



**MEJIRO
GAKUEN**

VOL.46

Mejiro Exchange

*Mejiro University (Undergraduate, Postgraduate)
Mejiro University College
Mejiro Kenshin Junior and Senior High School*

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DEC 2012

Ogilvie High School Visits Mejiro



**Posing for a group photo
outside of the school building**

In September 2012, 18 girls and 3 teachers from Ogilvie High School travelled to Japan for a sightseeing and cultural experience. The 18 girls have been studying Japanese for 4 years and were extremely excited to see the country they have been learning about and to practice their language. As inter-cultural communication is at the core of what we study, it is always a highlight for us to visit our Sister School, Mejiro Kenshin. Our students were thrilled at the opportunity to experience a Japanese school, and to try a variety of cultural experiences such as sushi making and Sado. They also loved the chance to experience English classes and the chance to practice communication with Mejiro students.

"I was so happily surprised when I saw how enthusiastic the Japanese students were at learning English." – Sarah Brazendale.

"We enjoyed the great tea experience and especially liked the chance to make it ourselves." – Ashlie Watson and Ashani Gunaseelan.

"I really enjoyed the Japanese traditional tea ceremony." – Jessica Hutchinson.

"I enjoyed making the sushi, it was fun and yummy." – Krystal Robins

"In English class we learnt new words and played games with the students, it was really fun." – Georgia Smith.

"The green tea ceremony was a new and interesting experience." – Courtney Chaplin

"I enjoyed playing games with the students and also making the sushi." – Saskia Heather.

We wish to thank the staff and students of Mejiro Kenshin for accommodating us again and we look forward to hosting them in Tasmania.

*Claire Rowe
Japanese Teacher, Ogilvie High School*

West Vancouver #45 School District Visit



**Ms. Smiley (second from left), Mr. Frankowski
(back), and Mr. Mukai (far right) with former
exchange students**

We were pleased to welcome Ms. Maureen Smiley and Mr. Michael Frankowski from the West Vancouver School District, as well as Mr. Moto Mukai from MYK Canada, to Mejiro Kenshin on November 19th. They were happy to be able to meet and have a chat in English with some of the Senior 3 students who have previously studied abroad at schools in West Vancouver. We hope they had a pleasant trip to Japan and Mejiro and look forward to seeing them again.

Harvard Students Visit Mejiro



With students from the Senior 3-6 class

On June 29th, five students from Harvard University visited Mejiro Kenshin Junior and Senior High School in response to a gracious invitation by Haruko Morimoto, head of the international education department at the school, and Harvard Graduate School of Education alumnus. The visit was organized with the goals of "giving students a chance to talk about school, life, and future goals with [the] Harvard guests in

hopes of them becoming inspired" as well as "to give [the] guests a chance to talk with Japanese students". The Harvard students spent time with two different English classes, which both began with introductions by a Mejiro student, followed by presentations and discussions led by the Harvard students. Each Harvard student gave a brief presentation on their life at the university, which was followed by a discussion about the academic and social aspects of both Harvard and Mejiro Kenshin with each group as they rotated around the room. Xiao Fu (class of 2013, government),

mentioned that some of the most common questions asked during this time were "Why did you want to go to Harvard?" and "How much time do you spend on homework?" although there were also entertaining questions as well, for example about favorite movie stars and boyfriends. Finally, the classroom visit culminated with the Harvard students offering short messages of advice and encouragement to the Mejiro Kenshin students.

With a lot of smiles and laughs during the visit, reflected in the final group photograph, both the American and Japanese students seemed to enjoy and learn from the cultural exchange. Tanya Avilova (class of 2013, economics) reflected, "I really liked hearing about the different varieties of clubs that students were involved in, from tea ceremony and traditional Japanese archery to lacrosse and hip hop dancing."

The Harvard students were very grateful for how warmly the faculty of Mejiro Kenshin welcomed them, as they were even provided with a delicious school lunch with the English teaching faculty. We hope Mejiro Kenshin students will continue to learn through international contexts and, in the words of Tanya Avilova, would "like to wish all of the Mejiro Kenshin students good luck in their future endeavors, and to remember to always do what you love, because then you will never feel like you are in the wrong place in life."

*Jeweliann Houlette
Class of 2014, English, Harvard University*

Encouraging Students to Study Abroad at the Toyosai Festival

Mejiro Kenshin opened its doors for two days in September for its annual Toyosai festival. The international exchange committee prepared a room with the help of the ESS club and the international culture club to showcase the exchange student program that has run so successfully year after year. The room was colorfully decorated with posters that exchange students had made about their trip abroad and you could see little souvenirs from countries such as Canada and Australia. Students who have come from other countries to study at Mejiro Kenshin also contributed their posters in English and Japanese. Other informative posters were also put up to give people an idea about what goes on in the exchange program. Flyers were available with more detailed information for those who showed an interest in taking part in the exchange student program and a special world map with the sister schools that Mejiro Kenshin is connected with were also given out. Guests were able to have their questions about the exchange program answered by those who participated in the program and many stayed to take

part in other activities as well. These two days during the festival were valuable to inform people about our exchange student program. The ESS club and the international culture club also worked together with the international exchange committee to make several special activities in the room. A little café was set up where guests could place an order in English and sit and enjoy a cool drink. People of all ages were able to make a bookmark with a variety of international flags, stickers and pictures. Many enjoyed an English word puzzle and were praised for answering all the questions. DVDs were shown all day and you could hear students discussing their English ability and saying they needed to study more. Teachers, staff, alumni, and students stopped by to see how things were going and chat with guests. It was a joy to have this time together to encourage international communication and understanding in our corner at the Toyosai festival.

Lorna Sachie Asami
Chair, PTA International Exchange Committee

Toyosai



Visitors enter the school gates

Our school holds its school festival, called Toyosai, once a year. At Toyosai, we share an enjoyable time with visitors and let them know about our school activities and traditions. Each class prepares either a refreshment booth or an exhibition presenting their work. In addition, clubs such as cheerleading, dance, wind ensemble, and sport clubs perform or do some activity to show guests what their clubs are about. They all work very hard to prepare for the festival. Each Toyosai has its own theme. The theme for this festival was "splendidness." The student council made a few changes to this year's festival to match this theme. They built a new signboard with an illustration of peacocks, a splendid Asian traditional bird. They also held a class T-shirt contest for the first time and put up more decorations than in previous festivals. Since this festival is held only once a year, all the students looked forward to this opportunity to exhibit the results of their hard work. I hope visitors enjoyed our school festival.

Sachi Arai
Senior 2

My First Towasai

My name is Meghan Strong and I am the new International Education Coordinator at Mejiro Gakuen. I took up my post at the beginning of October this year, so just three weeks into the job I was able to experience the yearly Towasai Festival which was held at the university on October 20th and 21st. The day before the festival students got a vacation from regularly scheduled classes in order to spend the day setting up and preparing for the event. Many student groups and clubs ran stalls at the festival selling various foods ranging from traditional Japanese festival foods such as okonomiyaki and takoyaki to ethnic foods from a variety of countries such as Korea, Thailand and Mexico. Walking around campus it was difficult to control the urge to try all the food in sight. In addition to the food stalls set up around campus the students from the Department of Confectionary Arts set up shop inside Building No. 1 selling a variety of homemade breads, cakes and other sweets. I heard from my coworkers that you have to get there early because these delicious and low priced sweets sell like hotcakes and that was definitely true. By the afternoon there were already "Sold Out" signs posted at the entrance. After enjoying a plethora of foods and sweets I was also able to attend the special concert by Kana Uemura, a famous singer-songwriter known for her touching song telling the story of her relationship with her



Students crowd the school's athletic ground where a majority of the festival stalls were set up

grandmother. This concert was held especially for the festival and many students and faculty members attended. It was a treat to be able to attend the festival and I am sure that all the students, both those participating in running the event and those who just came to enjoy, had a great time as well.

Meghan Strong
International Education Coordinator

My Canada Trip

Canada is a beautiful country. We went to Granville Island Market and rode the Aquabus on False creek. Granville Island Market was wonderful! There were many different foods to eat. For example; Japanese, Mexican, Chinese, Italian and many others. It was very fun! I saw colorful fresh fruits and sweet cakes. There were many kinds of cakes and a lot of chocolates in different shapes. For example, chocolates shaped like horses, hearts, lady bugs and many more. I also ate ice cream and saw many kinds of spices and cheese. I also saw seagulls and took pictures with friends!! It was very fun.

I stayed at the Kodak family's house. My host family was very kind. I went to the beach in the neighborhood. There was one dog named Casa. Casa likes people. I jumped on the trampoline with my host sister. She is shy. Some other time, I want to go to Canada again.

Ami Ojira
Junior 3

I was in Canada for ten days. I spent time with the Backman family, the mother, older sister, younger sister and brother. The older sister's name is Alexa. She was twelve years old. The younger sister's name is Anina. She was nine years old at that time. But she is ten years old now. The brother's name is Nathan. He was fourteen years old. I went to many places with Alexa, Anina and their mother. It was fun for me. I was very happy to spend time with them. My host family took us to Park Royal, Sea Park and Capilano Park. There were a lot of trees in Sea Park and Capilano Park. They were very beautiful. Park Royal is a big department store. It was wonderful! I had a very good time in Canada.



Junior 3 students during their trip

I went to Canada for ten days. I stayed with a host family. The family was my host mother and three children. My host mother took us to Whistler where the Olympic Games were once held. I thought Whistler was a very beautiful place, because there were many unusual trees which I can't see in Japan. I also went on excursions with my classmates. I especially liked Stanley Park, because there were many totem poles which were very interesting. The totem poles were made by First Nations people. There were many interesting things which tell us about their history. My Canada trip was very interesting, because I learned many things about Canadian culture.

Makoto Higurashi
Junior 3

Hideharu Ono
Junior 3

Studying Abroad in New Zealand



Nanae (right) with friends

I went to New Zealand as an exchange student for three months. It was my first time to stay abroad for a long term. At first, I felt nervous, but thanks to my host family's warmth, I could acclimate myself to life there. Takapuna Grammar School, the school I went to, has many ex-

change students from many countries, so I made friends not only from New Zealand, but also from other countries like Spain, Italy, Germany, and Finland. We shared information about our own cultures with each other. It was a wonderful opportunity to speak English.

I had English, Japanese, hospitality, tourism, and P.E. classes. I liked tourism the best. I learned all about New Zealand's sightseeing spots. Sometimes we went to tourist spots near school. In hospitality class, we studied about the different foods of the world and even made some of the dishes. It was good for me to study cooking words in English.

After school on Mondays, I went to a social dance class with my host mother. Sometimes it was hard for me to understand how to dance, but the other members in the class kindly taught me and I was able to enjoy every class.

At first, I felt it would be hard for me to live abroad because the cultures of other countries are so different from Japan and I would have to use English all the time. But, when I had to do things myself, living abroad gradually became easier. I learned not only English and about other cultures, but I also discovered Japan's good points. Lastly, I realized that my English ability is real and that I can speak English.

*Nanae Kojima
Senior 2*

School Trip to Kyushu



Kurumi (right) with friends at Isoteien

This school trip was a very precious time for me. I learned many things which I could not have learned in daily life. On this trip, I acted as a school trip leader, but I felt I could not fulfill all my duties because I wasn't able to express my thoughts when we heard an A-bomb victim

talk. But, this experience taught me that even if I cannot express myself well, it is not a big problem. The most important thing is to try to convey my feelings to someone in my own words.

Another reason this trip was a valuable experience for me is that I am interested in Japanese history. On the first day, we went to Isoteien, which is a garden that was built in the Edo era. On the second day, we went to Kumamoto Castle whose huge stone steps were made by hand. I was only able to stay there for a very short time, so I want to go there again and spend more time looking carefully at the stones, wood, metal and exhibits. On the fourth day, we were free to explore Nagasaki in groups. My group went to Koufukuji. It had a lot of information on Chinese history and all the buildings there were painted red and black. I was so impressed by it. I do not know why I felt so strongly about that place, but I wanted to stay longer.

This school trip was so much fun. Next year, we will have to study for our entrance exams to get into university, so this trip was a good chance to relax before starting our studies.

*Kurumi Hozaki
Senior 2*

Studying Abroad in Australia



Moe (right) and Ginger (left)

I went to Somerville House in Brisbane, Australia as an exchange student for about three months. At school, I chose the classes I studied in Japan, including music, art, Japanese, chemistry, and English.

I took many ESL classes. Although classes felt different and puzzling because they were all in English, they were good for me. I especially liked the extracurricular activities. One time, we went to a beach on the Gold Coast called Mooloolaba. Another time we went to Koala World. I was very happy because I was able to learn about Australian culture.

At school, I participated in an athletic meet. Students were divided into groups. Each group had a color. The colors were pink, blue, yellow, black, green and red. Also, each had a name. The names were Gilmore, MacArthur, Chisholm, Durack, Osburn, and Franklin. The names seemed to be taken from women honored in Australian history. It was interesting because many students dressed up according to their group color. Since my host sister, Ginger, belonged to Gilmore, I was in Gilmore, too. My best memory of Australia was playing with the band. We played in a festival called Ekka. There were many visitors there so I was nervous, but I could relax because the students at Somerville were kind. And, when they applauded, I realized it was good to play music. I thought that through music, people can connect.

I had a wonderful time in Australia. I experienced things not possible in Japan. I am so glad I went.

*Moe Suzuki
Senior 1*



Ami (left) and Hina (right) with friends at a school event

I studied abroad for three months in Tasmania as an exchange student. I had a fantastic time there. I have been to the United States with my family before, but I had never been to Tasmania. Therefore, when I arrived in Tasmania, I was so excited.

Tasmania is an island located south of Sydney, Australia. I went to Ogilvie High School. Ogilvie is very different from Japanese high schools. At Ogilvie, I could choose my favorite classes once every three weeks so I was able to attend a lot of classes and make many friends. And, through conversations with my classmates, I was able to speak English.

Outside of school, I had many enjoyable experiences. For example, I went traveling with my host family, and I went shopping with my friends. From this experience, I learned not only English, but also about foreign culture. Someday, I would like to visit Tasmania again.

*Ami Marui
Senior 2*

I went to Tasmania in Australia. Tasmania is blessed with beautiful nature. My host family was a very happy family consisting of five members. I like them very much because they were so kind and took good care of me. My host sister, Nina, plays hockey, dances and is in band. I went with her to her dance lessons on Fridays. Nina's father, John, often cooked dinner. It was very delicious. Nina's mother, Maria, often made cake and cookies which were also very delicious. Nina's brothers' names are Alex and Nicholas.

I stayed in Tasmania for three months and learned various things.

My host family took me places where there was a lot of nature. You could see a lot of stars at night because the air was very clean. It was like a planetarium.

I went to Ogilvie High School. Ogilvie High School is very large. It has a population of 850 students. Both the students and teachers are very kind and friendly. I took math, Japanese, outdoors, body and soul, food studies and P.E. In my outdoor class, I did rock climbing, bike riding and boxing. I found lessons in Australia to be very different from lessons in Japan. I like classes in Australia better than classes in Japan.

Tasmania is full of beautiful nature and very kind people. I will never forget my experience there. I would like to improve my English skills and communicate with people in other parts of the world. And, I would like to visit Tasmania again. I had a very good time.

*Hina Asano
Senior 1*

My High School Diplomat Experience



Akio (middle row, second from the left) with HSD members

Now, these ten days have passed by in an instant. They have been very delightful. We have many wonderful memories of our time together and of the friendships we have made.

I remember talking about lots of things like American and Japanese culture and romance, and joking around with many people. Also, I remember playing many sports and having meals together. Whenever I was in low spirits, I remember my roommate cheering me up. I can't speak English well, but everyone was so kind. They corrected my

English and tried to understand what I said. I felt so happy.

I realized that even if I can't speak English well, I can communicate and make friends. This experience and the friendships I gained will be my treasure forever.

This has been a valuable experience for all of us. Few things can compare to it. I believe that because of our time together, we will be able to overcome any obstacle in the future. We are sad to say good-bye to everyone. We will never forget our time here. Please keep in touch with us, and come to Japan if you can.

In August I went to the U.S. for three weeks on the AIU High School Diplomat Program. I was one of forty students selected to go from Japan. We were able to visit many important places like the IMF and the UN. We also participated in discussions with U.S. student representatives. The discussions focused on current issues like peer pressure and nuclear weapons. We also had the opportunity to do a homestay in Virginia for four days. On our last day in America, I had to give a farewell speech at Princeton University. Here is the speech I gave:

In the beginning, I was worried that we wouldn't be able to communicate with each other because we would be too nervous. But, because of the experiences that we've shared, we have been able to find a connection with each other and become friends.

Akio Miyaoka
Senior 3

Our Expectations of Studying in Japan

We are both students in the Mejiro University JALP program. Since September 2012 we have been living and studying in Japan. We both came here with different expectations. For Akil it was the challenge of furthering his Japanese studies. For Jin Yeong it was the dream of changing the university he wants to attend. We both arrived at Mejiro University at the same time and met during the introduction week for the new students of the JALP program. We are both studying in the N3 class. In the classes we study everything from grammar to listening and writing. Jin Yeong and I help each other in our Japanese studies. We both have the most trouble with Kanji in our class, since we don't know the meaning of the Kanji we use during the lessons.

Next to studying Japanese it is also important for us to make Japanese friends. For this purpose and to mutually improve each other's language knowledge we have weekly tutoring meetings with Japanese students at Mejiro. We also exchange our cultural differences. Akil has meetings where he speaks English and practices Japanese. Jin Yeong has meetings where he speaks Korean and practices Japanese. Next to practicing Japanese, belonging to a circle will allow you to increase your social connections. Besides our regular school activities we both joined the soccer team. Joining the soccer team was a lot easier than I expected. I saw some guys playing

soccer at the university and asked if I could play soccer with them. One thing led to another and that same day I found myself joining the soccer team. A couple days after that Jin Yeong also joined the soccer team. We have weekly training sessions. We look forward to joining more circles.

Living in Japan does need some getting used to, but the support we get from the people around us has been really helpful. We also want to thank everyone that helped us during our stay until now.

Akil Komur and Jin Yeong Kim
Japanese Language Program (JALP)
Mejiro University



Akil (foremost left) and Jin Yeong (right) with the members of the soccer team

My Special Experiences in America



Mami (left) and Sam (right) at their yoga class

My dream is to communicate with people all over the world. So, I started to study English in college and I have studied abroad in America twice. I found two things about English, that it is just a tool for communicating with people and in order to do this I need to study background more.

Before I went to study abroad I was very shy to speak English. However I became more positive after meeting my best friend Sam at a yoga studio. In the beginning, I couldn't understand at all what she said and I just answered "yes" to everything. We couldn't have conversations but we hung out every day. After a month, I was able to understand most of what she said. But I was very disappointed because I still couldn't answer correctly and I had trouble saying what I thought. However, I never gave up trying! Finally, I was able to express myself in English and I thought that I want to go to a place where no one speaks Japanese again.

Secondly, I went to America again for a month. There I interacted with people from different countries. I made lots of friends from other countries, such as China, Korea, Nepal, and so on. Especially, I hung out with friends from Saudi Arabia because I was interested in religions of the world and they believe the Islamic religion. They have strict rules, such as they can't eat beef. I played soccer with them after school every day to be friendly. Moreover, I studied Arabic to be friendlier. On the last day before I had to go back to Japan, they made KABSAs, a traditional Saudi Arabian food, for me. It was so delicious. The party was the most wonderful memory!

Since I came back to Japan, I became even more curious about other countries. And I now enjoy studying everything, talking to people and doing desk work since I had the experience of studying abroad. Now I am continuing to study English, and have started to read the newspaper and study about the history of Asia.

Mami Ishiwata
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VOL. 46 DEC 2012

Mejiro Exchange is published biannually by Mejiro Gakuen. Views expressed in the ME do not necessarily reflect those of Mejiro Gakuen. Comments and submissions invited.