the focus. Next year Alex will go to boarding school in Indiana. More changes are on the horizon as both our families continue their lives.

As for my girls, while our intention was originally to dig them out of a mono-cultural trench in Japan, it is now our greatest struggle to dig them out of a mono-cultural trench in the USA. Both girls hate their Japanese school and Sachina has begged me not to make her talk to her Japanese grandparents on Skype. It’s not that she doesn’t love them, or love being with them. It’s just that she truly believes now that her Japanese is not “worthy” of a Skype conversation, and both girls struggle with being what they perceive as “less than” Japanese.

Both girls do appear in the documentary as Gaby asks them questions about the differences between

Japanese and International school. My younger daughter Amy tells Gaby she feels Japanese school was more “joyful”, but watching that scene now makes her cringe and she denies ever having meant that. Sachina tells Gaby that at first she felt more “loyal to Japanese people”, and she too denies ever having felt this way. Both girls are in their awkward teenage years and don’t want to see themselves on film, but I think too they really can’t see what I see—that they have changed over time and that their loyalties really have changed like a switch in a railroad. I dream of a day they really know that they are not stuck to one path.



Lara and Megumi directing



The Oi Family playing jan-ken

I talked to Gaby about her experience with the film “*Hafu*”. She answered me from her small apartment in Cancun, Mexico, while her children were adapting to their new school.

I remember our times together during AFWJ meetings and we were both young mothers. How do you feel your expectations of raising bicultural children has changed over time?

It has been at times challenging. My children grew up in Japan, so at the time when they attended the Japanese school they did not want to feel different. They wanted to be like the other kids, but because I am not Japanese, sometimes I felt awkward.

When I contacted you to be involved in this documentary you seemed very open to the idea. What made you so willing to open up your family to this project?

I wanted to share with people that coming from different cultures is a good thing and very valuable. Children with multicultural backgrounds should be accepted as others and if they need support in school, the school should provide it. Teachers sometimes do not have the time or ability to help the kids and the availability of this support is needed to make sure that the children get the best attention, even if they do not have a multicultural background.

Both you and I have had kids in the Japanese system, the international school system and an overseas system. I find my kids struggle most with their cultural identity right now because other kids in their school have only been in one school system and don't really "get" the bilingual, bicultural experience in the same way as my kids have lived it. How have you found the transition to Mexico?

My children see themselves as Japanese. They spent a lot of time involved in different activities in Japan with Japanese people. They embrace their Mexican side, but I think that they feel a stronger connection with Japan. Maybe in the future this might change. They love Japan and now they will start to learn more about Mexico. They used to come to Mexico every year for about a month but this was a very short time to really understand and immerse themselves in the culture. They do love Mexican food and Mexican family parties, but I will have a better idea once they live here longer.

How are the kids going with their language acquisition? Which is their strongest language, and how do you find they communicate to each other these days?

Their Japanese is much stronger than English and Spanish. English is their second language and Spanish is their third language. I think that their English and Spanish will become as strong as their Japanese. I use more Japanese with them than other languages now. Since we are in Mexico, they do not have any chance to speak Japanese, and I want them to keep their strong Japanese. They use English and Spanish in school.

What was it like having the filmmakers in your home for that time? Was it difficult to accommodate them at the school, even on Alex's first day of International School?

The filmmakers are very nice people and very understanding. It was not difficult to be around them, because we felt they were part of our family. They are very kind with our kids and always very respectful. Both of the schools were helpful and did not object to filming. The schools only worried about making sure that other children remained protected.

Every school system has its good and bad points. From your perspective in the three school systems you have experienced, what are some of these? If you could highlight one thing, and change one thing about each school—what would it be?

The Japanese school's good points were that it taught the kids to do cooperative work such as cleaning together and serving lunch. During sports day they practiced very hard to make the event a very organized fun day. Practice for this event was very hard and long, but the children enjoyed the competition. Another

good thing is that they learn many things that I could not teach them about culture and manners.

A bad point was that they do not encourage children to be individuals. They are told to do things and that is it. They do not challenge kids to try different activities. All activities are the same during the years and there are not many changes. Questions during class are not common. The teacher speaks and kids are expected to be quiet. I would like to see more interaction where kids can talk to the teachers and give opinions or ask questions.

I think that the most challenging thing about Japanese school was the powerless feeling of trying to help the kids overcome a bad experience without result.

At the international schools the children are encouraged to be risk takers, enquirers, thinkers and more things. The children are not judged by how they look and the teachers help the children explore their qualities, abilities and confidence. Mexico is very similar. They are going to an international school with a very similar system to the international school in Japan. I would like to improve the responsibility within the community where children also clean together with the staff to appreciate the staff's hard work to keep everything in order.

If you went to an AFWJ event and met a newlywed who is about to give birth in Japan and raise bicultural children, what would your advice be?

Keep in mind where you live and learn the culture yourself. Teach your children of the importance of both cultures. The children do not have to choose which part of them is one culture or the other; help them to appreciate them and embrace them both. It is such a blessing to be part of different cultures. The children can take the best of them. They need to be confident that no matter how many nationalities they have, they are unique and blessed with such an opportunity; enjoy both and respect them.

Tell me about your life there in Mexico.

Mexico is great. I love Cancun. It is a very peaceful place for the kids and the environment is very good. Sara is starting jazz dance from September 2 and Alex started training for track & field. He is very excited.

What are your family's goals in this new school?

To master their English and improve their Spanish. Alex will be in this school for one year and his next step is boarding school in Indiana. Sara will stay two years and then join Alex at the Academy. It is a very exciting time for them. They are really looking forward to all these plans.

I feel incredibly grateful for my bicultural family and even for the struggles as they arise along the way. I also feel so proud for Megumi Nishikura and Lara Perez Takagi, as if they were my own daughters, that they are investigating Japanese bicultural issues in this way. Alex is the youngest of five bicultural subjects of this film, and the only one still in school. However each of the wonderful people who agreed to invite this documentary into their lives are still on their path of learning, and teaching. If films like this succeed in Japan then I believe that Japan is changing, and that even ten years from now we will see a Japan that is more open to difference, acceptance, and celebration of a multi-cultural society.

By the way, if you're not a fan of the word "hafu" and wonder why the filmmakers have chosen this word as a title for their film, my only advice for you is to see it. Watch it. Right to the end you should listen to the stories, and make up your own mind.

Please support this film wherever you find it, and however you can get to see it. I am hoping that the lines out the cinema door in Shibuya during the initial two week run from **October the 5th** will encourage other cinemas to show the film in different Japanese cities. It's truly a film that all of Japan needs to see. Buy tickets ahead of time for a discount, and in large quantities so that your family and friends can talk about it. In-laws,

students and acquaintances from all walks of life will be able to gain wisdom and have great things to discuss from this film which is subtitled in English where Japanese is spoken, and Japanese where English is spoken. Like on Facebook or follow on Twitter, or sign up for the newsletter online at www.hafufilm.com.



The directors: Megumi and Lara

When Our Children Grow Up:

A Conversation with One of the Makers of "Hafu"

By Sue Conolly

Hi Megumi. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your film. How did you and Lara decide to do this film together?

In 2009 I came across the *Hafu* Japanese Project, which was a photography/interview project started in London by two *Hafu* women, Marica Yumi Lise and Natalie May Willer. When I heard that they were coming to Japan to expand their project, I approached them immediately offering my video production skills. In a similar manner, Lara also independently approached them. We were then introduced to each other as filmmakers with mutual interest in exploring the *Hafu* experience. We started collaborating by video documenting the work of the *Hafu* Project but then we went on to do on the street interviews about the perceptions of *Hafus* in Japan. About six months after we had all met, we decided to make a feature length film. Both Lara and I are now members of the *Hafu* Project.

Did you always want to make films? Why this particular media?

I have wanted to make films since I was 13. At the time I was attending the American School in Japan which has an excellent TV Production class and club. I don't know what it was that caught my interest, but I knew then that I wanted to be a film director. My father is also a journalist, so I am sure that has influenced me. Since then my understanding of my love for this medium has grown. Very simply, I love the beauty of capturing a story on video and then sharing it with the

world. In the screenings of "*Hafu*", nothing makes me happier than to hear that people laughed and cried while watching it.

How do you think your own childhood has informed the way you made the movie?

As a *hafu* myself, I think this is only natural. For starters, I probably would not have committed 3+ years and my own money if I didn't feel so passionate about it.

There is also a little bit of me in every one of the subjects portrayed in the film. In particular, my experience most resembles that of Alex Oi.

I too switched from Japanese school to International school at a similar age. While I was never bullied at Japanese school, I was hyper aware that I was different and stood out from my classmates. When I switched to international school, I struggled with the English language. I remember many moments after school, sitting across from my mother frustrated with learning spelling and grammar. So I guess this

is a case of art imitating life.

Did you have any A-ha moments beyond your own experience, while you were making the film?

I grew up in Japan as a child but left at 15 for the United States. When I returned at 26, I thought that my identity issues of being half-Japanese were long over. However, living in Japan as an adult for the first time, I was suddenly plagued by questions of "Am I Japanese?"



and “Do I belong here?”. In my search for answers, I started connecting with other half-Japanese individuals and I started to going to ハーフの会 (*hafunokai*).

I remember the very first time I participated, my own preconceptions of the *hafu* experience were shattered. Having mostly gone through the international school system here and then living in Hawaii for high school, the *hafus* I met had either attended international schools and were bilingual or they grew up in the US and didn't speak much Japanese. So I expected the main language of conversation to be English. To my surprise it was in Japanese and I met many *hafus* who had only attended Japanese schools and only spoke Japanese.

The byline of your film is “Japan is Changing”. Some feel that Japan is not changing fast enough, and feel frustrated that our children still aren't considered to be Japanese, still have the label of “other”. The film seems to put the “change” in the hands of the bicultural people themselves—for instance—by forming social groups or carrying out individual passions regardless of how some people view their race. Have you seen any evidence that “Japan is changing” from the inside?

Perhaps because I live in central Tokyo I have a skewed perspective but I see *hafu* adults or international families every day. In fact, I actually play a counting game with myself. On any given day I would say I see three to four such people. Statistically one in 49 babies are born between an international couple which equals over 20,000 a year. This also only accounts for babies born in Japan. While there is no way to calculate the numbers of the existing *hafus*, there are many us and we are growing in numbers. So to me it's so obvious that Japan is becoming multiracial and multicultural. However, I think one of the reasons Japanese people don't realize this is that they assume the *hafu* is actually a complete foreigner. This is my personal experience every day.

On a tangent, I occasionally hear from parents who say that they don't like term *Hafu*. While I can understand their sentiments, I believe it is quite a minor issue on the list of challenges that we *hafus* face. For me the much bigger issue is that often because of the way we look, we are treated as a foreigner and we are not even recognised for the part of us that is Japanese. In fact, when someone recognises and asks if I am *hafu* I am delighted! “You see the part of me that is Japanese?!” So that is one of the many reasons why I am okay with the term *hafu*, because it is reflective of who I am. I am both half Japanese and half American and when people can see me as someone who has a little bit of both of these cultures in me *I feel that I am seen for who I really*

am.

How have things changed, for example, since the advent of the Internet? I know that you've done a lot of your fundraising and PR using the Internet—have you found that you've been able to use this to your advantage in Japan as well as overseas?

Yes! This film would not be what it is without Facebook and the other social medias. I was very conscious of this early on and one month after we began filming, we started building a website and created a Facebook page. We have put very little money into publicity so really this film's success this far is *okagesama* to the Internet.

Do you have a favourite “moment” from the film? Mine keeps changing—from David Yano's smiling enthusiasm in the face of adversity (what a great smile!!) to Sophia's first phone call home to Australia from Japan (it reminded me of me). Of course I love everything about the Oi family, but in particular loved the conversation Gaby had with Alex in the car coming home from the airport after his extended stay in Mexico. I love Edward's talking about his childhood in Kansai and his idea to make a community there, and I cried when Fusae talked about her childhood “secret” coming to light. I love the moment she is making her husband dinner at home and the children's party she organized that looked to me so much like any AFWJ function I've ever attended. I know there are many favourite moments to choose from, but do you have a few to share?

Oh wow that's a tough question! I guess I like the ending the best. I loved going back over the interviews and trying to find the one sentence from each of the subjects that could encapsulate the whole film. I also got to run around for two weeks during the *hanami* season last year and film lots of *sakura* so that was enjoyable as well. When the film premiered in Los Angeles, I ended up tearing up upon seeing the end. I guess it is not only a conclusion to the film but the culmination of all that went into it.

Many people have asked me, can't they just see the film on video or why isn't it freely available? What is your hope for the film, and how do you plan to create “buzz” in greater Japanese society? Is there anything we can do to help?

Many *hafus* and their parents who have already seen the film have said, “This film is great, but it needs to go beyond our *hafu* community because we more or less know what our experiences are like. The film needs to be seen by the Japanese.” We feel this way too. This is why we are pursuing the theatrical route because

going as big as possible allows many more people the opportunity to see the film. Because of our October release, Japanese magazines and newspapers are picking up and reviewing the film. Word is spreading beyond our immediate international communities. Any Tarou could wake up say, gee I feel like going to see a movie today, check the listings and discover “*Hafu*.” The theater debut is also a gateway to something bigger: TV broadcast! Can you imagine these stories being shown during a primetime evening slot?

If Tokyo is a success, theaters in other parts of Japan will take an interest and the film will spread. So what I would like to ask the members of AFWJ is to encourage all their Tokyo friends to go see the film which will play initially from October 5 to 18th. And if you are based in Tokyo, please not only bring your family members, but bring two Japanese friends. If every one of us who attends brings two Japanese friends, the film is already guaranteed to be a success.

We will also be making the film available on DVD and other home video options in due time.

Finally, I would just like to add that this is a movie everyone should see. Bicultural families who live overseas should see it, bicultural families who live in Japan should see it, and in particular every citizen of Japan should see it because it does tell a story of changing Japan and will help people to embrace a Japan that is increasingly multicultural.

In particular I want the extended families and friends of extended families to see this film because it is the *Jii-chans* and *Baa-chans*, the cousins and the friends of cousins who will create the dialogue for the future generations of Japanese. I also think that cousins, and friends of cousins, may be increasingly involved in the world of international families themselves, so it is important to create this dialogue for the younger generation who will be the potential parents of bicultural children. I wish you all the best of everything in this and future projects. What's next for your future, by the way?

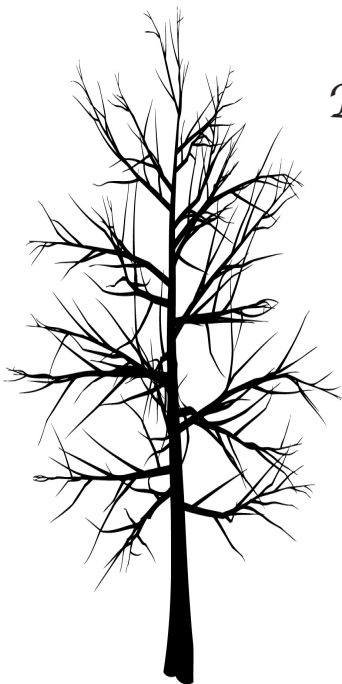
Thank you for these great questions and your kind words Sue. As for me, I hope to continue to make documentaries on an international level and not just in Japan. I think as a base my interest is telling stories that remind us of our common humanity. I am also getting married next year to a German man—so I am starting my own international marriage adventure. I feel like I can relate to my mother's experience more than ever before!

Thank you AFWJ for all the support you have given us thus far and helping us to find the Oi Family. It is only because of people like you that this film has been possible.

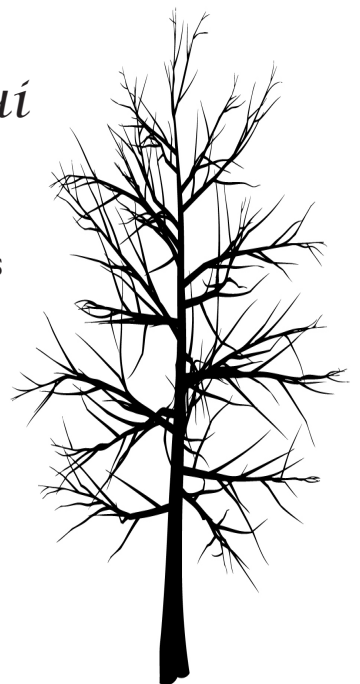


March

By Winnie Anne Inui



The quiet drear of bare brown trees
of spring not here but on the way
and day no longer making way
for night without the
lingering of light.



Have You Misplaced Your Mojo? Ideas and Activities to Help You Get It Back

By Hershey Wier



"Mojo" is referred to, in a general sense, as energy. This energy takes form in a variety of ways, for example: motivation; physical energy; creativity; being "in the zone"; performing at peak levels; and *joie de vivre*.

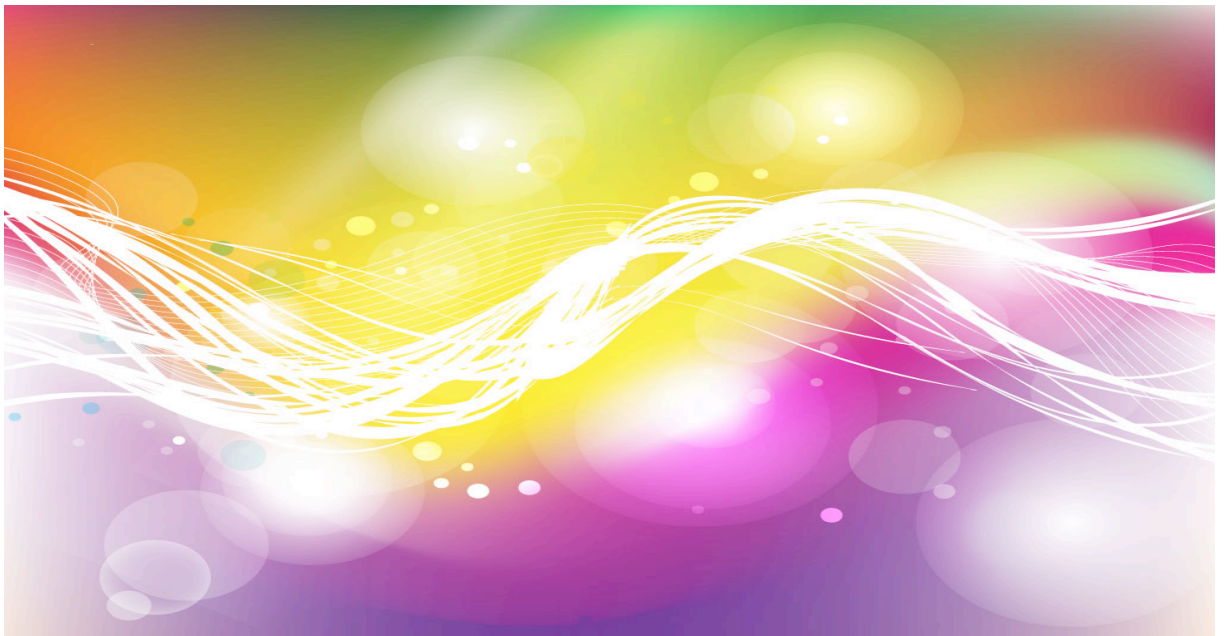
Every now and then, we can lose that mojo. Change is the one constant in life, and it's not always easy to adjust. Perhaps you've recently moved to Japan, married, or gave birth (or all of the above, whew!). Or, maybe you've already done all of that, and your role in life is changing. Career-wise, perhaps you've hit a fork in the road: that job you once thought was so exciting has lost its luster. Or, your body may be changing as you go through midlife, causing confusion, sometimes inertia, seemingly unexplainable changes in a variety of areas. And, maybe you were expecting something different from your life, and are asking yourself, "Is this all there is ever going to be?"

In the Mojo Workshop that I offer, we look at and try activities that help you get back your mojo. We look at what is no longer serving you. We cover a short checklist to gauge your health/lifestyle habits.

Thought life, self-care, relaxation, and self-discovery are discussed, accompanied with activities to help you get clarity on how your past brought you to where you are today; and, where you could be going on your life path in the future.

Change can be an exciting time that will lead to an awakening and finding your true self and purpose. Remember that there's no reward for living an unfulfilling, uninspiring life. You've got everything to gain by allowing yourself the gift of self-exploration and discovery. Exploring together with a fellowship of women, in a safe environment, can be a tremendously validating and rewarding experience. You are not alone. I feel privileged to help you begin your new journey.

Bio: Hershey Wier, BS Education, MBA, is a freelance ICF (International Coach Federation) certified career and talent management coach, specializing in career and life transitions. Feel free to send questions and comments about the Mojo Workshop to *Hershey.Wier@gmail.com*



The Boy Who Came Through

By Winnie Anne Inui



Who is this handsome man hugging his mother in the rush and crush of Tokyo Station?

Many years ago, this same person, looking a bit like a young policeman in his dark high school uniform, had passed her by on a Hankyu commuter train. Eyes averted, hat at a cocky angle, he had been loath to show her any hint of recognition lest someone connect him to this weird foreigner. After all, she was the one who had “ruined” his life by making him different, outlandish in the literal sense. His mother’s blonde hair, her blue eyes (hidden behind sunglasses for godsakes), and most of all her behavior, all added up to “not Japanese”. She insisted on speaking “that English”—even worse, “that funny *Nihongo*.” These were the years when he devoutly wished he had a nice Japanese *okaasan* like all his classmates. If only his dad hadn’t married a *gaijin*, how much easier his life would be.

In a photo stands a little boy of five, looking shy and uneasy in his kindergarten cap and jacket. He is aware that he looks different from the other children, and in fact is different... He is part of two worlds. Most people are raised in just one, with one culture, language, identity. But for this child, and others like him, being “both” is bred in the bone. Identity will never be reduced to a one-word answer. Belonging can never be a given. It is something he will have to forge, provided he survives the immense pressure to conform in a system that makes scant allowance for individual difference.

Meanwhile, his American mother was overwhelmed, as if her own identity were being smothered under the rules and demands of a school system where mothers were talked down to by male teachers, treated like little girls and expected to give half their waking energy to school activities. Feeling no longer her own person, this young mother got caught up in trying to make her son the embodiment of her values and theories on childrearing.

The boy was lonely and wanted nothing more than to fit in. But he was tugged in two directions. Home and school life did not mesh.

Japanese mothers indulged their children, especially sons, from whom little was required but good grades. Her son had chores to do, was expected to be polite,

even at home. She encouraged him to be strong and independent when all he needed at that point was to be spoiled and coddled like the other boys. How could *he* know, much less care, that everything *she* was taught to value was being threatened in Japan?: women’s rights, equal partnership of husband and wife, mutual respect between parents and children. By Japanese standards, the young woman did not fit the traditional image of good wife and mother.

One day the phone rang. Mrs. Yokoyama, a neighbor who was hosting an after-school play time, was wondering why *her* boy was refusing to have any sweets with the rest of his classmates. The woman explained she was trying to keep sweets to a minimum to help prevent cavities, and had taught her boy to stick to fruit for snack time. This struck the neighbor as being overly strict. Couldn’t she try to look at things from her child’s perspective, to let him join in with the other kids? Her son was already feeling different and on top of that he had to refuse something he really wanted in front of all those kids.

Thanks to this neighbor’s good advice, she began to recognize she was making her son’s situation all the more perplexing. A new awareness opened in her heart as it dawned on her that Japanese mothers had a wonderful ability to put themselves in the child’s place, to see and feel the world as a child does, which gives children a sense of security in a sometimes scary world. She saw that there was a lot to learn from this rich culture, and that in certain ways she too would have to become a ‘both’ by embracing the gifts and challenges of living in two different worlds.

At times her son was being teased at school for not being a real Japanese. His mother, frustrated by this rigid mindset; she believed different was okay. But for the boy’s sake, she had to accept reality and follow the rules. Even though it was painful to accept her son’s rejection of her and her culture, she eventually came to understand his need to affirm his Japaneseness to get along in his school life. He started practicing *aikido*. He asked his mother not to show her face at school unless necessary, and never to use English outside the home.

Although the young couple had planned on their future children accepting both cultures and receiving

their situation as a unique gift, they hadn't realized how much time and courage it would take. It was a long haul from the days of "pretend you don't know me" to that Irish hug in Tokyo Station. But the boy had learned to be comfortable with himself in both worlds.

Along the way, he came to realize that in being a "both" he is also a part of a third dimension where the two cultures coalesce to create a new and ever-evolving

identity. Like a gemstone held to the light, this identity reflects and refracts the shifting facets of its beauty. Its qualities, however, are not rigid; they are fluid, adaptable to the world's changing realities.

He wears this heritage well, my 45-year-old son, who still hugs me in train stations and has passed this delightful custom on to his own children.

Cool Take on Winter Lake

By Winnie Anne Inui

This was supposed to be a
bleak poem on the bleakness of
post-autumnal December, a brief
lamenting on the unrelenting gloom
of recent days; but the sky
suddenly ceased scowling as
smoky clouds slid, cracked,
broke apart, were funneled off
in ragged lines of slow retreat.
New blue comes surging through
the winter sky, and words once
meant to frame my lonely sigh
now tumble down the blue-lined page
in gratitude.

How to Renew Your Membership

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS:

One Year Membership: 7,000 Yen.

- Current, joining or rejoining members; January to December.
- Includes the year's Directory and a complete series of the year's AFWJ Journals (both the e-zine and in-stock print editions). You can start attending events and joining e-groups within the year of membership as soon as payment is confirmed.

Half Year Membership: 3,500 Yen.

- Joining or rejoining members only; July-December.
- Includes the year's Directory and August, October & December AFWJ Journals (both the e-zine and in-stock print editions). You can join e-groups and attend any events that occur on or after July 1st.

New Member's Special: 8,000 Yen.

- First time members paying after August 31st only; September of current year to December of the following year.
- Includes both years' Directories and AFWJ Journals from October of the current year through December of the next year (both the e-zine and in-stock print editions). You can join e-groups and attend events from September 1st.

Overseas Airmail Postage Upgrade Option: 2,000 Yen/year.

- All memberships include land or sea postage and delivery. Overseas members may choose to upgrade to air delivery for 2,000 Yen per year.

All memberships expire on December 31st.

This includes access to online resources
and most AFWJ events.

YEARLY MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:

DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 15.

Directions for payment via the post office

1. Ask for a pre-printed *furikae yoshi* from the Membership Secretary. (*Furikae yoshi* are sent out every year with the October Journal.) You can also use a blank form from the post office.
2. Fill out as shown below. **Please write in English (romaji), NOT kanji.**
3. Please include your complete contact information, including postal address and postal code, prefecture, phone number AND **e-mail address**. If you are an **overseas member** paying by *furikae yoshi* while in Japan, please include your contact information, country of residence and the address where you would like your Journals mailed.
4. Insert your *furikae yoshi* into the ATM machine and follow the instructions (English instructions are available) or hand it in at the Post Office window. There is a small fee charged by the Post Office, please note the ATM is slightly cheaper. If you would like to complete this process on the postal ATM without using a *furikae yoshi* to avoid fees, please contact the Treasurer to register your account.

Other Payment Options

Payment can be made online through PayPal on the AFWJ website. There is currently a charge of 40 yen + 3.6%. You can also pay by bank transfer or registered cash envelope. If you intend to use one of these methods, please contact the Treasurer for more information or check the AFWJ website for details.

Gift Memberships:

Gift memberships are welcomed. Please contact the Treasurer for details if you would like to help a member in need of support.

Help a Friend Join:

If you would like to help a friend join AFWJ, please send her postal or e-mail address to the Membership Secretary, who will send an introductory packet and instructions to join.

DIRECTORY CHANGES

The information on your *furikae yoshi* is only intended for matching financial data and your member record and will not be used to update your Directory listing. If you move or wish to change or limit other data in your Directory listing, please contact the Membership Secretary directly or update your information online.

If you have questions about payment or your membership record and account, please contact the Treasurer or the Membership Secretary.

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00		口座記号		口座番号		金額		千:百:十:万:千:百:十:円		001507		52301		001507		52301							
加入者名 日本人の外国人妻の会						料金		備考		加入者名 日本人の外国人妻の会						金額		千:百:十:万:千:百:十:円					
<p>Thank you for your payment. Please <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> and fill in below as appropriate.</p> <p>Joining <input type="checkbox"/> Rejoining <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Payment for year(s) 20____ (¥7,000/year)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Half year: July to December 20____ (¥3,500/year)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Special New Member Offer for Sept 1, 20____ through Dec 31, 20____ (¥8,000 inclusive)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> OVERSEAS POSTAGE (+¥2,000/year for airmail; seamail included)</p> <p>NAME _____ TOTAL DEPOSITED: _____</p> <p>TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____ (ROMAJI ONLY PLEASE)</p>										<p>記載事項を訂正した場合は、その箇所に訂正印を押してください。</p> <p>切り取らないでお出しく下さい。</p>													
<p>通信欄・ご依頼人 おとこ おなまえ (ご連絡先電話番号)</p>										<p>ご依頼人 消費税込 日 附 印</p>													
裏面の注意事項をお読みください。(ゆうちょ銀行) これより下部には何も記入しないでください。										この受領証は、大切に保管してください。													



Friendship Campaign

A Friendship Campaign was approved by the Board at the May 2013 Board Meeting as a system to help encourage our membership to grow.

If you know someone who is thinking about **1) joining AFWJ for the first time** or **2) rejoining after a lapse of three or more years**, please give them the code “**friend45**.” This code, along with your name, must be submitted to the Membership Secretary when they join.

You both will receive an **immediate 1,000 Yen credit** toward your dues, convention payment or airmail. Only one referral name per new or rejoining member will be accepted, so it is up to the new member to decide who of her friends helped her take the final steps to joining our wonderful organization!

This is a cumulative system. You will receive a *1,000 yen discount for every member you encourage to join AFWJ!* To track your discount amount, check your Journal envelope for more details, or contact the Treasurer or Membership Secretary.

When you **wish to use your discount**, please make a note on the Post Office payment slip (*furikae yoshi*) “Friendship Campaign discount = 1,000 Yen” or how ever much you wish to use from your accumulated credits to help us keep track of your membership record and give you flexibility when you use your credits. If you pay by bank transfer, please mention by email to the Treasurer the total credits you wish to use and the total you will pay in currency.

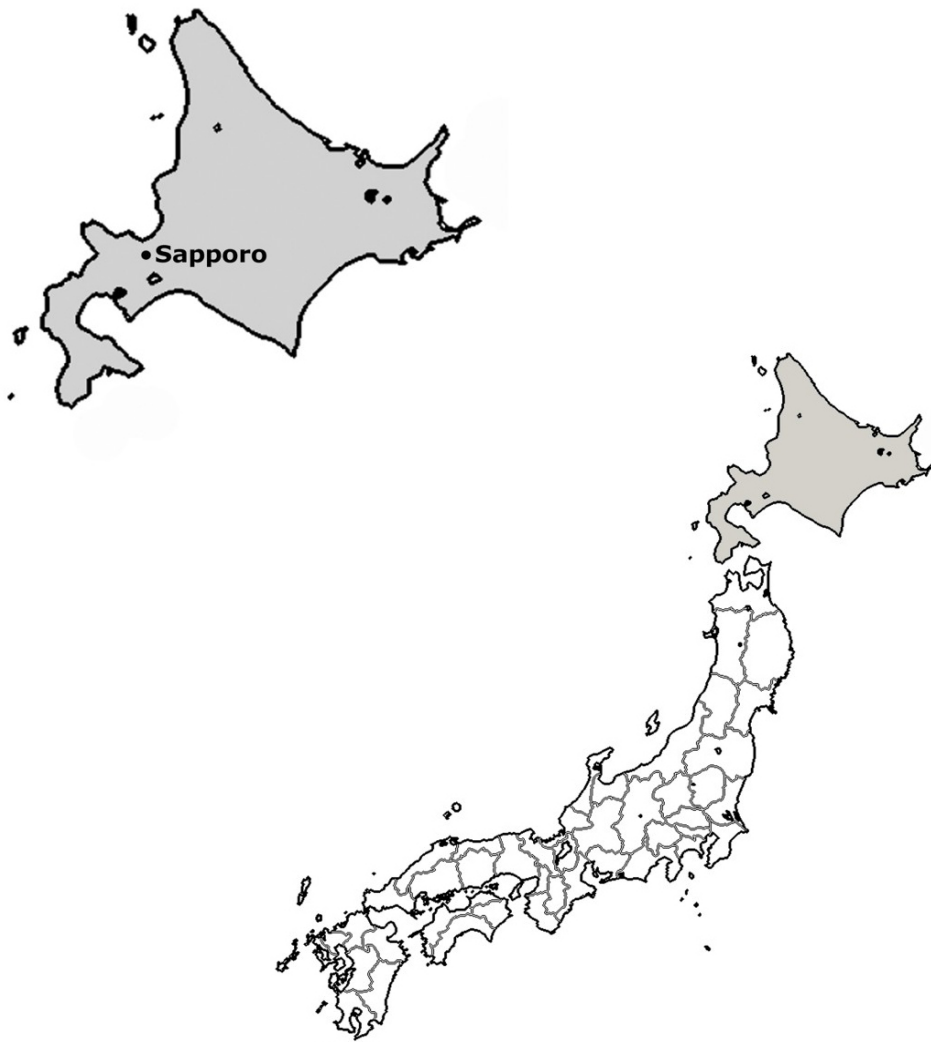
As the half-year memberships start on July 1st, a member can join now from then until the end of the year for only 2,500 yen using their 1,000 Yen credit, and if they introduce a friend as well, they are eligible to participate in the campaign for credits toward their future dues, airmail and convention!

Refer A Friend—Get her to include **friend45** and **your name**—Get your Credit!



HOKKAIDO

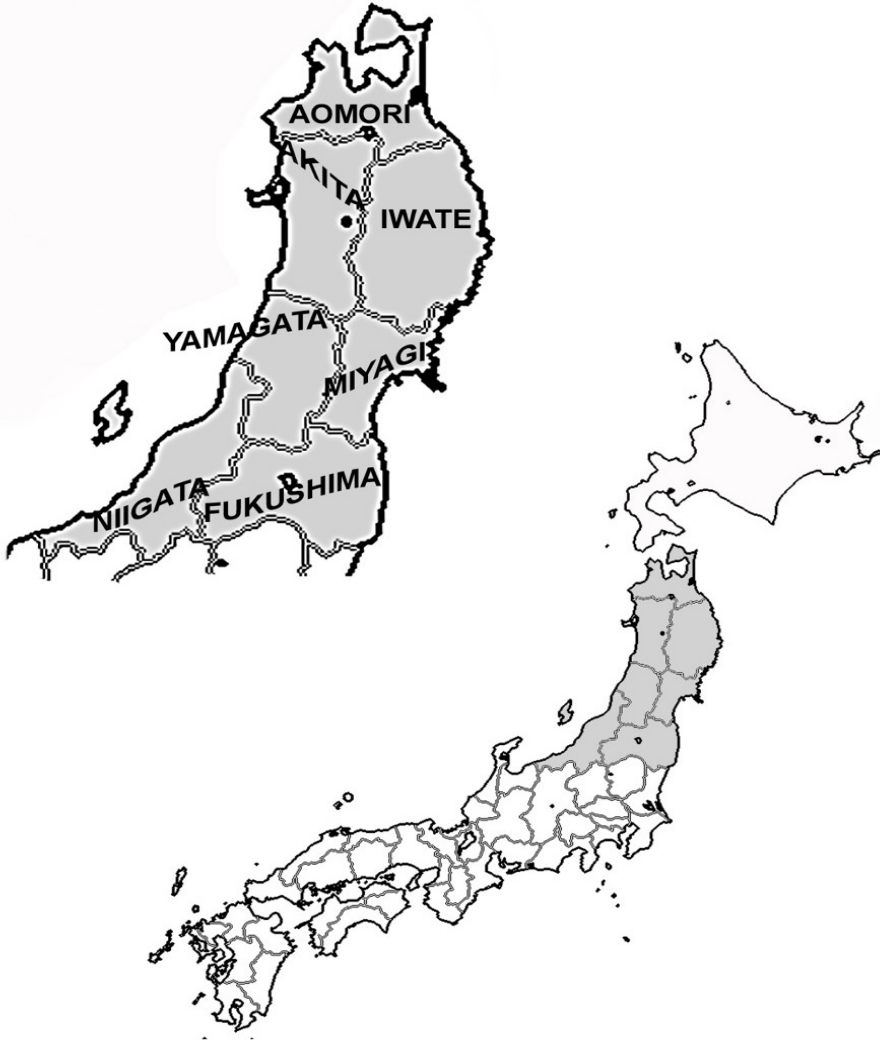
北海道



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
hokkaido-rep@afwj.org

TOHOKU

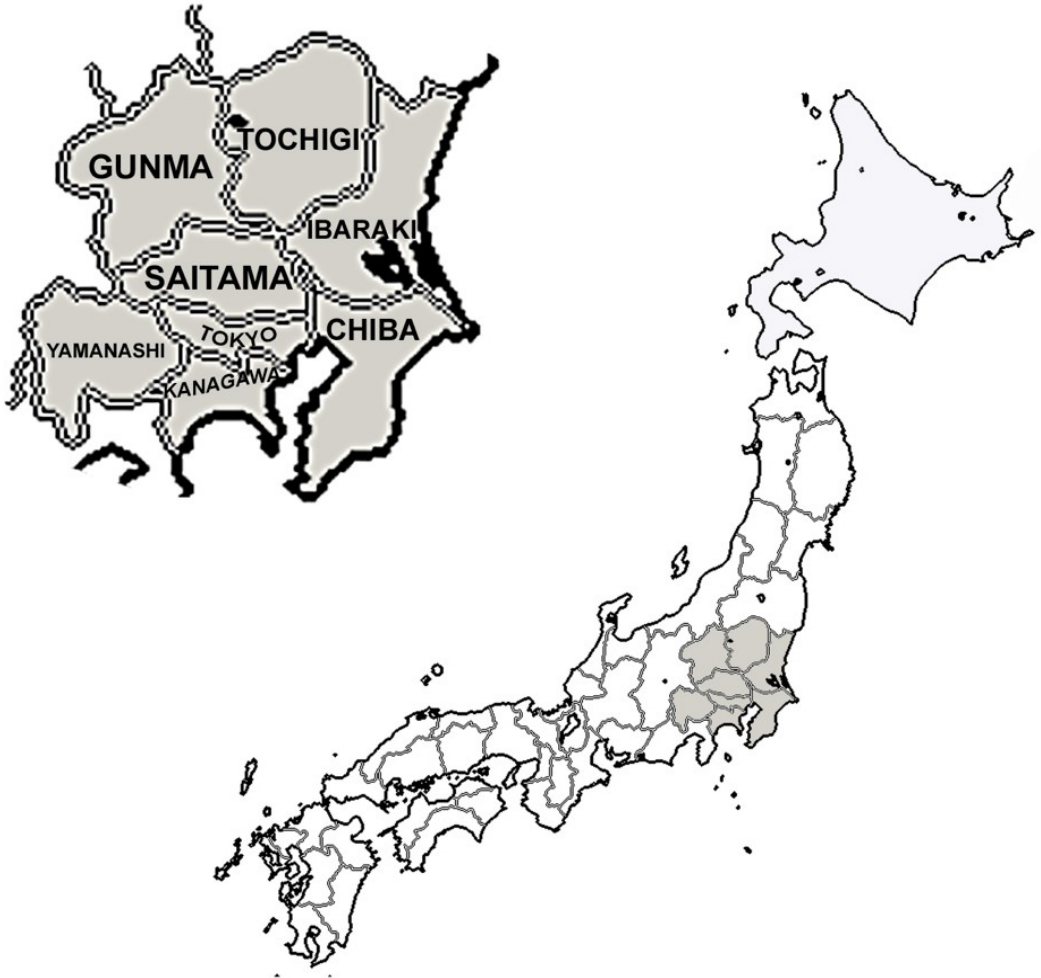
東北



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
tohoku-rep@afwj.org

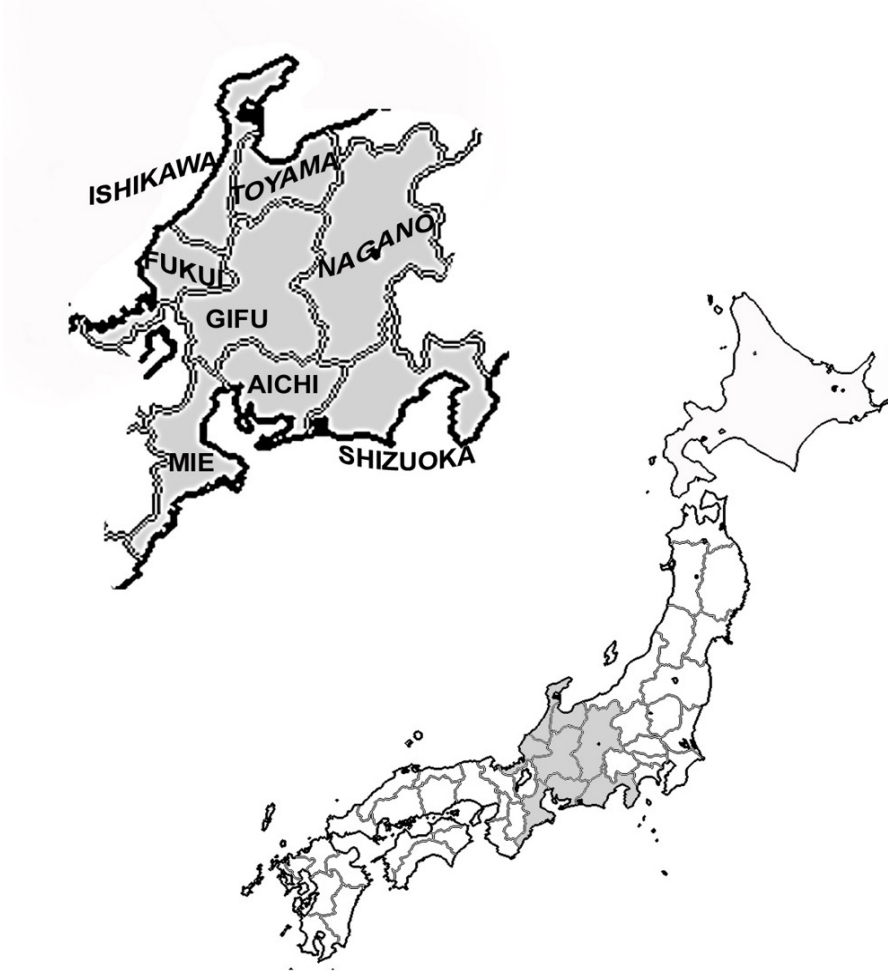
KANTO/KOSHINETSU

関東甲信越



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
afwjkanto-rep@afwj.org

CHUBU-TOKAI & HOKURIKU 中部東海北陸



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the

District Representative at:
chubutokaihokuriku-rep@afwj.org

KANSAI & CHUGOKU

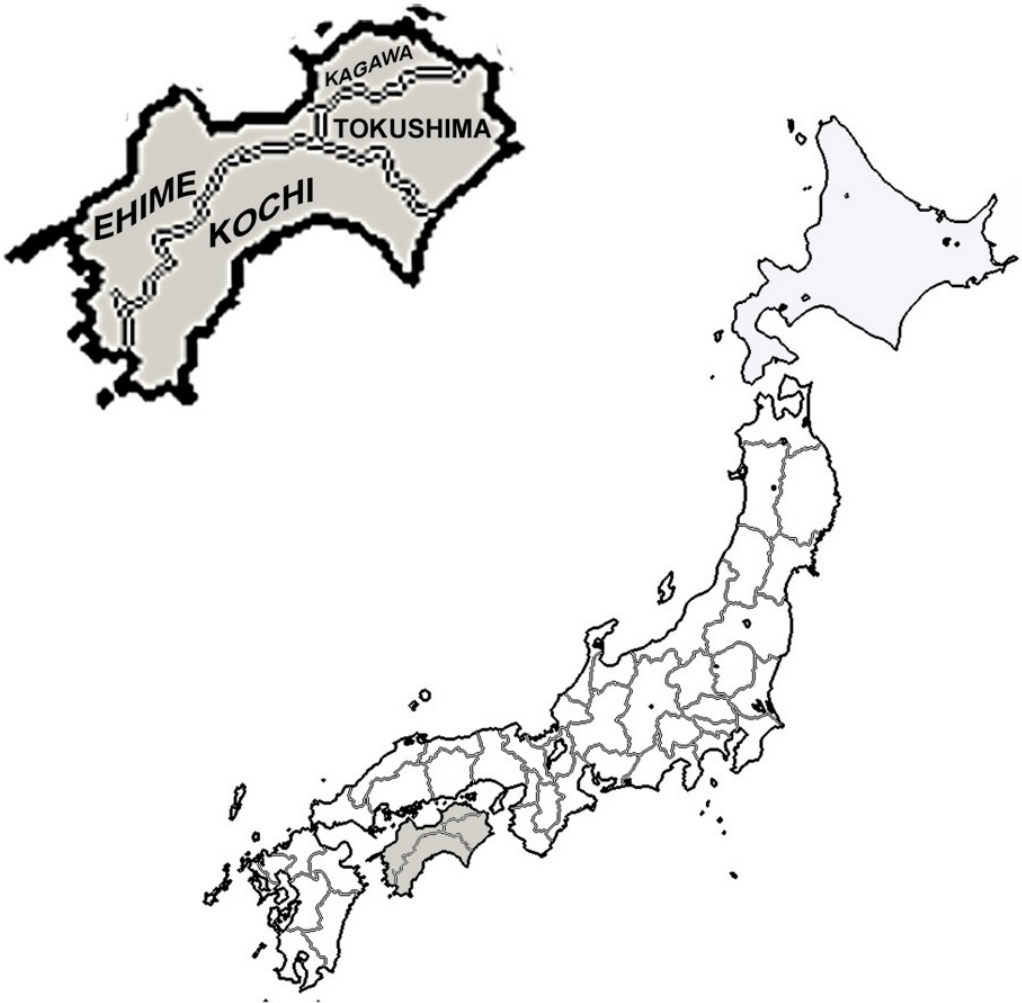
関西中国



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
kansai-rep@afwj.org

SHIKOKU

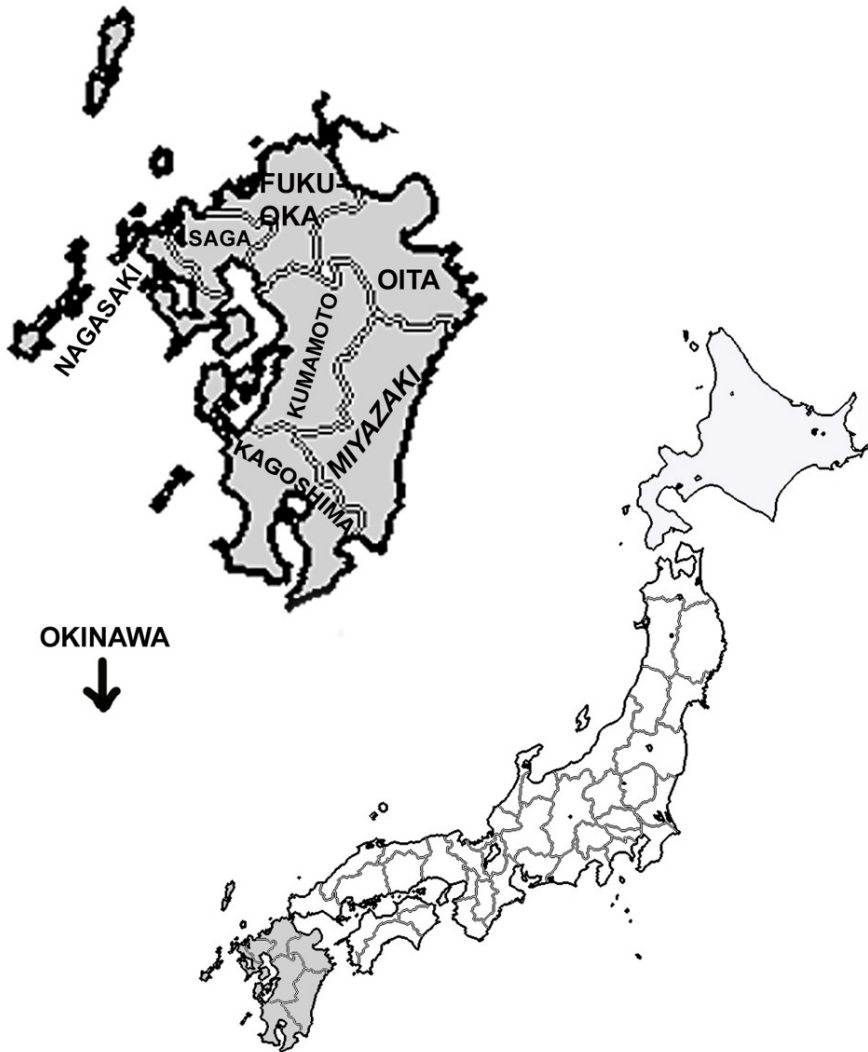
四国



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
afwjshikoku-rep@afwj.org

KYUSHU & OKINAWA

九州沖縄



For more information
about local events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
kyushu-rep@afwj.org

OVERSEAS

海外



For more information
about overseas events
and activities
contact the
District Representative at:
overseas-rep@afwj.org

Attention Journal Contributors

The AFWJ Journal is created from submissions by AFWJ members. There are several different ways you can contribute:

- Write an article
- Think about writing a column—agony aunt, etiquette specialist, dream analyzer, horoscope, you name it!
- Encourage your friends who write well or have had a unique or educational experience to write about it
- Suggest ideas to the Journal Editor for articles or topics
- Put yourself forward as a ‘reporter’ to be assigned an article to write
- ART!! Illustrations, etchings, drawings and paintings!
- Photos! I need an editorial photographer who can take topic-based photos on request.
- Event photos—please send me only those you want printed!

All contributions must be accompanied by the sender's name and address. A pen name may be used in the Journal, or an author's name will be withheld upon request, but no anonymous contributions will be accepted.

The Journal Editor reserves the right to refuse to publish submissions that she judges may be offensive or upsetting to other members. Submissions that breach legal copyright will NOT be published. Members who feel their submissions have been unfairly refused may appeal to the President.

Please send contributions by one of the following:

E-mail: Send a file attached to an e-mail. Or write your contribution into the body of the e-mail.

Hard Copy by Mail: Type or print neatly and mail to the Editor at the address below.

Please check the spelling, confirm the accuracy of phone numbers, names etc., in your contribution. The Editor will make changes to correct obvious spelling and grammar errors, but neither the Editor nor AFWJ will be held responsible for the accuracy of members' submissions.

Illustrations: Original illustrations (created by you) are welcome. Use of illustrations not your own MUST be accompanied by written permission from the original

creator. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Material not returned to the sender will be sent to the Historian.

Photographs: Original photographs (taken by you) are welcome. Use of photographs not taken by you MUST be accompanied by written permission from the original photographer. Number or name the photos, adding captions. Identify the photographer and everyone in the photo. Photos may be sent by postal mail (printed photo or .jpg on a CD) or e-mailed in .jpg format.

Artwork: Original artwork (created by you) is welcome. Use of artwork not your own MUST be accompanied by written permission from the original creator. For cover illustrations, please contact the Editor prior to submission. For other artwork, mail the original work, unfolded, with cardboard to prevent bending or folding. Attached files sent via e-mail in .jpg or .gif format are also welcome.

Clip Art: We can't accept clip art at this time.

Newspaper/Magazine Reprints: Send the original article, not a photocopy. On a separate piece of paper, write the author's name, title of article and publication, publisher's name and full address, and date of publication. Please obtain permission in writing from the publisher to reprint the article in the Journal before you submit it to the Journal Editor.

Copyrights: By contributing to the AFWJ Journal, an AFWJ Handbook, and/or the AFWJ website, the author grants AFWJ one-time print publication and/or electronic publication rights for that piece. The copyright at all times belongs to the author, and the author is free to sell/reprint her piece to other publications.

Electronic Journal: Parts of the Journal will be available in electronic form from the private members' section of the AFWJ website.

Deadlines for Journal submissions: The first day of January, March, May, July, September, and November for the following month's issue.

Send all contributions to the Journal Editor:

journaleditor@afwj.org

AFWJ Privacy Policy

Information in AFWJ Journals and in the Membership Directory is for members' use only. Since AFWJ members value their privacy and entrust personal information to one another, no one's name, address, email address or phone number and no one's Journal article may be released to non-members without the permission of the author or the written permission of the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ).

**Do you need to update your
information in the Directory?**

**Do you need to pay your
membership dues?**

Contact the Membership Secretary at:

membershipsecretary@afwj.org

Website: *www.afwj.org*