

**Autumn 2001**

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# CJST Quarterly

The Canada-Japan Society of Toronto

## CJST celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary

*Over 100 members, dignitaries and guests attend party;  
many thanks to corporate donors for providing door prizes*

**BY JOHN E. LE BLANC  
CJST PRESIDENT**

On October 22, 2001 the CJST proudly celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the über-cool Steam Whistle Brewery. Attendees were treated to wonderful beer, great eats, and rousing speeches by CJST co-founders and past presidents paying tribute to an independent and thriving society. Highlights included a history lesson from the venerable Ted Goossen who reminded us why the CJST was formed and why it has succeeded in fulfilling its mandate to further Canadian-Japanese understanding. We were also honoured to have full house representation from the Consulate General of Japan, led by our new Consul General Mr. Takashi Koezuka along with Mrs. Reiko Koezuka.

I also made a brief speech, which I would like to paraphrase here because it encapsulates CJST's philosophy:

"Ladies and gentlemen, please raise your glasses for a toast to the CJST. For some seven years now, I have had the pride and privilege of being associated with an organization made up entirely of volunteers and members who share one common goal: to provide opportunities to enhance understanding of Japan, Canada and Canada-Japan relations. Not one of the CJST founders or directors has ever taken a dime for his or her efforts; our reward has been the continued pursuit of our goal, and we have succeeded. A toast to 20 more years!"

Cheers indeed. Thank you, everyone, for your continued interest, participation and support.

**Looking Forward:** Our next event will be the **Bonen-kai** (end-of-year party) to be held at **Sushi Bistro** on Thursday, December 13, 2001. Please see the enclosed flyer, and check [www.cjst.org](http://www.cjst.org) for any updates. The party will be a smashing combo of mingling, drinking, eating, and yes, karaoke silliness for those of you so inclined. (Personally, I would rather eat roofing nails than sing in front of fellow CJSTers, but that's only because my modesty strictly dictates that I remain an undiscovered talent.)

The festivities run from 7:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m... and into the wheel! hours, perhaps? This is an RSVP event so don't forget to call the CJST events hotline at 416-406-CJST (2578). This Bonen-kai will mark the celebratory end to a milestone year for our organization. I hope to see many of you there!

**PLEASE NOTE:** We will NOT be holding **Ichi-moku-kai** in December or January. Instead, come join the Bonen-kai event on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, and spend the first Thursday of January recovering from your New Year's debauchery. IMK will return with a vengeance in February – details forthcoming. ?

# ESSAY

## Tokyo Then and Now

*A Professor of Japanese Literature at York University reflects on the evolution of a city he has known and loved for over 30 years.*

**BY TED GOOSSEN**

Tokyo - a city defined by its perpetual destruction. Earthquake and fire have regularly turned swaths of the city to ashes since the Tokugawa period, which lasted from about 1600 to 1868. The city was called Edo then, the capital of the Shoguns, and for a time during the 18th century it was the most populous human settlement in the world, with over a million inhabitants. The worst calamity, however, was the earthquake of 1923, when over three-quarters of the city was burned. Then, twenty-two years later, Allied bombing burned half of it all down again. As a result of these conflagrations, little survives which can speak of Tokyo's past.

Yet the city flourishes, so that today over 30 million people dwell within a 30 mile radius of its centre. Although no big fires have raged since the B-29s departed, still the round of destruction continues. Buildings deemed too old to be efficient are routinely demolished to make way for new state-of-the-art incarnations. The first time I lived in Tokyo in 1968, they were just tearing down Frank Lloyd Wright's famous Imperial Hotel, to replace it with something more modern. Now that replacement too is gone. In fact, little of the Tokyo I knew in the late 1960s survives.

This continual change has led to some improvements. Pollution has been reduced: fish have returned to the Sumida River, which was an open sewer in the '60s, and there are many more days when the air is clear enough to see Mt. Fuji in the distance. Air-conditioning is a blessing in the city's sweltering summers. Enormous underground



malls and shopping centres have burrowed their way beneath the major train stations, which circle the downtown like ornaments on a necklace. Today's Tokyo is a glittering, diverting world.

Much has been lost too, however. Now university students and unmarried office workers live in tiny efficiency apartments, which offer more privacy, and less contact with other people, than did the dark rooming houses that were common in the '60s. Those had shared squat toilets and kitchens, neither of which were terribly hygienic, and everyone used the public bath down the street. The easy familiarity with bodies and their functions which characterized that era has been replaced by a discomfort so profound that today's sit-down toilets are equipped with button-activated recordings of flowing water, to cover the sounds of urination. Tokyo life is more antiseptic now, and, quite literally, more compartmentalized.

It is also far less in touch with the Japanese countryside, and with nature. Back in the '60s I can remember the streets emptying each August during Obon, the Festival of the Dead, when people returned to visit their grandparents in the country. Now that connection is largely severed. In the process, many long-held traditions - the religious belief that there are gods dwelling in the landscape, for example - have ceased to have any real meaning. To speak today to a young Tokyoite of Shinto gods is not all that different than speaking to a non-Japanese.

Are Tokyo and its inhabitants thus fated to sink meekly into an amnesiac bog of postmodern consumer culture? A decade ago, when the "Japanese miracle" was still in full

swing, I probably would have said 'Yes'. Until then, Japan had developed somewhat parallel to the West: the '60s was a time of student protests and social upheaval, while the '70s and '80s saw a steady rise in consumption, and a growing belief in the virtues of global capitalism. Now, in Japan, things have drastically changed. A string of traumas has shaken Japanese society to its very foundations: the death of the former Emperor, the Kobe earthquake, the deadly sarin gas attacks carried out by a large loony cult (the Aumu 'Pure Truth' sect) on Tokyo subways, and, most important, the collapse of the over-inflated "bubble economy." For the first time since the '60s, mainstream Japanese are questioning the educational and social structures that underlie the corporate mind-set which Tokyo, the home of the "salaryman", has come to represent.

Let me offer you two examples of how this is affecting Japanese culture. The first is taken from literature, my particular field. A decade ago, few if any would have predicted that novels about the War, especially Japan's bloody campaigns in Asia, would figure large today. Yet that is precisely what has happened. In fact I can recommend two notable examples -- Murakami Haruki's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* and Okuizumi Hikaru's *The Stones Cry Out* which are available in English. These can be

seen as new variations on themes and subject matter which were common in the '60s, but which few thought would ever reappear.

The second example is more anecdotal. On a recent trip to northern Japan, I happened across a group of young men and women from Tokyo who, like me, were taking in the lively summer festivals in the region. How did you make the time, I asked. Oh, they said, we just quit our jobs and took off. They invited me to the tent city they and others like them had pitched nearby. I felt a sudden wave of nostalgia when I entered, as if I had returned to the Tokyo I had known three decades before. The cramped quarters, the unhygienic bedrolls, the communal living, everything recalled those days. True, the people I met talked less of politics, and more of personal freedom, than would have been the case back then. Yet the feeling of rebellion, and the conviction that the existing system was bound to collapse, were the same.

The scene may have shifted, and the cast may be completely new, but the struggle is far from ended. ?

*This piece was originally written for a BBC Radio 3 program, broadcast January 22, 2001. Many thanks to Prof. Goossen for allowing us to feature his article in our newsletter.*

## Once a Gaijin...

### Handshakes

BY STUART CREEMORE

One thing I really liked about Japan was this business of not shaking hands. Giving one of those half-assed gaijin bows always felt so much better than reaching out and squeezing somebody's sweaty palm. It got me started thinking a lot more about germs too, with all those damn colds and flus going around, so it was a big relief not to have to touch anyone.

Then there's the question of washroom etiquette. I know I was brought up to always wash my

hands - with soap - after taking a leak, but I know there's a lot of guys who just do the old 'shake off the last few drops, stuff it back in, and walk out' without going near a sink. But to be honest, I think Japanese men are more likely to wash their hands after peeing than the average Canadian. Check the next time you stop at a Tim Hortons along the 401, and you'll see what I mean.

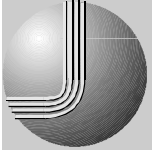
Anyway, what's bugging me now is that it seems more and more Japanese men are shaking hands these days - especially those over here in Canada. I guess it's because everyone thinks it's the proper thing to do, but damn it, I wish they could stick to being proper Japanese, and just bow!

There's always this awkward moment when you want to keep your hands at your sides and bow, but they're figuring you're just about to shove your hand towards them, so they try to be first so as not to

look rude. Once their hand is out, you can't just ignore it, and next thing you know, you're both shaking hands and wishing you weren't. It's like a gunfight in the Wild West, watching and waiting for the other guy to draw first.

Maybe we should start some sort of campaign to stop this before it's too late. Like maybe wear a "Down With Handshakes" button, with a pair of hands shaking and a red diagonal bar across them. Or maybe more of us should follow Michael Jackson's lead, and just refuse. You'd think with all these anthrax scares no one would want to get touched. I say it's time to put an end to this grubby old custom.

Next time you see me at Ichi-moku-kai you're welcome to buy me a beer - but don't expect a handshake in return. Especially if you're Japanese! No offence, eh. ?



## CJST's 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY: 1981 - 2001 GREETINGS FROM VETERAN CJST MEMBERS

### From a former CJST President...

We do have a lot to celebrate. The CJST is *the* place to meet people who share an intense interest in all things “Japan” and Canada’s relationship with Japan. The Society draws from a wide, cross-section of our community and includes many with significant expertise in their chosen fields of interest. As a former president, I would like to convey a sense of our organizational roots. In mentioning names – I hope to give some texture to the story – please see them as representative rather than particular.

There are three hallmarks of a vibrant “civil” organization such as the CJST: First, it thrives from year to year, albeit with some pauses and surges, drawing on an ever-changing constellation of volunteers. Secondly, interest and knowledge of members deepens as the Society evolves. And finally, it generates enough money internally, through memberships and admission fees, to cover its expenses. Independent; beholden to no one: a satisfying self-sufficiency. I believe that our strength and self-confidence is sustained by this independence.

Looking back we can see a number of waves or surges in the Society’s evolution. The founders – **Bob Ulmer, Bronwyn Best, Ted Goossen** and **Michael Donnelly** – were Japanese speakers who, for the most part, made a life study of Japan. The next wave was created by people who worked for Canadian and other companies in Japan during the 1980s and who craved the excitement and “pump” of meeting fellow returnees as well as Japanese business people on assignment here. The arrival of Japanese studying in Canada, both at high schools and universities, brought a flood of eager participants in the popular Ichi-moku-kai. The ever-growing number of Canadian students participating in the JET programs in Japan. The participation in the CJST of these returnees has widened the range of interests and the depth of Japanese experience amongst our members.

Successive Consuls General agreed to serve as honorary board members, and each made his own contribution to the Society – recognizing the vitality that such a grassroots society brings to bilateral relations. The sustained and reliable support for CJST events of the Consulate staff and of course, the Japan Foundation, has been invaluable for a volunteer-based organization such as ours.

Programming liveliness and relevance are what keeps motivating people to contribute their time to Board positions and organizing events. It has been ambitious in the extreme – exploring many different aspects of the Canada-Japan relationship as well as Japanese culture. The homegrown talent has been

considerable. Some of the many memorable events come to mind – from Alan Middleton’s much prized analyses of the humour and sophistication of Japanese advertising, to Ted Goossen’s literary events, to Hugh Wylie’s events on the visual arts and architecture. Margaret Buckworth and Fumiko Shiba are surely the longest serving organizers and supporter of CJST events, both business and cultural.

Stand-alone cultural events have been exceptionally popular but indescribably time-consuming and difficult to orchestrate. Over the past decade The Japan Foundation and the Consulate have taken the lead in this field, establishing a stunning presence in Toronto. We can make a contribution with joint events and a lively programme of our own. John Le Blanc led the way in the CJST’s participation in Access Japan. On the business side, exploring the rapid current evolution of Japanese business culture and corporate structure, might make for some topical business events.

Ah – it’s all very well for old-timers such as myself to dream up suggestions for other people to implement! Believe me, I recognize the Herculean effort for the individual organizers faced with so many other demands on their time. But it is worth it! *Ganbatte kudasai!* ?

-- **Margaret Comish-Kehoe**

### ... or, is it actually the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary?

According to **Bronwyn Best**, the Canada-Japan Society of Toronto actually began in 1980; she also remembers the CJST 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary party taking place at JCCC in 1990. She informs us that there were ten founding members, among which she can recall seven: herself, **Ted Goossen, Anthony Liliefeldt, Ken Richard, Charles Rummel, Susan Tsuji, and Bob Ulmer.**

The initial focus of CJST was strictly business-oriented (i.e., no cultural content), although none of the original members was a business person at the time. Bronwyn notes that it was **Gary Turner**, a CJST president with a business background, who introduced a cultural element into the organization.

Thanks to Bronwyn for providing the information.

### Note from London...

Happy 20th to the CJST.

I have had so much fun over the last eight years participating with the CJST both as a member and then as a board member. There is such a wealth of knowledge and creativity from both the Canada and Japan side that always makes participating in events so worthwhile ... and such a great time.

Congratulations to the original organizers as well as the current board for making sure that the vision to support great relations between Canada and Japan continue.

Cheers,  
**Ann Parkin**

# Restaurant Review

***Oishii-licious!***

## **Sushi Kaji**

860 The Queensway  
Etobicoke, ON M8Z1N7  
(416) 252-2166

Chef: Mitsuhiro Kaji  
Style: Japanese/sushi  
Major credit cards accepted  
(and you'll need them!)  
Dinner for two: \$200



### **REVIEWED BY**

**MARGARET BUCKWORTH AND ADRIENNE YOUNG**

Well! Margaret and Adrienne are somewhat astounded to report that we went to a place in Toronto where Fumiko Shiba didn't know anyone. If you know Fumiko, you know what a rarity that is. (Hint: If you don't know Fumiko you are not being invited to the right Japanese parties, and should have a heart-to-heart with whoever is organizing your social life.)

In retrospect, we are not entirely surprised that this place was new to Fumiko. You have to go to (practically) Winnipeg to find it. Sushi Kaji is a truly wondrous place, but its location is not such as would lead one to stumble across it on any normal jaunt about town. Kaji-sensei (whom we admire most devoutly for his ability as a chef) has done a truly impressive job of ferreting out the most loathsome location imaginable to any sushi eater with pretensions of trendiness. Tempo-dwellers, take note: Kaji is in Etobicoke. Past the food terminals. In a grey strip mall. On The Queensway, near Islington. This is a part of the city that is so unlovely that you'll never have to pay for parking. Ever.

It gets worse. The Kaji windows are curtained. If you are used to eating at Tempo, Bar Italia and such, it is downright... forbidding. If there was a designer involved in this restaurant, Kaji-sensei intimidated him into submission. The lighting is not amusing, or even flattering. We suspect it may be fluorescent. The walls are white. The tables are square. The music smacked of Muzak. (Sigh. We may speak rather ill of the trendy folk, but we do wish the music was at least a *little* more fun.) Further, the wait-staff are the epitome of non-cool. They are friendly

Japanese girls dressed in uniform (mompō, which I bet you don't ever want to own). And get this: they do a great job of serving. Which, if you eat a lot at places like Tempo, you may not know what to do with. They make an unobtrusive but serious job of providing great service. Sans attitude, sans spiffy College street clothes. Just lots of kindly thoughtfulness. Enough to make us suspicious that we were the recipients of preferential treatment, owing to being with Fumiko. Except that they hadn't met Fumiko. Which leads us to suspect that everyone gets treated this way. Ahhh... Can you tell we approve?

And as for the dinner itself... Well! It seems the whole Japanese community knows of Mitsuhiro Kaji. Some people say that Sushi Kaji won't last long because Kaji-sensei insists on giving people a little more than they ordered – not a wise practice, from the point of view of profitability. That was what happened to us, and oh, it was wonderful. So you can understand why, when we hear the name Kaji, we smile now contentedly and begin to dream... And, in case the rumour should be based on fact, we urge you to go to Kaji yourself. Soon.

Save your pennies first, though. Sushi Kaji is not cheap. The current Kaji menu has three set dinners to choose from: the sushi dinner (\$45.00), the chef dinner (\$65.00), and the Kaji dinner (\$85.00). Alternatively, you can order à la carte, but we thought the set dinners were wonderful so we wouldn't bother. Each set meal comes with a few nibbles of beautifully presented cooked food, then some sashimi, then a small main course (cooked again), then some fairly extraordinary sushi, then soba noodles (ours came in a lovely broth) and a handsomely presented dessert. Very kaiseki-ryori. You might want saké with your meal, or you might like beer. Kaji has both, but nothing you won't see elsewhere. So you might prefer just plain green tea.

Kaji-sensei has worked at Megumi, Ematei, and other such places in Toronto, training chefs as he moved from one to the other. And they should count themselves lucky, because this man knows his stuff. His knife work is gorgeous to watch, he's got great people skills (always key at a sushi counter), and he's clearly a perfectionist when it comes to the food he serves. So much so, and with such success that Adrienne (normally a squeamish eater) will henceforth eat *whatever* strange edible he plonks down on her table.

We had (gag) pork belly. It was delicious. We had squid sashimi. (Adrienne loathes squid.) It was extraordinary. We had something called filefish and another something called icefish. Adrienne looked them up later in her dictionary, and she couldn't find them. Adrienne usually will NOT eat anything that nobody has bothered to translate. The filefish and the icefish were sublime. We ate tsunahachi.

***(Review continued on Page 6)***

## Sushi Kaji (continued from Page 5)

Even Margaret's electronic dictionary couldn't translate that one. (Kaji-sensei tells us it's the "toro" of "hamachi".) It was glorious. There's lots more; we won't bore you with it, though. (You should plan on dinner lasting for about two hours, by the way. Ours took longer.) All you really need to know is that it was uniformly outstanding, and that if we tried to list the whole menu we would run out of superlatives.

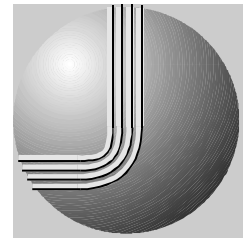
**Big tip:** If you don't speak Japanese, go with someone who does. Reserve at the eight-seat bar. Here you can watch Kaji-sensei at work with his knives and, if you are lucky he will tell you about the food you are eating. We learned many new Japanese and English words, referring largely to fish we haven't seen anywhere else nearby, and probably wouldn't see much of even in Japan. We also recommend that you take Fumiko, if you can. Watching her exclaim over and eat (very happily!) a five-inch fish head was almost as much fun as watching Kaji-sensei prepare his sashimi. (Adrienne's comment: Bleh! Yuck! Except that it was *delicious*...) Adrienne and Margaret agree that Fu-neko was most likely a very fastidious cat in her previous life.

**Overall Assessment:** We give this restaurant a **4-½ sushi rating**. Amazing food. Adrienne thinks this was one of the best dinners she's ever eaten. The half point is lost for location and background music. The prices are high but after you have eaten there you will understand and will be happy to pay. ?

## Door Prize Winners!

*The lucky recipients of door prizes at CJST's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event were:*

- ✂ **Bronwyn Best** (CJST Founder and Member): Japanese plate courtesy of JNTO
- ✂ **Margaret Buckworth** (Secretary, CJST Board of Directors): Cordless phone courtesy of Sanyo Canada Inc.
- ✂ **Erica Chicoy-Daban** (CJST Member): Royal Weekend for Two courtesy of King Edward Hotel
- ✂ **Don Christie** (Consulate General of Japan in Toronto): Infiniti desk clock courtesy of Nissan Canada
- ✂ **Chi Diep** (JETAA): Golf shirt courtesy of Rogers AT&T; pen courtesy of Omron Canada Inc.
- ✂ **Steve Fry** (CJST Member): Lamp courtesy of Green Tea Design
- ✂ **Craig Hancock** (Guest): Golf scope courtesy of Deloitte & Touche
- ✂ **James Heron** (Executive Director of JCCC and CJST member): Camera courtesy of Nikon Canada Inc.
- ✂ **Michael Infuso** (former CJST Member): Golf shirt courtesy of Rogers AT&T; pen courtesy of Omron Canada Inc.
- ✂ **Kanako Iwaki** (CJST Member): Evening for Two courtesy of Famous People Players
- ✂ **James Matsumoto** (CJST Member): Tiffany's crystal paperweight courtesy of Mitsui Canada
- ✂ **Tani Miki** (The Japan Foundation Toronto): Lexus watch courtesy of Toyota Canada
- ✂ **Michael Rajbar** (Webmaster, CJST Board of Directors): Waterford pen courtesy of Deloitte & Touche
- ✂ **Eiko Shaul** (Cultural Director, CJST Board of Directors): Calendar and book courtesy of Mitsubishi Canada Ltd.
- ✂ **Len Silverman** (CJST Member): DVD player courtesy of Hitachi Canada Ltd.
- ✂ **Darryl Young** (CJST Member): Tea for Two courtesy of King Edward Hotel



## CJST QUARTERLY

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We welcome comments, suggestions and contributions you may have on Japan and related topics for this publication.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not of the CJST or its Board of Directors.

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