

**Autumn 2003**

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# CJST Quarterly

The Canada-Japan Society of Toronto

## JAVA jive and JET fuel

*Don Christie works at the Japanese Consulate in Toronto as JET Coordinator, Culture and Education. He's also a JAVA pub night regular – after all, he helped start the organization.*

BY DON CHRISTIE

As an expatriate in Japan – and if you've been one you'll know – relationships with other gaijin happen spontaneously, based on the very simple notion that we aren't Japanese and so should commune in safe havens.

In-jokes among expats are easy to come by, like beginning every other sentence with, "Let's Enjoy \_\_\_\_\_!" We also knowingly got away with actions unacceptable from a Japanese person, such as exclaiming, "Gaijin power!" the same way a cartoon character might shout, "Wonder-twin powers activate!" Funny how easy it is to compare expats in Japan to cartoon characters.

I went to Japan on the JET Programme, which offers people from abroad work with local authorities in an effort to promote international co-operation and enhance foreign language education (e.g., "I'm fine thank you, and you?" and "Do you like my room?"). There are about 6,000 JET participants, the majority teaching at public schools in smaller cities and towns. My gig was in an *inaka* community with great people, an apartment surrounded by rice fields, a lot of attention from my neighbours, and an Irish pub just a short, one-hour train ride away.

For three years, the Celtic Heart Pub in Saga-shi became my place to be if there was an event to plan (with, say, the Kyushu Irish and Celtic Network), gossip to share (perhaps regarding what's new in the Saga All Gaikokujin Association), or to hear out the culture-shock woes of others and to be heard. I was grateful for the expat camaraderie and wisdom that filled this place.

When I returned to Toronto to work in the Japanese community, it was easy, as a recently "degaijinated" Torontonionian, (*continued next page*)

## JAVA jive and JET fuel *(continued from Page 1)*

to form friendships among those involved with the CJST, the JET Alumni Association (JETAA), and other groups. I met a lot of people in a very short period of time, as Access Japan 2000 was just about to get under way and little tsunamis of social activity burst out and about from my workplace.

Among those I met was Takeo Maekawa, formerly of Fujitsu and now with the Japanese Social Services (JSS). We spoke often, sharing stories about living abroad and experiencing various things. He knew of JET through his work with Crystal Whitney, who at about that time started work as a counsellor for the JSS, and through Shaney Crawford, who was then working at the Consulate. All three of us are former JETs.

Maekawa-san has extensive international experience and understands the importance of expatriate communities. Through his work with the JSS he'd met a lot of new Canadians, and noticed that younger, temporary Japanese residents in Toronto often fell through the cracks, struggling with life here on their own. Mr. Maekawa wanted to start a social circle that would see young Japanese in Toronto getting together occasionally, hopefully to create a network and knowledge base for mutual support. With a few select volunteers at the JSS who were interested in giving this a try, a first meeting was held in March 2001.

Everyone at that meeting was familiar with Mr. Maekawa's vision, and offered ideas, experience and, especially from a number of Japanese working holiday (*wa-hori*) folks there, energy. Thus formed the Japanese Visitors Association, better known as JAVA.

Here's how JAVA defines itself, according to its bilingual website:

*JAVA is a volunteer organization that seeks to improve the information resources available to Japanese people who are visiting the Toronto area. In particular, we are interested in helping working-holiday makers (people who have come to Canada with a working holiday visa), but we also welcome any kind of visitor to our group. We welcome anyone to our group - Japanese, Canadian, or other - who has an interest in promoting good relations and communication, and having fun!*

JAVA website (in Japanese and English):

[http://www.geocities.com/java\\_toronto/](http://www.geocities.com/java_toronto/)

JAVA's vision was to structure a network of peers, to let young Japanese visitors in Toronto share knowledge, build community memory, support each other and enhance the experience of living here. Those of us who had lived in Japan immediately sensed that the development of JAVA reflected our own expat-bonding experiences, and also provided us with a sense of what it might be like to experience Toronto as a visitor. All around there was a warm, fuzzy feeling of usefulness in the air, much like what Bronwyn Best, Ted Goossen and the other CJST founders say about the early CJST years.

Starting with just a few volunteers, we came up with a statement of purpose, plans to take on a few activities at the JCCC and downtown, and set off. Two-and-a-half years later, there are about 450 people receiving regular updates from the JAVA e-mail list, taking part in events, providing each other with a back-up sense of community, and getting involved in *(continued on Page 8)*

*BRAND NEW!*

## *Toronto Shumi no Kai:*

# Sake Society of Toronto

Membership to the newly-formed *Toronto Shumi no Kai*: The Sake Society of Toronto is open exclusively to current members in good standing of the Canada-Japan Society of Toronto (CJST) and/or the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC). All Sake Society members must pay a one-time initiation fee of **\$10.00**, payable to Ken Noma (see contact info below). Sponsored guests are welcome, but will be charged a slightly higher tasting levy.

The Society does not intend to limit itself simply to enjoying the spirits of Japan (although there are enough varieties of spirits to keep us busy for many lifetimes!).

## INAUGURAL EVENT

### Japan vs. Scotland: Single Malt Showdown

Wednesday, November 19, 2003  
7:00 p.m.  
Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre  
6 Garamond Court

***Admission price TBA***

*The Sake Society of Toronto pits Japanese single malt whiskey against Scotland's finest!*

*Last year, in a blind tasting organized by Whiskey Magazine, Nikka and Suntory single malts were ranked Number One and Two respectively against their formidable Scottish counterparts.*

*We hope to have the Nikka and Suntory brands, as well as some of the more famous single malts from Scotland, at the Society's inaugural event.*

- **Next Event:** A special pre-Christmas dinner & sake tasting is in the works; stay tuned.
- **Spring 2004:** Plans are also underway to organize a weekend wine tasting tour and luncheon of the Niagara Region.

**Contact:** Ken Noma <ikuei@sympatico.ca>  
32 Hollybrook Cres., North York, ON M2J 2H7  
416-493-2139

## CJST Board Musings

BY JOHN E. LE BLANC,  
CJST VICE PRESIDENT

**A**s I tap out this 'blurb' (as Christened by my editor), I glance over at my newspaper, which glumly reports on Baghdad, hurricanes, and kitten-eaters. Surely there must be something nicer to read first thing on a chilly autumn morning...ah, the Internet.

If you Google "Japan +culture +Toronto", the search results will include the "What's New?" page of the Japan Foundation Toronto website. This very fine organization is presenting an exhibition called *The Graphic Appetite: Shin Matsunaga Poster Exhibition* from October 30, 2003 to February 7, 2004, with a lecture/DVD presentation by the artist to be held on opening night. By now, I've completely forgotten about my morning paper.

Many of you may be familiar with the Japan Foundation. Have you been there lately? It's so easy to take wonderful things for granted until you really think about them – like I am today. When I say "take for granted" I don't mean it in a negative way. I mean that since I've become involved with the CJST, the Foundation has always been there as a fantastic and reliable source of information, art, and everything

## Been to the Japan Foundation Toronto lately?

else Japanese that a cultural Japanophile could ask for.

The Japan Foundation was founded in 1972 as a non-profit, special legal entity, in order to further international mutual understanding through the promotion of cultural exchange between Japan and other countries (in this case, Canada). The Foundation co-ordinates its operations through its headquarters in Tokyo, as well as through overseas offices designated as Japan Cultural Institutes, Japan Cultural Centres, Language Centres and liaison offices. The idea is that the Foundation administers a wide range of programs and establishes networks with affiliated cultural organizations and individuals – that's us, the CJST.

For those of you who have not yet visited (*for shame!*), the Japan Foundation Toronto's Yabu Pushelberg-designed facility includes a library, exhibition/auditorium space, and seminar rooms. The CJST has hosted countless events there over the years (including an AGM), and we often hold our regular board meetings in one of their boardrooms. We see ourselves as being a natural friend of the Foundation, as we share very common goals and, in fact, further the mandate of the Foundation (although we are not affiliated in any way).

The Japan Foundation and all of its affiliated foundations, cultural centres and liaison offices worldwide must cost the Japanese government a fortune to operate; the central website (<http://www.jpf.go.jp/>) states that "the Foundation operates on income from an endowment, annual grants from the Japanese government, and donations from the private sector." In times of fiscal difficulty (a 12-year understatement?), it must be extremely tempting for the Japanese government to make massive cuts to the budgets of such government supported entities. While I am certain that there have been substantial cuts, the level of expenditure must remain great. All the more reason to not take this awesome institution for granted.

Japan Foundation Toronto website:

<http://www.jfctor.org/>

Looking back at the "What's New?" section in the Toronto website, I see that I've missed some great-sounding events, such as the recent Kyogen (Japanese medieval comedy) theatrical lecture/demonstration by Kyogen Master Kaoru Matsumoto. I should (and you should, too) check out the upcoming Shin Matsunaga talk and exhibition. In case you're wondering, all lectures in Japanese feature an English interpreter. |

## INTRODUCING...

# The new members of the CJST Board

Chi Diep credits several members of the CJST Board of Directors - Margaret Buckworth, Adrienne Young and Fumiko Shiba - for her interest in joining the board. She became enticed to join after witnessing their dedication and contribution to the CJST, as well as enjoying their friendship.

Having spent two years on the JET Programme in Ibaraki (which she dreamily refers to as "natto heaven"), Chi cherishes some bizarre and unforgettable memories of her life in Japan. She hopes that being part of the CJST will allow her to continue and strengthen her ties with Nihon. Chi looks forward to working with the board folks, and contributing some fresh and unconventional ideas to the organization.

Ken Noma, a history teacher at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, is very active in the Japanese Canadian community. He was the Redress Subcommittee Chair of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, and is the past President of the Greater Toronto Chapter of the National Association of Japanese Canadians and the Hastings Park Foundation. Ken is the current President of the Ontario Kagoshima Kenjin-kai.

As a new CJST Director, as well as a member of the Heritage Committee of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Ken will be guiding the activities of the Sake Society of Toronto (see Page 3).

Annette Goulin has been a familiar face around Ichi-Moku-Kai and other CJST events since 1999 when she returned from three years of teaching and travelling in Japan and Asia. She now looks back fondly on her Tokyo life as the best years of her life so far. Annette's love of travel and cultures led to her current career in cross-cultural writing and research.

Look for Annette's occasional articles in the CJST newsletter, and introduce yourself at the next IMK. Annette credits Jeff Harju and Craig Martin for recruiting her to the CJST board, and hopes to contribute to upcoming event planning, including guest speakers and other Japan-related activities.

Don Waters is a lawyer at McMillan Binch LLP in the firm's Corporate Financial Services Group and is involved in McMillan Binch's Japan practice group. He previously worked from 1996 to 1997 at the law firm of Anderson Mori in Tokyo as a foreign legal intern. Don was previously in Japan from 1993 to 1994 as an English teacher in Shimodate, Ibaraki.

Don has been an active member of the Business Committee since he joined the CJST in 2000; he has helped organize CJST business events such as the Canada-Japan Free Trade Roundtable during Access Japan 2000, and the Bronwyn Best/Michael Donnelly talk at U of T earlier this year on the topic of corruption in Japan. Don is also CJST's new Treasurer.

### 2003 – 2004 CJST Board of Directors

Craig Martin, President  
Linda Adachi, Communications Director  
Ken Bole, Membership Director  
Margaret Buckworth, Director  
Chi Diep, Director  
Steve Fry, Webmaster  
Annette Goulin, Director

John E. Le Blanc, Vice President  
Jeff Harju, IMK Director  
Ken Noma, Director  
Fumiko Shiba, Director  
Robert Tran, Director  
Don Waters, Treasurer  
Adrienne Young, Secretary

# Restaurant Review

**Provides “eatertainment”, but not edamame**

## Benihana Japanese Steakhouse

Fairmont Royal York Hotel  
100 Front St. W., Toronto  
416-860-5002  
Open for dinner 7 days/week  
Open for lunch Mon - Fri

Chef: Does it matter?  
Reservations: Recommended  
Dress: “Smart casual”



**REVIEWED BY  
ANNETTE GOULIN AND JOHN E. LE BLANC**

### Annette said:

“What! You don’t have *edamame*?” were John’s first words after ordering his Sapporo (in a big can, *mochiron!*). “You know, the little green beans that go with beer...” his voice trailed off dejectedly.

This is how our dinner at the upscale Benihana Japanese (Steakhouse) Restaurant began. The lack of edamame was disappointing; however, overall, the dinner was a treat. Located on the lower level (shopping and dining arcade) of the Fairmont Royal York Hotel across from Union Station, Benihana is not new to the Toronto dining scene. It’s been open since 1973 and underwent a \$2.5 million renovation in 1998, when the establishment closed for six months.

After careful consideration (i.e., flipping a coin), John and I decided on a regular table, rather than a *teppanyaki* “cooking table,” or a stool at the sushi bar. We later realized that there are few “regular” tables, all located forlornly near the

door. Since the Benihana restaurant chain has built its “eatertainment” legend on teppanyaki-style grilling featuring the chefs’ food-juggling antics, the teppanyaki tables are clearly the choice for most patrons. In addition, there’s a large sushi bar, lounge/bar area, and smaller dining room for a private function. However, there isn’t a *tatami* room or any other traditional Japanese dining options.

The Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese chefs entertain diners with high flames, chopping ability, and stabbing of meat mid-air. Lots of oooh-ing and ahhh-ing was going on. The meat and seafood at the teppanyaki tables are cooked right in front of you and presented with flair.

The all-English two-page menu consists of numerous options for all appetites. Appetizers and soups – onion soup (apparently simmered for 12 hours), miso soup, tofu, salads, BC soft shell crab, and others - range from \$4.50 to \$12. We tried two, the flavourful and not-too-greasy shrimp and vegetable tempura, and the *hotate-gai* (deep fried scallops) which were similarly flavourful and non-greasy. “You can actually taste the scallops,” John marvelled.

The extensive list of sushi and sashimi may be ordered in sets or à la carte. The combo platters range in price from \$8.50 to \$34. We had the large *Matsu* sushi platter. It was beautifully presented and offered a good assortment of salmon, tuna, roe, and *maki* sushi. *Ikura* and *maguro* are my two favourites. The fish melted in my mouth and lived up to my high expectations.

I think the waitress was on to us (she saw me taking notes) and brought complimentary bowls of miso soup. It was very good. “I’m liking this...” nods John. The next section of the menu is the teppanyaki options - chicken, steak, and seafood meals ranging from \$12 to \$36 and served with soup, salad, shrimp appetizer, vegetable, and rice. Along with the chef’s show, it’s quite a treat.

Benihana’s desserts, ranging from \$6 to \$8, include ice creams (green tea, ginger, and *azuki*), a house-special mandarin orange cheesecake, and several other decadent treats. We had the rich and creamy green tea ice cream – another favourite of mine – complete with a tiny paper

umbrella that I swear I saw John put in his pocket.

The restaurant is large and comfortable, the food is tasty and well-presented, and the service is friendly and attentive. Even the rest rooms are clean and fully equipped. However, the large room lacks intimacy. There aren't any quiet date-type tables. And the prices tend to be high.

**John said:**

Okay, so Annette's version of our dinner is pretty much spot-on accurate; that little umbrella is sitting right here on my lap-top (my reasons are my own). But, after serving credit where it is due, I think it incumbent upon yours truly to add a little to the review.

While both Annette and I were pleasantly surprised by the quality of the food, the place itself was rather...well, let's just say that I could do a hell of a lot more with six months and \$2.5 million. Who carpets whole swaths of a restaurant with blue, gold, yellow and white koi-

pattern carpet? What kind of Japanese eatery has a Koala-Kare diaper changing table...in the men's room!? Don't know what kind? Well, I'll tell you: it's the kind of chain Japanese restaurant built to cater to the American tourist and the Japanese bus tour that dumps its unsuspecting

cargo at the Royal York (I will never use the "Fairmont" part, traditionalist that I am). And the service - well, if you don't mind that vapid fawning that tastes like saccharine and smells like a Glade product, then this is the place for you. I will take the condescension and abandonment of a French waiter any day over someone trying to play the role of

what they think a good Japanese server would play...if they were in fact Japanese, that is...

So, I'd give the joint 4 sets of chopsticks for food (I still rate Hiro at 5!), and a lowly 2 for atmosphere and service (it would have fallen to 1 if not for the delightful company of my co-reviewer). One final note: did I mention that they didn't have any edamame?! There was really no recovering from that.

**Benihana Trivia**

- ❶ Benihana Restaurants were founded in New York in 1964 by Rocky H. Aoki, who was once on the Japanese Olympic wrestling team.
- ❷ *Benihana* means red flower. Benihana Restaurants were named after the Tokyo coffee shop that Rocky's parents owned.
- ❸ Benihana owns 54 teppanyaki restaurants worldwide, plus 22 franchises currently open or under development.

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**WELCOME...**

**New CJST Members (from January 2003 onwards)**

Atiq Ahmed  
Chris Bernard  
Sonia Cardillo  
Safak Citftcioglu  
Tim Cornell  
John Denos  
Daniela Didiano

Namiko Hayashi  
Adam Keung  
Mack Kitagawa  
Reiko Kratky  
David Lim  
Milos Markovic  
Malyar Nahil  
Akemi Nishimura

Mariko Oka  
Yuki Sato  
David Simpson  
Katsuhiko Sumida  
Hitomi Toshida  
Tracey Wang  
Todd Wolfe & Seung-Joo Baik

## JAVA jive and JET fuel.... (continued from Page 2)

events happening around the GTA. The "staff" list includes about 35 folks, not all still in Toronto, but those who are extremely busy.

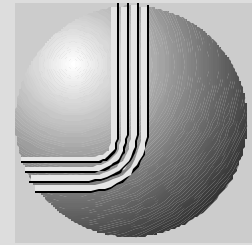
But back to the JET Programme (plug! plug! – we're recruiting soon)... JAVA has come to play a huge role alongside JETAA, with the two groups supporting each other's events. In three years, JAVA has progressed from having a few members help on the sidelines at the annual JET pre-departure orientation and training weekend, to co-presenting the event with several JAVA-run workshops and seminars to prepare Canadians for life as aliens. JAVA pub nights draw more than a hundred people every month, and swell to double that number in the spring and early summer with the fresh arrival of Japanese for the summer and the addition of new JET participants about to leave for Japan.

One new and exciting event marking the relationship between JET participants and JAVA members will be seen this fall. As part of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations, JETAA are spearheading a photo contest event that invites Canadians to submit photos of Japan, and Japanese to submit photos of Canada. This event was inspired by the relationship between JAVA and JET.

JETAA website:  
<http://toronto.jetaa.ca>

Closer to the CJST (I mean, this *is* your newsletter), IMK has become a regular second haunt for JAVA members. The opposite is also true, as CJST folks (including a number of board members) find themselves part of regular JAVA gatherings on the second Thursday night of each month.

I feel I should recognize JAVA volunteers individually when noting the success of this group, but given their numbers and how many have come and gone already, it's just not possible. I'll simply encourage CJST members to get to know them a little better when you get the chance. If you haven't had the opportunity to experience JAVA, I hope that will change. Visit their website and come out to a pub night. A word of advice from the already initiated: wear your dancing shoes and don't plan any meetings for the next morning. "Let's Enjoy JAVA!" |



### **CJST QUARTERLY**

**EDITOR:**

**Linda Adachi**

**CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:**

**Don Christie**

**Annette Goulin**

**John E. Le Blanc**

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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