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Student Group at Chioin

Jin Jackson's Impressions on Her Trip to Japan

I got off the nine hour, fifty-one minute, and twenty-seven second airplane ride and was ready for my adventure in Japan. As soon as I stepped out of the airport I could tell that this country was not the same as home. We arrived in Tokyo and walked to the youth hostel. We went up to floor eighteen on the elevator. Thank goodness there was air conditioning because the weather was extremely hot! I was completely tired by the time we were ready for dinner. In Japan it was 6:00 PM, but back in America it was 2:00 AM!

After going to this delicious restaurant that had phenomenal food, we all decided to go to Shabuya and see the famous dog, Hachiko. We took trains to get there. It was about 9:30 when we walked the

streets of Shabuya. If I looked up there would be huge billboards that were brightly lighted. The streets were filled with people. Every time we crossed the intersection at least 50 people on both sides would cross the street. There was a cool breeze, which was perfect for me because I really don't like hot temperatures. When we took the trains back to the youth hostel almost everyone was falling asleep. It was 11:00 PM and we rushed to get back because the doors at the hostel closed at 11:00. The next morning I could barely open my eyes, I was so tired. Somehow, I managed to get myself up and dressed so I could get to breakfast. Breakfast was scrumptious. There was rice, miso soup, salad, French fries, and other little

tasty treats. We took a bus to Miasa-Omachi that took about four hours. On the bus I would just look outside at the beautiful scenery including many mountains that looked like pictures I had previously seen, raging rivers, houses that did not look like our typical homes, trees that were not redwoods, and cars that were small and had weird license plates. Japan, to me, looked exactly like I expected it to be: the high mountains with fog rising above them, trees that would never end and so many rice fields. When we arrived in Miasa we were greeted by a few people and many cameras. I met my host parents and many other people who were happy to see us.

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Upcoming Events:

- March 26, 2012 Spring Fling Dance at Crown Hall in Mendocino!
- May 2012 Student and Artist visit from Japan



We then walked to the art center that had both Mendocino and Miasa art. The pieces were beautiful, but my mind couldn't function well because it was so hot outside. That night there was a welcome party for us. They had tables of wonderful foods. I met my host family, one who I knew from

when he came to Mendocino last year. There was a twelve-year-old boy, a ten-year-old girl, and a seven year-old girl in the family: Ayumu, Koyuki, and Yukana. After meeting tons of new people and listening to many

family we first went to the 100 yen store with two stories. Then we went to this five-story arcade place. There they had almost every sport you could think of to play. You could practice your aim for soccer or tennis. You could



Student Group with Homestay Hosts

speeches, Maddie and I were taken home. While I stayed with my homestay family I grew to love them and had a great time with them. All of the mornings I would wake up at 5:00 AM. Every breakfast and dinner we would have there would be some new food for me to try. I would either love it or not care for it. The family spoiled us. We were treated so well. They gave us everything we needed plus more. In addition, they spoke good English. That helped a lot because I didn't know how to speak Japanese, besides some basic phrases. At nighttime after dinner they would take us out to catch the fireflies. I had never seen one before so I was very excited when I got to hold one. Other nights when we didn't catch fireflies, we lit off fireworks! Since they are legal in Japan we bought about 8000 yen (\$80) worth. On our free day with our host

bike race or even fish. On the top floor there were mini courts or fields. They had an archery range and a spot where you could play curling. The arcade was one of the major highlights of my trip. The day I went to visit the school I was beyond excited. I have been a visitor at a new school for a day before and loved it. When we got there they had a big assembly for our arrival. I made a speech along with other students from their school. Our group went to different classes where we learned to play Japanese games, learned calligraphy, and played physical games. While in the classrooms I saw people from past trips and made new friends. When we had lunch I ate with a group of kids around my age. They taught me a few things like how to properly use my chopsticks. After lunch every single kid helped in different ways to clean the school. It made the jobs get

done fast and efficiently. When we left the school we walked down the hill to the preschool classrooms. The kids sang and danced for us. The good-bye party was very sad. It started with the girls getting dressed like princesses in yukatas, and the guys in a less fancy robe thing. There was about an hour of speeches before we could all eat. That night I collected a bag full of gifts that was so big that I didn't know if it would fit in my already full suitcase. Our Japan trip started its new chapter when we left Miasa-Omachi for the big cities. We took a bus that took a couple of hours to Takayama. We made a few stops along the way at a waterfall and a cave. The cave was really cold, about Mendocino's tem-

bite, in my case, the bites swell up and itch like crazy. I was given numerous things to put on my bites but I found the most effective to be tooth-paste. Takayama Adventure and Kyoto The whole group decided to go to a place that would take an hour on a bus to get there. My dad and I thought about going, but decided to stay and explore Takayama instead. He really wanted to go on the two hour walking course to the castle ruins. When walking we missed a few signs and took some wrong paths. We ended up getting lost or



Our Group at the Tomb of the International Unknown Soldier in Kyoto

perature, but also pretty cool. There were colored lights to make it look cooler. That night we stayed in a youth hostel that was up a hill which meant we had to drag our luggage up a few stairs. Morning Market The morning market was about a five-minute walk from the hostel. I found some pretty sweet souvenirs there. It had food, bag stores, stuffed animal stores, pottery stores and other neat places. Bugs The bugs in Japan are vicious. The mosquitos are little suckers that you can't see so you can't kill them when they are sucking your blood. When they

“misdirected”, as my dad says. We finally found our way back to the walking course and decided we were so hungry, and



Jin Singing Her Favorite Song

it wasn't worth it getting “misdirected” again going to the ruins. I had been craving a nice juicy hamburger for a while, and there happened to be a burger place in town. We

walked all the way there to find it wasn't open that one day! After Takayama we traveled to Kyoto where we stayed in the



Zip Line

Utano Youth Hostel. It was the biggest, nicest one yet. The rooms had bunk beds and there were cubbies to put your stuff in.

Temples and Shrines

We went into many temples and shrines while we were in Japan. They were fun to look at, but some of them got boring. I liked the part at the end when we were done looking at them and Marci would buy us ice cream.

Heat

The heat in Japan, especially in Kyoto, was unbearable. It was in the mid 90's most of the time. I must've drank 15 bottles of water in two days. It wasn't only incredibly hot, it was muggy, too. On this trip fans and air conditioning were my best friends.

Food

I thought the food in Japan was for the most part delicious. In the youth hostels, the food was not great. In Kyoto the place was amazing, the rooms were nice, but the food was not too good. My favorite foods on this trip would probably be the chicken on the stick and the noodles (udon and soba).

After Kyoto we traveled to Nagasaki.

Zip Line

On our way walking into town there was this kids' playground with this awesome zip line. It was in a circle with a few turns that would twist you around.

The height of the structure was about to Dan's shoulders, so pretty tall. The rope hung from the zip line that you could hold on to, then hold your feet on the knot at the bottom.

Fat Man

The second atomic bomb dropped by the U.S. in World War II was at Nagasaki. While we were there we looked at monuments and memorial statues for the city of Nagasaki. We went to a museum where we learned the nickname for the atomic bomb was "Fat Man."

After Nagasaki we took a train to Hiroshima.

Peace Park

Hiroshima had the first atomic bomb dropped on them by the U.S. in World War II. We went to the Peace Park that was the memorial place for the victims of the atomic bombing.

Karaoke

The adults took us to karaoke one night. We walked into this small room with seats, a T.V. and a karaoke machine. I didn't think I'd sing anything, but they had all the popular songs I knew. I ended up having a blast there.

Miyajima

We took a bus and a ferry to Miyajima. We saw the enormous Torii gate. We walked up a small hill that took us up to the gondola which took us up about 1600 feet. From there we walked even higher to a mountain peak that had a gorgeous view. Of course, though, it was hot. After walking up a gazillion steps to the top, we had to walk down. It was about 3:00, and I was hungry. We walked down the stone steps all the way down. About half way I thought my feet were going to fall off! When we finally reached the bottom all the restaurants were closing, but we

managed to find a place.

Long Ride Home

We got up at 6:00 AM to catch our 7:15 train. That train ride was about an hour and a half. Then we took another train ride that lasted about three hours. Our train was late getting to the airport so we had to rush through security and to our gate. Everyone had made it on time. The plane rumbled and we were off, back to Mendocino. I was sad to leave but excited to share all my amazing stories.

Madelyn 7-13-11

During the last few days we have been riding on lots of trains. The train rides are long and boring. I wish that we took less of them. Every day we ride on about three trains.



Maddie at the Waterfall

It was a lot of

rode up in a gondola almost to the top of a mountain. Then we walked almost a half an hour and split up and the boys went to the top of another mountain and the girls and Jim went down. After our walk our legs felt like rubber. Then we went to the Hana Youth Hostel and stayed until 12:00 PM.

My Home Stay Family

My home stay names were Yukana, who is 7, Koyuki, who is 10, and a boy named Ayumu, who is 12. There is also Mama-san and Otsuka-san.

On our free day we went to a five-story arcade that had just about every sport that you could think of. The arcade was called "Round 1". In the arcade I played a game with Koyuki and I beat her, but not by much. I also played DDR against Yukana, and I won.



Soaking Our Feet

work going up and down the stairs because if you have your suitcase you have to carry it up and down, but if there is an escalator you are in luck because then you don't have the carry it up and down.

Just yesterday we went to Miyajima Island. At Miyajima we saw a lot of deer. We also



Change is good for a trip to Japan

The preparations for this year's trip started out like any other Student Exchange trip to Japan. But then, March 11 struck in three separate ways. Nothing was quite the same after that until we reached Narita Airport. With an intrepid group of 13, including four artists, we were met by our good friends Tokio Oda, Hiromi Kitahara and Yasue Yokokawa at Narita. We spent one night in Tokyo where our two adventurous, traveling Mendocino Students, Jin Jackson and Maddie Crowningshield were able to have their picture taken at the statue of Hachiko the faithful dog at Shibuya Eki. From that point on the entire trip was different from most all previous trips. We traveled to Miasa-Omachi first, instead of ending the trip there. Since there were so few of us, the artists and the students traveled together until we separated after two nights in Takayama a week after arriving in Japan. While we were in Miasa-Omachi the artists and students followed separate agendas except for three special events: the tremendous Artists Welcoming Dinner at the Wachigai Restaurant hosted by owner Watanabe-san, the 4th Annual Art Exchange Artists Reception Party at the Asagura Art and Cultural Center, which our good friend and 2001 student group alumnus, Chelsea

Robinson attended from her small town of Tsubata on the Sea of Japan, and also the Artists Farewell Dinner at the Traditional Kizaki House. Our group this year was no different than previous years in their congeniality, thoughtfulness, and caring for the other members in the group, except there were far fewer participants than any trip before. I wish it were not that way but everyone must do what they feel is best.

We also added a couple of different destinations this tour, and altered previous stops. We visited Takayama for the first time. It is a small city on the west side of the Japan Alps. Everyone seemed to enjoy our two-night stay and feel it would be a good place to return.

This is the first time we traveled as far south as Nagasaki on the island of Kyushu. No trip before had ever been off the main island of Honshu. It was "mushiatsui," hot & humid in Nagasaki and I am not sure we will visit the city again if we return to Kyushu but possibly head to the east of the island to the peninsula and the onsens.

I have to say the Nagasaki Peace Park was worth touring. It was very different from the Hiroshima Peace Park. The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum has an infinity pool with 72,000 lights shining up through the water to symbolize the lives lost to the atomic bomb. Also the anti-war section

was very thought provoking. We changed our stay in Hiroshima to a different, smaller Youth Hostel since there were only eight of us, and we scheduled an entire day on Miyajima where we climbed to the top of the island to partake of the great view.

Except for a couple of mishaps, temporarily losing my JR Rail Pass in Kyoto, and Dan forgetting his Passport at the Hiroshima YH, the trip was smooth sailing. I almost feel spoiled by the ease and comfort of traveling with a small group. I think I may fondly reflect back to this tour during future trips with the usual 40 participants trailing through the Tokyo subway station. I do want to thank Marci for her invaluable experience, wisdom and ability to adapt to my every flight of fancy. Without her the trip would not be the same. The same holds true for Debbie and Travis, each contributing in their own manner to make the trip the best possible. Our chaperons this trip were superb. Hats off to Jim Jackson and Dan Dickson for their comedic relief in times of uncertainty. It was great to have retiring Mendocino K8 Principal, Bronwyn Rhoades, on the trip to represent the Mendocino end of the Sister School relationship with Miasa School.



At Rieshoji Temple with Temple Head Priest and Tour Guide, Homestay Host Takada-san, Assistant Head Priest, and Miasa-Omachi Sister Cities Association President, Kitazawa

The four artists, Debra Lennox, Carolyn Zeitler, Miriam Davis & Bob Rhoades added a spice that was never present on previous trips, and I savored their input tremendously. Thank you all for a great time!

I am currently living in our Sister City of Miasa-Omachi until May of 2012 when I will return to Mendocino with the Artists group, shortly before the Student Group arrives in mid-May. You can follow my activities on my Blog "A Mendonesian's year in Miasa, Japan" at: <http://amendonesianinmiasa.wordpress.com/>

Ja mata,
Mike L. Evans
MSCA President



Mike with Debra and Hiromi at Asagura



Jin and Maddie with Hachiko



My love of Japan started when I was an art student studying ceramics at San Jose State. In those times, the story of Bernard Leach (1887 – 1979), a British potter who became widely recognized as the father of studio pottery, was popular reading, if not mandatory for ceramic students. “A Potter’s Life” described Leach’s time in Japan as a young man in the early 1900’s, his relationship with a group of Japanese artists who called themselves, “Shirakabaha” and his friendship with a young potter named Shoji Hamada (1884 – 1978). Leach and Hamada would remain friends for over seventy years, both providing influence to one another’s art. For me, the first time I saw Hamada’s ceramics, in Leach’s book, my love relationship



At Narita Airport with Debra Lennox, Dan Dickson, and Yasue Yokokawa

with Japan had begun. Even after 40 years, I still feel a sense of wonderment at the beauty of his art. I no longer work with clay but have evolved to basketry, working exclusively with pine

Carolyn Zeidler, a Mendocino Basketmaker in Japan



Two Basketmakers

needles. Yet, Japanese pottery and the Japanese way of creating art still guides me in my designs. Needless to say, being able to finally go to Japan to see this for myself has been a great highlight of my life. I was honored to have been chosen to participate in the second Maisa/Omachi – Mendocino Art Exchange Exhibit.

I had a checklist of things that I definitely wanted to see and do in Japan. It started with a general “Make it to Japan” (check) “speak Japanese” (check) “dress in kimono” (check) to more specific things such as “see Buddhist temple” (check) “meet Zen monk” (check) “buy samui” (check). (Samui are the traditional cotton work-clothes of the farmers and especially of Buddhist monks.) Everyday I was sure that I had done all I wanted to do and everything else was just icing on the cake.

Much to my delight, each day was filled with more wonderful things to experience.

I loved my host family – Yujiro and Yuko Nakajima. They were fun and interesting and more than willing to tolerate my very poor Japanese language skills. Yuko and I talked

about gardening and plants and Japanese grammar. Yujiro would drill me every morning on my knowledge of the language since I told him that I didn’t want him to speak English with me. The language thing is always tricky because the Japanese

hosts want to practice their English skills and the Americans want to practice their

Japanese skills. I am sure that the Nakajimas and I will forever remain friends. The Japanese esthetic of

nature-based art has long intrigued me. Much of traditional Japanese art has been associated with Zen Buddhism and exemplifies many of Zen’s core spiritual tenets. To meet other Japanese artists and see their work

deserved the biggest check of all on my list. One of these artists was a bamboo basketmaker (takekogeika) named Yoshida-san. Baskets in Japan hold a special meaning and place in the art of tea ceremony. These baskets are used for ikebana (flower arranging) and are much revered. Yoshida-san graciously invited us into his studio and gave us a wonderful demonstration of how he prepares his bamboo for basketmaking. He trained in a school in Kyushu, one of the southern Japanese islands that is famous for its quality bamboo. He returns there yearly to collect his bamboo. With Chelsea



Farewell Dinner With the Artists

Robinson as

our interpreter, we talked about collecting materials and the various difficulties in making a living selling baskets. Indeed, while we were in his studio talking art, prospective buyers came to look at his more utilitarian baskets to put bathroom towels in. Before we left, Debbie Lennox took a photograph of Yoshida-san and me with one of my baskets. I had finally met a real Japanese basketmaker (check) and here is the evidence. I am looking forward to returning to Japan as soon I can make it back there. My deepest gratitude to all the subarshi’i Japanese hosts that made our stay totemo tokubetsu.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for the dance in March

Food, silent auction items, and help on that evening would be appreciated.

Contact Carolyn or LaRene for details. (Contact info on Page 6.)

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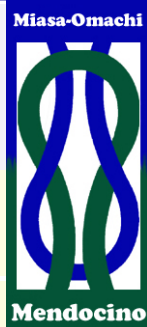
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Student Group at the Torii Gate



Kimono Girls at the See You Again Dinner



We're on the Web
www.mendosca.org



SEE YOU AGAIN!!!



For more pictures and detailed accounts of both group visits, go to <http://www.mendosca.org/www/html/2011.html> on the internet!

Don't Forget!!

- Go to the website at <http://www.mendosca.org/www/html/Application%20Forms.html>
- Follow the instructions to email or print it out and mail in your membership renewal form. Please renew and help support or program!