

## A Message from the President

With the warm days hinting of summer, the flowers are blooming profusely and my students' minds are wandering. It is a wonderful time of the year, isn't it!!

I want to thank you for continuing as a member of WATJ through this academic year. We have had a great conference, the Immersion Camp for High schools students was a wonderful success. Just this past Friday the HBCC Speech and Skit Conference filled the Highline Performing Arts Center with high schools students. In each of our classrooms we have seen students become more skillful in the use of the Japanese language and deepen their interest in the culture of Japan. Even though there are still several weeks remaining to the school year, I have lots of great memories to wrap it up with. I hope it is similar with you as well.

The next General Meeting will be Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup> at Roosevelt High School in north Seattle from 10 am-12:30 pm. Please plan to participate in a Professional Development workshop at the meeting lead by Professor Masashi Kato of the University of Washington's Technical Japanese program. Many of you will remember Professor Kato's excellent workshop at the February Conference. Details will come out in an email.

As well, this is the time of the year for our association to elect new officers. Motoko Hayashi has served faithfully as Treasurer for three years. As well, Aki Stevenson has served wonderfully as Vice President since last summer, but she will be going out of the area with her husband next year, so we need to elect new people to these positions. Please consider joining the Board of WATJ as an officer.

I want to extend my appreciation to all of you for the stimulating experiences and the privilege to serve this association. I believe that there is a vital role for our profession to serve families and young people in the State of Washington in the coming years. I look forward to it with great anticipation.

*Kurt Thompson, President*

*Arigato! WATJ would like to thank HBCC for another great speech and skit contest! What a great job on the part of all of the organizers, sponsors and participants!*

## Speech & Skit Contest

My Experience at the Speech and Skit Contest  
-Laura Melfi , The Overlake School

Walking out onto the stage this year was definitely one of the most nerve-wrecking moments of my life. I would be last—not just last in my division, but dead last in the competition. Arriving at 9:15 am in the morning, I practiced and practiced my speech all the way up until the last moment, only taking breaks for lunch and drinks. After making it to the loading dock backstage, all the butterflies I had been avoiding rained down on me like a storm. Being at Benaroya Hall this time made my nerves jump a foot higher; the stage lights were brighter, the audience was larger, and the podium was shorter. I knew walking out on stage that above all, my mission was to get across the message of my speech to the audience, so after shakily raising the height of the podium, I greeted everybody and commenced my speech with energy and earnest.

Although I did shortly blank out in the middle of my speech, I remembered that as long as I communicated my message effectively I would succeed. Communication is—to me—the be-all and end-all of learning a language. Apparently, in answering the question the head judge asked me, I did make a grammar mistake or two, but I believe that through my trip-ups and incorrect word choices I was still able to say what I wanted to, and I think that the ability to “generally” communicate pulled me through my time in the hot seat.

I am a big supporter of the HBCC Speech and Skit Contest for the simple reason that it promotes the communication of ideas and the expressing of opinions. Through preparation, foresight, and insight, participators in this event gain not only a boost of self-confidence, but they gain the power to express their opinions across cultures in an exciting, supportive environment. My experience this year proved to me that I could express myself in a different language and still be myself; I can communicate my feelings and beliefs to even a panel of professors and judges and still be understood. After participating in this contest, my confidence in expressing myself has grown like a beanstalk, and I feel like many other competitors had the same experience after the event as well. I highly recommend going through this experience to anybody; whether the prizes, the experience, or the excitement of creating the speech/skit itself intrigues you, or even if you are just a bit curious about trying it out for fun, it is truly a worthwhile event. Hopefully this contest will continue running for decades to come, and maybe one day I will become involved in the production of this very important cultural exchange.

### IN THIS ISSUE....

**CONFERENCE REPORT.....P.2**

**CAMP REPORT.....P.3**

### **WATJ Annual Conference report by Laurie Pruden Sensei**

The Washington Association of Japanese Teachers (WATJ) held its twelfth annual conference at University Prep on March 5<sup>th</sup>. The theme of the conference was “Motivating Your Students to Use the Target Language in Class, and featured keynote speaker, Mikako West, a master teacher at Milwaukie High School in Oregon. Other teacher-lead workshops included “How Students Can Receive UW credit in High School,” led by Chikako Misener, “Eight Things I Wish I Had Known When I Was a New Teacher,” by Motoko Hayashi, and an idea share session, “Spice up Your Japanese Class,” by Aki Stevenson. In addition, high school counselor Daniel Naegeli addressed a group of teachers on the topic of promoting one’s language program.

West-sensei’s keynote presentation included an explanation of Multiple Intelligences, theoretical foundation of her teaching, a description of a number of teaching strategies based on those theories, and a chance for the participants to experience these strategies first hand. Those in attendance left with a packet full of practical ideas they could use in the classroom.

Other presentations also featured useful information. Hayashi-sensei stressed the importance of making activities relevant to students’ lives, by utilizing meaningful communicative activities and creating a positive “weather” in the classroom. Participants who attended the presentation on UW credit noted that the procedure didn’t seem as difficult as they had imagined. One attendee at the idea share wrote that she wished the ideas were expanded into a longer lecture. Daniel Naegeli encouraged teachers to communicate with counselors about their programs. If one’s program has a high success rate with at-risk kids, the teacher should let the counselors know. At his school teachers may check in during the registration process to see that students have registered properly. The participants left the conference energized and enthusiastic, as they returned to their classrooms.

### **Japanese Teacher Training Institute - Financial Support Available**

An intensive training program in teaching Japanese will be held this summer at Portland State University in Oregon. The Japanese Teacher Training Institute is an intensive course for current teachers of Japanese or those who plan to enter the field. The program provides the foundation for a future instructor to teach Japanese and gives substantial tools to current teachers of Japanese to reinforce and strengthen their programs. Effective methodology in teaching Japanese to North Americans is emphasized over a theoretical analysis of the Japanese language

8 Week Program: June 20 - August 12, 2005

4 Week Program: June 20 - July 15, 2005

<http://www.eastasia.org/jtti.htm>

Limited financial support is available on a competitive basis. Please see the webpage for more information.

The program is administered by the Alliance for Language Learning and Educational Exchange (ALLEX) with Portland State University.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Information regarding the Japanese AP program training is available at <http://apps.apcentral.collegeboard.com>

Beginning Fall 2005, [Carnegie Mellon CyLab](#), in collaboration with Hyogo Prefectural Government, will offer a **Master of Science in Information Technology - Information Security Track (MSIT-IS)** in

InterCom is a free email information service provided by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon. By signing up for this personalized email service, you will receive a weekly customized digest of information tailored to your specific interests (e.g. French curriculum or job interests at the high school level). I encourage you to sign up for this weekly information service at <http://casls.uoregon.edu/intercom.php> today.

## **GENERAL MEETING REMINDER.....**

**Join us Saturday, June 6 from 10am-1pm  
at Roosevelt H.S.**

**Professor Kato will provide another great professional development class after business. Clock hours will be available.**

## ***STUDENTS REPORT ON THE ANNUAL IMMERSION CAMP.....***

### ***Taiko, Koto, and Beyond by Vera Zharinov***

When the six Japanese students left Bainbridge High School on Friday March 25<sup>th</sup>, the overwhelming consensus was that, because they understood so little Japanese, silence would inevitably be the only option for a weekend of Japanese immersion camp.

However, the kind, supportive, and understanding teachers and teacher's assistants made the weekend not only enjoyable, but also a learning experience. The fun-loving staff encouraged the students to try their hardest, even if they made a few mistakes, and to not take them too seriously.

Everyone was assured of a good time with a Taiko drumming performance, staff skit, early morning calisthenics, and a whole camp-wide field day with contests galore. Even the food showed their dedication to the students, as it was wonderfully prepared with plenty to go around for second helpings or more, if anyone was hungry enough.

Many different classes were offered, based on both cultural and modern Japanese themes, such as basic martial arts, flower arranging, song and dance, calligraphy, Koto (a traditional stringed instrument), and, most importantly, a respect for the depth of a culture that is vastly different from our own.

Classes were offered that were similar to a regular classroom setting and which worked to teach a new skill essential to everyday life in Japan. These classes were Shopping, Visitation, and Phone Conversation. As a result of the language classes and the no English rule, every student learned something new and improved their conversational Japanese.

Prized were awarded for exceptional behavior, language ability, or just not giving up and the punishment for speaking English was to make a formal apology (in Japanese, of course) to all the students, teachers, and staff, for letting themselves, and letting everyone else down. No one purposefully spoke English, but sometimes a word or two slipped out unknowingly.

Overall, the camp was a fun learning experience for all the students, who were studying Japanese who want to improve their language skills, to just have fun with friends, and maybe make some new ones. The classes offered new experiences and the chance to advance students' understanding of the Japanese language and culture.

The Japanese Immersion camp was a blast. The activities were all super fun and I was assigned such a wonderful, cheerful teacher. I learned quite a bit and enjoyed doing it.

I remember being awed by the **TAIKO** (Japanese drumming) performance, learning a bit of Japanese sign language that went along with a catchy Japanese song and being taught kendo (Japanese swordsmanship). I even volunteered to get dressed up in the cool traditional kendo outfit to attempt sparring with one of the instructors.

But the most fun activity was to be saved for last. On the final day, everyone gathered in the mess hall for a huge tournament! Everyone had been separated into color teams on the first day (I was in team orange), and now the teams were going up against each other. There was tug-a-war, the ball and spoon race, best team cheer competition, the 'four people on one pair of extremely large sandals' race, and my personal favorite, the **CANDY RACE!**

The candy race is a relay race where each member participating has to sprint across the room, shove their face into a tray full of powdered sugar with their hands behind their backs and pull out a piece of candy with their mouths then sprint back and tag the next person in line. It was delicious!

The meals were great, and every mealtime, there would be a random drawing to win prizes! And you meet some of the most wonderful people at the camp. I'm still friends with some of the people I met there.

But of course, the whole reason to go is to be submersed in the language 24/7, which, though it was difficult, wasn't as difficult as I thought. It gets you so much more used to, and comfortable with the language. Like I said, I had a blast and I can't WAIT for next year. I would most definitely recommend this to anyone even mildly interested. Hope to see you there.

By typical high school student: Laura Franke



## Japanese Speech and Skit Contest

by Leon Zhao / Ninth Grade Student / Liberty High School

*"I have done my best and I have no regrets" (William Hung).*

Experience is what makes one successful. This is the reason why I participated in the Washington State Japanese Speech Contest in April. When I first heard news of the contest, I did not hesitate for a second to think about participating or not. Although I lost, I have no regrets because this experience was the most memorable experience I have had in my life so far.

Before going to the Washington State Japanese Speech Contest, I first had to win the Liberty High School contest. I wrote my speech, memorized it and my teacher taped it. I was a winner! As soon as I learned I was going on to "state", I began revising my speech to make it better. During this time, a very helpful volunteer was invited to assist the winners. Her name is Yoshino-san. Yoshino-san was a great teacher. She helped me improve my speech and pull all the elements together. Yoshino-san knew all about us: our weaknesses, strengths, and what we needed to improve on. She was just like another *sensei* to us.

April 1, 2005: the Japanese Speech Contest. Everyone dressed up and looked great. First we registered, and then quickly went inside the hall to find the best seats. I looked around. I saw my name. There was a piece of paper attached to a seat in Benaroya Hall that said, "This seat is reserved for Leon Zhao". From that moment on, I knew I was already a winner. I've always thought that if I had a reserved seat in a place like Benaroya Hall, I was considered a successful student.

The contest began. The skit performances went first. Every skit was very professional and humorous. This made us feel more relaxed, but once the skit competition ended, it was our turn. I glanced at the order of who was going first. I found out that there were a total of 13 contestants for 2<sup>nd</sup> year Japanese. I said to myself, "Although I might not win and get a prize, I will still do my best".

Finally, the host called my name and told me to get ready. I stood up and walked down the long, dark hallway that led to the back of the stage. The hall frightened me a little. Then I stood near the entrance to the stage. I was shaking. I held my paper and tried to recite my speech the best I could. Suddenly, I heard my name. I knew it was my turn to perform, and I went on. I suddenly felt less nervous and I even felt very comfortable. I walked to the microphone waiting for me. I bowed, and then I began my show.

I had imagined that the stage would be the scariest place to be, but I was wrong. The scariest place was backstage. Backstage is dark and quiet. The hall that led to the back stage was unfamiliar and gloomy. I felt like I was lost. However, when I walked onto the stage, I felt a kind of brightness that lightened everything in me. I felt like the whole stage was mine and I was the owner of it at that time. When I was reciting my speech, the spotlight on the ceiling shined on me, causing me to become blind. Although I was blind, I could still see Yoshino-san, Murakami-sensei, my family, and the other contestants from Liberty High School.

Once I finished my speech, I went back down and sat down. I was calm now; much calmer than when on stage. I started to think who I would say thank you to if I won. I told myself to thank Yoshino-san first. Although I was ready and knew who I was going to thank, I knew I wouldn't go on stage again.

This experience was the best I've ever had. If I have a chance, I will go again. I'll also tell more people to try. If a person is brave enough to stand on stage and make a speech, then that person is a winner. Failure is the beginning of success. I will try again and I believe that someday, I will be the champion.

*~Special Thanks to Yoshino-san and Mrs. Murakami~*

## GENERAL MEETING

### REMINDER

Saturday, June 4

10 AM

Roosevelt High School

*Professional Development (clock hours available) with Professor Kato!*



### A Smooth Translation

by Christopher Chan,  
O'Dea High School

We stepped outside the Shibuya station only to find ourselves amidst a plethora of pedestrian traffic. As far as the eye could see was human congestion, heads, bobbing up and down all the way to the horizon while giant advertising screens lit the street and loudspeakers blasted music to accompany the ads. Students and young professionals flocked around Hachiko statue while commuters whisked in and out of the train terminal. We were in Japan.

We arrived in Tokyo strangers to a foreign land. After studying Japanese for three and a half years, I figured I knew enough Japanese to be able to explain what kind of meal I wanted on the airplane. But after five minutes in the airport, it became painfully apparent; I needed to brush up, and fast.

As Americans, our history only extends a few hundred years. Coming from Seattle, a young city in a young country, I was astonished to see the flagrant juxtaposition of ancient and modern. High-rises with bright, flickering signs tower above aged temples. In busy back alleys, alongside

noisy pachinko arcades and video games, are tiny shrines. The Japanese live every day in touch with their heritage because they have the artifacts of it in front of them. We had the opportunity to live life in a Japanese person shoes, trying the onsen, eating teppan-yaki, kaiten-sushi and buying ice cream out of a vending machine.

We saw the sights of Japan: The Tokyo Tower, the Kannon Temple, the Osaka Castle, the Kinkakuji, and the Imperial Palace. We took pictures. But the most intense and memorable experience wasn't seeing the places pictured in postcards; the most cathartic moments happened each time we had the chance to meet a Japanese person and converse with them completely in Japanese. We met dozens of people from all walks of life in Japan; fashionable kids in Harajuku, practitioners of the ancient tea ceremony, teachers, and college students. The most memorable conversation, however, was with our taxi driver. After a twenty-minute long conversation about Ichiro and fugu fish, I basically learned the ins and outs of plain form (the casual style of Japanese speech). He gave some good parting advice: "Try karaoke. I love Avril Lavigne," he said.

The only thing that was more surreal than our trip to Japan was our return back to Seattle. I left for Asia still unclear about my future. On the plane ride home, I realized what I actually want to do in college. In seeing just how different a foreign country can be, but seeing how much alike its inhabitants can be, I have decided to study linguistics. People of the world really aren't all that different. If I can learn the languages of the world, I can be a link between people who would normally never know each other. Banzai!