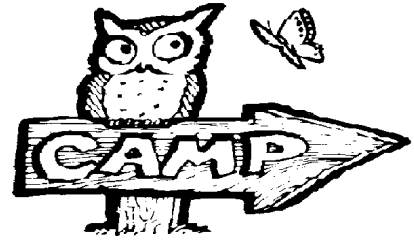


# Japanese Immersion Spring 2006



## WATJ Teacher Report:

March 31<sup>st</sup> –April 1<sup>st</sup> was our 7<sup>th</sup> **Japanese Total Immersion Camp** at Camp Don Bosco. About **100 students** participated from **17 high schools** plus **20 Japanese TAs**. We even saw sunshine during the camp! I lost my voice from cheering too much during our Undookai (sports competition) but had a great time! We had three levels of classes, including: shopping, visitation and telephoning. Consul General of Japan, Kazuo Tanaka paid us a visit and gave an opening speech for us. We again had the high school taiko group, Kaze Daiko, for our evening entertainment. It was overall a well organized, fun event for all who participated.

**Chikako Misener**  
Bothell High School  
WATJ Board



## Student Report:

From March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup>, I participated in the Japanese Language Immersion camp, run by the Washington Association of Teachers of Japanese. I and four other students went to Camp Don Bosco to spend a day and a half **entirely English-free**. During that time, we attended Language classes, learned about Japanese culture, and made friends with other Japanese students. I had signed up a couple of months before to attend this camp, but as it drew nearer, I was having second thoughts, because I had already missed a great deal of school in the month of March. However, this was an incredibly rewarding experience.

While at the camp, I interacted with various Japanese teachers and students. Talking with native speakers and participating in cultural classes helped me to better understand the Japanese point of view. I learned about the great emphasis the Japanese put on one's own "group" and playing koto and creating ikebana gave me a greater appreciation of the Japanese ideas of beauty.

This experience emphasized both how much about Japanese culture and language I knew and didn't know. I found myself able to understand more than I'd expected I would, but also found out how much more there is for me to learn in terms of the language. Additionally, there were some aspects of culture that I had known about, such as rajio taiso, but others I encountered for the first time. It was gratifying to learn so much about the culture which is part of my heritage and that I have been out of touch with for most of my life.

I would definitely recommend this camp to any Japanese student of level two and above. It is a wonderful experience, but you can only make the most of it if you have some idea of what is happening. I think that last year I would not have been able to make very much of this experience, but as a second-year student, **I was able to learn a great deal.**

**Rachel Chin**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student

Issaquah High School  
Teacher: Tammy Haldeman





# Japanese Immersion Camp

by Dana Niebalski

Tammy Haldeman's student, Issaquah High School

*Photos courtesy of Momoko Fuji, Naomi Kato, Chikako Misener, Gyoko Weeks, Toyo Nakayama*



**Date:** March 31- April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006

**Location:** Camp Don Bosco

## The Arrival:

We (Emily, Rachel Chin, Rachel Fukuda, Gracie, and myself) arrived at the camp at around 8:30 am on Friday, March 31st. Nervous as ever, we walked across the slightly muddy grass field from the tiny strip of a parking lot to the crowded entranceway to the Thunderbird Room (the taiikukan). Harboring all of my things in my arms, I approached the front desk, gave my name to the woman attending it and received a packet with my name on it and a t-shirt with a cute design on it. Thanking her in Japanese, I squeezed through the line of people to an open space near the side and slipped on the nametag that I found in the packet. Meeting up with everyone else from my group, we all went over to our assigned room; Apartment 2, Room 202. Setting all of our items down on our beds, we turned to look at each other. When we checked in, we left English at the door. Conversing lightly in Japanese, we made our way back out the door and to the taiikukan.

After the introduction to the camp by the camp director, we were made familiar with all of the various senseis, including their group colors. Looking down at our nametags, we found that a little colored square in the upper right corner assigned us to one of seven different colored groups. The five of us were split into three separate colors.



Excited to have the camp officially begun, we made our way to our first class.

## Language Class:



Meeting with our specific group (I was in the blue group), we went through an introduction in which we got to know a bit about each other, then we proceeded to learn about various things, mainly counters. Using giant flashcards with pictures on them, we were quized by the sensei and had fun getting to know some of the other people in the group. We even did a game to see in a battle of "who can say the counter for an item the fastest", who could beat five different people in a row. I managed to beat four, and was feared by all... Until Charlie came around. The young man from Liberty High School managed to ruin my winning streak both times we



were put up against each other. He ended up being the only one of the group to beat five consecutive people and given the right to yell “Banzai!” while pumping both arms jubilantly into the air.

Moving on from there, we proceeded to further our knowledge of how to handle buying things from a store. Having been handed a sheet of paper with a variety of items, corresponding shops, and unit numbers, we made our way outside to the other side of the camp so we could go through varying stations (the separate shops) and ask for a certain amount of a certain something. We were then given a piece of paper with a picture of whatever it was we “bought” as proof of our amazing capabilities to be a proper consumer in another country. This brought about the main problem of the simulation- considering we were given no money (fake or real), the main thing that was forgotten by all of the language students wandering with varying degrees of aimlessness from station to station was to actually mime handing over the money for these pieces of paper. The three thousand yen’s worth of high quality air was almost always forgotten by the buyer. A minor issue in a simulation, though carrying this over to a more real situation could bring about great consequences...



Overall, the language classes (though easy for me given I had already covered this material in school), were a fun experience. I mean, we even got to spend fake yen to get two very real items brought by other kids from other schools and I was able to wake away with a box of Pocky and a Japanese knot template (brought by Emily, oddly enough). It was a time to get to know the people of my group better and to laugh and have fun.

### Culture Classes:



**Koto:** Koto, a Japanese instrument is kind of like an elongated, skinny harp with only thirteen strings but that very distinctly Japanese sound. The koto is to Japan as the didjeridu is to Australia. You hear that sound, and you can automatically associate it to the country of origin. In this class, we got the chance to play two very fun songs, the first of which being very very easy, and the second one being hard enough that I wanted to pull my hair out using a pair of rusty pliers. Yes, it was difficult and slightly frustrating, but it was fun beyond belief. The best part of it was watching Brian, a young student of koto who has been playing for a very long, long, time, play two songs for us. Just playing the easy little pieces that we had was nothing... It’s when you see someone like Brian play that you get really caught up in an instrument like the koto. His fingers were flying effortlessly across the strings, plucking out complex, tangles of notes, each one crystal clear and attention grabbing. Given another opportunity, I would definitely love to learn how to play the koto like that.



**Kirie:** Kirie (a sort of paper cutting art) is tedious, painfully slow, painful in general, and tests every ounce of your concentration and patience. It is a wonder how it is so much fun and so addicting. Hunched over a table with several sheets of paper and scraps scattered before me, I slaved away at

cutting precise lines around the white area of a design template with an x-acto knife. My fingers were cramping, my neck felt like I would never be able to straighten it again, and my back felt like it was going to stay like that permanently, and yet I couldn't get enough of it! The finished product is pure beauty (given that you took the time to do a good job) and is well worth the effort. I was very reluctant to return my knife and pack my stuff away, both the finished and in-progress works. In other words, I can't wait to go out and get my own x-acto knife so I can finish what I started in that hour and forty-five minute long class that seemed to fly by way too fast.



### Taiko Drummers:



This one is pretty much self-explanatory. It's one thing to watch Taiko drummers on TV, but to see their performances in person, up close and personal, feeling the vibrations fly through the wood around and below you, slithering throughout your body, is a whole other story. It's just purely amazing. Now, I had an absolute blast at this camp, but this performance was something else... If I were to forget everything but one aspect of this camp, the one thing that I would remember would definitely be that performance. No words can be summoned up to try to explain it.

### Evening Activities:



We were given four separate options of classes to sign up for which would take place after dinner, and after the entertainment provided by the Taiko drummers and the teachers. Gracie, Emily, and I all signed up for Wagashi (a type of Japanese dessert). We all made our way to the kitchen and had fun making tiny little white balls of dough (about half the size of a ping pong ball) with seventeen other people. After we had all of the little buggers shaped, I dropped them in one by one to a pot of boiling hot water and waited for them to float to the top to tell me they were done cooking. After all of them jumped to the surface for a breather, I scooped them up with a spoon and plopped them down on a plate. We then made our way into the neighbouring room and rolled them in a special powder mixture that was half brown-ish seasoning stuff and half pure sugar. Then (the best part of all of this), we got to eat them! Very, very yummy. This is the kind of stuff that happens all the time at this camp and brings me to my next point.

### Meals:



would draw

All I can say about this is that the food here was soooooo good. I'm talking the best curry rice I've ever had (dinner), a bowl of miso soup, rice with furikawa, scrambled eggs with ham (breakfast), and yakisoba (lunch). We even got to go back for seconds! And thirds!

When entering the cafeteria for a meal time, we would draw a card with a number on one side and a kanji on the other from a basket and go sit at the table with the corresponding number. Each table would also have about two teachers sitting at it, which helped so much in terms of communicating a bit while sitting at the tables. The teachers would help everyone get talking



and definitely heightened the comfort levels. Then, after each meal, they would have prizes that they would hand out. To hand them out, they had another basket with all of the same kanji/number cards as the first one did and pick one of them out at random. If your table number and kanji was picked, you got the prize! The prizes all varied but were always interesting.

The meals were generally some of my favorite parts of the camp.

### The Cabins:



Night-time was a lot of fun and the feeling of having spoken only Japanese for an entire day was a great feeling. We had fun conversing about the day, laughing at some new inside jokes, creating interesting phrases that were most likely not grammatically correct, but still made sense to each other and gave us something to laugh at. We also had fun talking with the teachers, and sharing stories. Then, it was lights out at 10:30. But man, was that so much fun. We were worn out by that time though. Both physically and mentally. Physically worn from a whole day of activity after activity (all of which were interesting and very very fun), and mentally worn from having been completely surrounded with Japanese for the whole day. It was taxing to not be able to resort to English to further a conversation or a point, but it was worth it. It was a lot of fun and a great experience.

Our time in the cabin was our time to wind-down, our time to relax, and our time to just hang out. Grateful to finally climb into our sleeping bags to fall asleep, we bid each other good night and drifted off to sleep.



In the morning, we were woken up at 7:00 am sharp by our very enthusiastic teacher (Haldeman sensei), and I rolled over to look right up at a camera lens. Looking back on it now, I know that I should have expected something like that. Not exactly what one wishes to wake up to in the morning, but something that for sure wakes you up and gives you something to laugh and smile about.

After rolling reluctantly out of bed, it was time to clean up the cabin a bit and evacuate our things to the front of the taiikukan.

### Undoukai:



One of the things that we did towards the end of the camp was a series of games set up to be a competition between the different color groups. A three-legged relay race, a spoon relay (carrying a ping pong ball the whole time), a relay in



which they had to run up to a bowl of flour one at a time and grab a piece of candy in their mouths, a relay in which they had to wear these funky Japanese style shoes that were made for three people to wear them at once and have to move simultaneously, and a tug of war contest.

Throughout all of these games we got to hear the fun cheers that each group came up with to help motivate their group members to go faster or to pull harder. Decked out in paper in our group colors, we did our best to be able to say that our group was truly number one.



## Closing Ceremony:



Throughout the camp, teachers would give out red ticket stubs to kids who were either speaking good Japanese or making a great effort. Then, after each meal, a basket would be sent around for everyone to put in their ticket stubs (with their names on them, of course) and all of the stubs were dumped into a big green box. At the very end, this box was used for a prize drawing and many people won fun little things. We were also handed certificates proving that we had gone to and survived Japanese Immersion Camp. These certificates are especially fun because no one else at home or who comes to visit would be able to read a single word of it.

## Overall Summary:



This camp was way beyond fun. I can't even begin to explain how good of a time that I had and I urge all Japanese language students who are given the opportunity to go should take advantage of it. It may seem really hard in concept, speaking in only Japanese for two days, but when you get there, you realize that it's really not as hard as it seems. Just don't be afraid to make mistakes- everyone there makes them and everyone is fine with it because the entire purpose of that camp is to familiarize you with the Japanese language, and one of the ways to do that is by learning from your mistakes.

All of the teachers are extremely nice, the other kids are fun to be around, all of the classes are interesting and very entertaining, and the stories you gain from having gone will last a long time. This experience is unique and one that you shouldn't pass up. I didn't go last year when I had the chance and I'm very angry for having not done it. I had a blast this year, and so did everyone else that I talked to about it.

**Out of 10: this camp is most definitely an 11!**



**PLAN AHEAD!**

**Next year's  
Japanese Immersion Camp  
March 23 - 24, 2007**



**Questions?**

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