

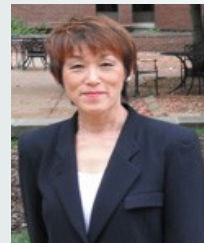
JAPAN NOTES



NOTE 27 WINTER 2012

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Greetings from the President, Chikako Usui



2012 is a very special year! It will mark the 45th Anniversary of the Japan America Society of St. Louis. It is also the 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry blossom trees from the people of Japan to the people of the United States. Planted in Washington D.C. in 1912, these cherry blossom trees have been a symbol of the friendship between Japan and the U.S. for the past century. To celebrate, the Japan America Society of St. Louis will have special events and programs throughout the year. Please check our website to see our events and news, including a special lecture by Edson Kodama on Operation Hope Tohoku (February 14), JASWA & JAS Luncheon with the Watanabe Duo's Performance (February 5), an introduction and discussion by Dr. Marvin Marcus on Haruki Murakami (March 27), and much more.

The JAS Night at the Ballet on December 22, 2011 was great! We offered a 50% discount and sold more than 100 tickets. The Nutcracker was fun to watch and we enjoyed drinks and hors d'oeuvres in a VIP lounge during the intermission, which was hosted by Gen Horiuchi, Artistic Director of St. Louis Ballet Company.

The JAS website has been updated and improved, thanks to Kayla Strauss' hard work. Please go to: <http://jasstl.wordpress.com/> to see the new website!!

The JAS 2011 Annual Report is now available online at: <http://jasstl.wordpress.com/2011-jas-annual-report/>

Board of Directors: The two newly elected directors are Linda Austin and Dr. Richard Colignon. Ms. Austin served as President of JASWA in 2008-2010. Dr. Colignon is the Chair of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Saint Louis University. Altogether, 22 elected board members and 9 officers were approved at the Annual JAS dinner on November 17, 2011.

Volunteer and Intern Opportunities: We are a non-profit organization and all the work of the Society is done by volunteers. Volunteers make the gift of their time and skills to help the society carry out its missions. If you would like to meet new people who have an interest in Japanese culture and/or U.S.-Japan relations, please consider contributing your time to JASSTL as a volunteer/intern. If you are interested, please contact our office at cisjas@umsl.edu or (314) 516-5754.

2012 Membership is open. You can now manage your JAS membership online and pay with PayPal or mail-in payments. Go to **Membership** at <http://jasstl.wordpress.com/> for becoming a new member or renewing your membership.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE AND HOW WE ARE DOING!

Chikako Usui, JASSTL President

2011 JAS Annual Dinner



On Thursday, November 17th, 2011, JASSTL hosted its Annual Dinner at Wasabi Five Sushi Bar.

Members and non-members alike joined to enjoy a delicious and elegantly prepared Japanese meal by Hama-san, the head chef of the restaurant. Various dishes were served, including sushi and authentic items like *oden*.

Among the attendees were special guests Consul General Yoshifumi Okamura and his wife Kaoriko Okamura, Rhonda Broussard, Founder and President of St. Louis Language Immersion Schools, and St. Louis Ballet Company Artistic Director Gen Horiuchi and his wife Tanya Horiuchi-Strautmann.

The entertainment of the evening was provided by Matthew Crecelius, who put on an amazing performance of the *tsugaru shamisen*, a traditional Japanese *banjo*. Crecelius lived in Japan for several years and started practicing the *shamisen* in his formative years.

With excellent service, a diverse cash bar, and iridescent ice sculptures ornamenting the restaurant, the venue was perfect. A big thank you to Wasabi Five and everyone who came!

2012: YEAR OF THE DRAGON

2012 marks the year of the dragon in the Chinese Zodiac, which is celebrated throughout Asia, including Japan. In that the dragon is the only legendary animal that is part of the Chinese Zodiac, it is also the luckiest. The dragon is associated with the earthly branch symbol, 辰. People born in the year of the dragon are said to be passionate and ambitious, yet very obstinate. Overall, dragons are very healthy people.



Many famous people were born in the year of the dragon, including Alicia Silverstone, Courteney Cox, Joan of Arc, John Lennon, Keanu Reeves, Martin Luther King, Salvador Dali, and Sigmund Freud.

Want to find out if you or someone you know is a dragon? Find out below!

16 February 1904 – 3 February 1905
 3 February 1916 – 22 January 1917
 23 January 1928 – 9 February 1929
 8 February 1940 – 26 January 1941
 27 January 1952 – 13 February 1953
 13 February 1964 – 1 February 1965
 31 January 1976 – 17 February 1977
 17 February 1988 – 5 February 1989
 5 February 2000 – 23 January 2001
 23 January 2012 – 9 February 2013

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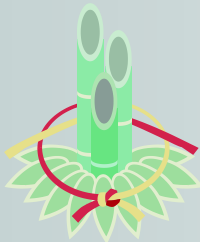
Kagamiwari—JASSTL New Year's Celebration!

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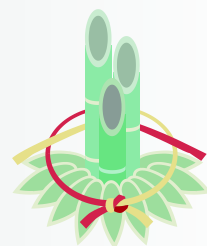
As many of you know, the celebration of the New Year is the most important tradition in Japan. People celebrate the New Year by drinking *sake* (Japanese rice wine) and eating a special meal called *osechi* and *zoni* (soup with *mochi*). Public celebrations of the New Year begin with *kagamiwari*, the ritual of breaking open a barrel of *sake*. After the barrel is cracked open with a wooden mallet, the *sake* is ladled into a wooden *masu* (cup) and given to participants who then toast, saying in Japanese, “*kanpai!*”

The Japan America Society of St. Louis celebrated the New Year at Nobu's Japanese Restaurant on Sunday, January 15. The celebration was also for the 45th anniversary of JASSTL and the 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry blossoms from the people of Japan to the people of the United States. Dr. Chikako Usui, JASSTL president, thanked people from local Japan related groups and organizations who devoted their time and effort to promoting Japanese culture within the community. She also reflected on the accomplishments that advanced the mission of JASSTL, its present roles, and spoke about the future. Wells Fargo Private Bank sponsored the *Kagamiwari* ceremony. De Krapfl (Wells Fargo Private Bank), Edson Kodama (Secretary General, Junior Chamber International), and Vince Schoemehl (President/CEO, Grand Center and former Mayor of St. Louis) broke open the *sake* barrel. After the *sake* was poured in individual *masu*, everyone cheered “*kanpai!*” in hope of a prosperous year. All of the attendees enjoyed taking part in the traditional celebration, in addition to drinking lots of *sake*, of course! Everyone enjoyed a special new year's meal prepared by head chef Nobu Kidera and his wife Taeko Kidera. The food was beautifully presented in a Japanese lacquer box and served with *zoni* (soup with *mochi*). The afternoon was concluded with a spectacular performance by master illusionist Keith Jozsef, who astounded the audience with his magical moves.

Special thanks to Wells Fargo Private Bank, Nobu's Japanese Restaurant, and all of the guests for making this unforgettable event possible!



From left to right: Vince Schoemehl (President/CEO, Grand Center), De Krapfl (Wells Fargo Private Bank), and Edson Kodama (Secretary General, Junior Chamber International).



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Upcoming JASSTL & Japanese Studies Events!!!

There are many exciting events in St. Louis scheduled for 2012. Please see the list below!

Watanabe Duo - Sunday, February 5, 1PM @ Westborough Country Club Club Room

Film Screening: *Sound of the Mountains* (dir. Mikio Naruse) - Tuesday, February 7, 5PM @ Clark Hall 100, UMSL

Culture Within a Culture: Voices of Women of Japanese Heritage in St. Louis (feat. Ms. Noriko Yuasa) - Thursday, February 9, 5PM @ MSC SGA Chambers, UMSL

Female Ghosts and Invisible Monsters: Unbodying the Body in Japan Past and Present (WashU Mellon Sawyer Seminar) - Friday, February 10, 4PM @ WashU Danforth Campus, Busch Hall 18

Reflections of the Buddha Curatorial Talk - Saturday, February 11, 2PM @ Pulitzer Foundation

JCI Operation Hope: International Organizations in Disaster Relief and Recovery (feat. Edson A. Kodama, Secretary General, Junior Chamber International) - Tuesday, February 14, 2PM @ SSB 331, UMSL

Silver Roots: Japan Meets World (International Performing Arts Series) - Saturday, February 18, 8PM (doors open at 7:10PM for pre-concert discussion) @ Touhill Performing Arts Center, UMSL

Film Screening: *Boy* (dir. Nagisa Oshima) - Thursday, February 23, 5PM @ 100 Clark Hall, UMSL

Not Just Any Body (WashU Mellon Sawyer Seminar) - Friday, March 2, 4PM @ WashU Danforth Campus, Busch Hall 18

Film Screening: *Humanity and Paper Balloons* (dir. Sadao Yamanaka) - Thursday, March 8, 5PM @ Clark Hall 100, UMSL

Film Screening: *Endless Desire* (dir. Shohei Imamura) - Thursday, March 22, 5PM @ Clark Hall 100, UMSL

What's So Great about Haruki Murakami?: Lecture by Dr. Marvin Marcus, Washington University in St. Louis - Tuesday, March 27, 7PM @ St. Louis County Library Headquarters

Technologies of the Imagination: Cyborgs and Cyberpunks in Postmodern Japan (WashU Mellon Sawyer Seminar) - Friday, March 30, 4PM @ WashU Danforth Campus, Busch Hall 18

Film Screening: *Sandakan 8* (dir. Kei Kumai) - Thursday, April 5, 5PM @ 100 Clark Hall, UMSL

Film Screening: *Muddy River* (dir. Kohei Oguri) - Thursday, April 19, 5PM @ 100 Clark Hall, UMSL

Film Screening: *The Story of Yanagawa's Canals* (dir. Isao Takahata) - Thursday, May 3, 5PM @ 100 Clark Hall, UMSL

Symposium on Pop Heroines and Female Icons of Japan - Thursday-Saturday, May 3-5 @ UMSL (Stay tuned for more info!)

For the most detailed and up to date info about our events, please visit our website at:

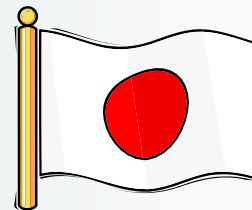
<http://jasstl.wordpress.com/>

Japanese American Veterans Honored

On October 9, 2011, the Japan America Society Women's Association, the Japan America Society of St. Louis, and the Japan America Student Association at the University of Missouri St. Louis partnered to sponsor a film screening of *442: Live with Honor, Die with Dignity*, a film about the 442nd Infantry Regiment, which was composed mostly of Japanese Americans who fought during World War II. The film was introduced by Dr. Marvin Marcus, professor of Japanese language and literature at Washington University in St. Louis and the screening took place at the Missouri History Museum. A wide variety of people from the public came to learn about the story of these courageous heroes.

Recently, there has been much discussion about Japanese Americans who served during World War II. In November 2011, an article titled "Japanese-American WWII vets awarded special medal" was posted on CNN.com. The article mentions the honor shown towards Japanese-American World War II veterans at the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony, which was held on November 2, 2011 in Washington DC. One recipient of the medal was Senator Daniel Inouye, D-Hawai'i, who is the oldest United States senator in office. According to the article, the medal states, "The United States remains forever indebted to the bravery, valor, and dedication to country that these men faced while fighting a two-front battle of discrimination at home and fascism abroad. Their commitment demonstrates a highly uncommon and commendable sense of patriotism and honor" (Ure).

Source: Ure, Laurie. "Japanese-American WWII vets awarded special medal." CNN.com . 3 Nov. 2011. Web. 20 Jan. 2012. < http://articles.cnn.com/2011-11-02/us/us_japanese-american-medals_1_100th-infantry-battalion-japanese-american-veterans-japanese-american-soldiers?_s=PM:US > .



Suihanki—Cooking the Perfect Rice

Rice is a staple of the Japanese diet. Many people in Japan eat at least a serving of rice everyday, and rice is an ingredient in most Japanese dishes. Because of its importance, many technologies have been developed to enhance the process of cooking rice. The Japanese word for rice cooker is *suihanki* (炊飯器). In 1945, the Mitsubishi Electric Corporation created the first electric rice cooker. Since then, rice cookers in Japan have evolved exponentially. Most rice cookers for sale in American stores are difficult to use and only have a few settings, but Japanese rice cookers can cook perfect rice with the press of a button and have a variety of settings. For example, the Zojirushi NP-KAC10 has settings for cooking sweet rice, brown rice, and porridge. It also has an induction heating system that allows the device to make precise temperature adjustments while cooking. Almost all Japanese rice cookers also automatically calculate the time needed to cook the rice based on the weight of the contents, so you never have to worry about under or overcooking your rice! Moreover, you can keep your rice warm for hours at a time. Most families in Japan have a rice cooker, and some can cost over \$1,000 depending on the functionality and manufacturer of the device. If you're interested, Japanese rice cookers can be purchased from stores like Amazon, eBay, and Rakuten Global Market. Happy Cooking, and *itadakimasu!*



Natto: An Emerging Health Food



Take a look at the picture on the left. What do you think it is? Looks kind of like moldy baked beans, right? Actually, it is *natto*, which is Japanese for “fermented soybeans.” *Natto* has been eaten in Japan for many years as a breakfast food. Although *natto* looks, smells, and tastes rather unappetizing to many people, it is packed with nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Not only is *natto* high in protein, fiber, and probiotics, which help weight maintenance and aid in digestion, it also has been found to contain *nattokinase*, an enzyme that encourages cardiovascular health. *Natto* also supports cardiovascular health in that it is plentiful in Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. There are many vitamins in *natto*, but Vitamin C and Vitamin K are of the highest concentration, both of which are essential for immune system and bone health. This food also contains Vitamin PQQ, which supports skin health. Furthermore, *natto* is high in important minerals such as iron, calcium, magnesium, and manganese. Lastly, *natto* contains relatively high amounts of choline, which is important for brain and liver health. As far as we're concerned, *natto* atop a bowl of rice constitutes a 100% breakfast. Whoever designated Wheaties the “Breakfast of Champions” must have not known about this miraculous food. Even if it doesn't seem tasty, your body will love you for eating *natto!*