

Weights of newborn babies

2007,1,31



Recently one of my staff delivered a girl baby. Her baby was 2 point 5 kilograms when she was born. Nowadays weights of newborn babies are a little bit lighter than they used to be. Actually my two sons were over 3 thousand 3 hundred grams. About 2 point 8 kilograms is a healthy weight of newborn babies. Why are they smaller than old babies? Now doctors direct pregnant women not to be overweight: 10 kilograms overweight is the limit. In Japan we have a saying like this," Deliver a little baby and bring up him bigger. It's the best way."

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✚ Kirigaya funnel hall

2007,1,30



Last night I went to Gotanda to attend my aunt in law's funeral. Have you ever heard of Kirigaya funnel hall? It's a very big funeral hall near Gotanda. It's a 10 minute taxi ride from Gotanda station to there. We can see about 10 funeral ceremonies taking place all at once there. Some of them were performed in the Buddhist style and others were performed in the Christian style. There are many sects in Buddhism and their sutras and ways are all different. One family was singing a hymn and next to them a Buddhist monk was reciting a sutra. The other Buddhist monk was playing a drum to pray for the dead. I think it's kind of imprudent but actually it's an interesting scene. Even for me it's really interesting to see many kinds of styles of Buddhism. To tell the truth I'm not sure about the difference between sects. I recommend that you visit there someday to observe them. But don't forget to wear a black suit.

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✚ We don't want to get old.

2007,1,29



I could catch the train safely and went to my son's house in Nagoya. The next morning I received an e-mail from her on my cell phone. She wrote like the following. " After that one more trouble happened with us. After dinner we drank coffee at the other hotel and came home. After eating supper our mother suddenly noticed that she had lost her pearl necklace. We looked for it all around the house, the car and the garage and called the two hotels. At That time they answered

there is no necklace at the hotels but fortunately this morning the second hotel called me to let me know that they found it. That's great and I will have to drive to the hotel again in a few days to pick it up. I think we don't want to get old anymore." I also agree with her.

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✚ Are these comical or terrible?

2007,1,28



Yesterday I attended the second anniversary of my late aunt at a temple in Osaka. A Buddhist priest recited some sutras for one hour in front of her 12 relatives. Honestly I was bored in the second half. After the ceremony we ate a Japanese style full course dinner at the restaurant in a hotel near the temple. Ten adults and two little boys were there but we found only 8 dishes on the table when we entered the dining room. Actually my uncle in law at the age of 77 made a mistake when he made a reservation. Oh my gosh! We had to wait for 30 minutes at the table even though we were so starving. As soon as we began to eat dinner, my second sister suddenly stood up and shouted," Oh no! I forgot to turn off the gas of my stove. I have to go home to check it." She went out of the room immediately. We were staggered to see her but we continued to eat. Actually I stayed at her house and left there with her. I remembered that we checked the gas before we started to go out but I didn't have a time to stop her. About one hour later she entered the room again laughing and said," Sorry, actually I turned off the gas. I remembered it as soon as I began to drive the car but I went back to my home to check it. It was OK." After that she took me to a station without eating dinner.

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✚ Turtle dishes (Suppon)

2007,1,27



Have you ever eaten turtle dishes? Last night I ate turtle dishes for the first time with my friends in Osaka. I came here to Osaka yesterday afternoon and had a dinner at a turtle dish restaurant with my two old friends. Turtle dishes are famous and expensive dishes in Japan but it sounds kind of grotesque. But actually I wanted to eat it at least once. I finally ate it. At first they served relish. It's usual. Then we drank Turtle soup of good body. It was quite delicious and contains a lot of collagen. Next it we ate Nabe with turtle meat. Actually turtle meat looked very strange and

grotesque but it was soft and tasted good. During eating the Nabe we drank red blood of turtle with apple juice and ate some organs of turtle. It required a little bit courage to drink and eat them. But once we began to drink and eat them, we noticed they were delicious. The last dish was our favorite, Zosui. It's a kind of oatmeal. They put rice into the boiling turtle soup and just before they turn off the fire they add eggs into porridge and sprinkle cut Nori. We became full and we were satisfied with the wonderful dinner. I recommend that you try these dishes. Anyway do you have a custom to eat turtle?

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The campaign

2007,1,26



This morning I got up at 5 am and left my home at 6 am. Why did I have to leave my home so early? We had a campaign in front of some stations. We handed out some fliers that explain the change of tax systems to many people who take the trains. From this year the Japanese tax system was changed. There are national taxes and local taxes in Japan as in many countries. The two main taxes for individuals are income tax, that is the national tax, and resident tax, that is the local tax. From this year the income tax is reduced. On the other hand the resident tax is increased. It's necessary to improve the local revenue to empower home rule. So this reform was enforced. Now we have to spread this change to many people to make them understand correctly.

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Bird flu in Miyazaki

2007,1,25



Recently Bird flu outbreak was confirmed in Miyazaki. It's really difficult to protect ourselves from the bird flu because we can't stop birds from flying from different places. If a chicken has bird flu, it must be dangerous for human beings to eat its eggs and meat. It's better for us to boil or bake them to eat. Anyway why do so many new terrible diseases like AIDS and bird flu occur these days?

✚ **Some exercises**

2007,1,24



- ①He is majoring in Aerospace at the university. He must be very smart studying such a difficult subject.
- ②Young people should be ambitious. It's kind of their privilege.
- ③There are lots of controversies about English education of elementary school kids in Japan. One of them is it's very important not to fall behind the world and the other one is it's more important to make them master our beautiful language Japanese than that.
- ④In my opinion to coordinate many people is one of the most difficult tasks.
- ⑤Studying English is useful to foster internationalization.
- ⑥We usually complain to a liaison when we attend the meeting with unknown people and can't understand them.
- ⑦Some spies have to obey impossible missions.
- ⑧There are a lot of new probes in a hospital now.
- ⑨The police probed him to solve the terrible murder.
- ⑩Studying abroad is a stepping- stone to improve his ability.
- ⑪Working for an American company instead of a Japanese company is a sort of adventure.

✚ **Describing a famous landmark**

2007,1,23



Today I would like to describe a famous temple building, Enkakuji Syariden in Kamakura. I've been there twice or three times but I've never entered in it. We are not allowed to enter in it except 6 days, 3 New Year days and 3 days in December. We can only see it from outside of the gate, about 100 meters in front of the building. So I can only guess what materials were used. Probably it's made of wood. I'm not exactly sure who designed it but it was completed in the fifteenth century. I just couldn't get over how well preserved it was. It's hard to believe that it was built so long ago. Of course it's a national treasure in Japan.

Some proverbs

2007,1,22



A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple. (French Proverb)

When you say this proverb, do you mean after getting married we should not care about our partners so much?

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. (Haida Proverb)

When people say this proverb, what they mean is the earth is a very important asset so we should keep it clean and protect it from environmental destruction, right?

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

You know how some students seem to study very hard without a break and end up failing in the test, right? Well, it's kind of like that. For instance have you ever seen a high school boy whose face is pale and who is always memorizing English words on a train?

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Good job!!

2007,1,21



Today I was talking with Monte for 20 minutes via Skype. When I was on line this afternoon, he came on line, too. (It was in the middle of the night in Illinois but he couldn't sleep well and began to use his computer.) Just before that time I found his e-mail to me and it told me that he had purchased a microphone and he wanted me to him know how to use Skype. I tried to explain how to use it through MSN messenger and finally we could speak with each other through Skype. I'm used to using Skype because I began to use it about 2 and a half years ago, just before my son moved to LA. But we were very surprised that we could speak with each other like we spoke face to face. I could hear him very clearly. I was also very glad because I could explain to him how to use Skype in English and he did it well. Wow!! Don't you think it's kind of difficult to explain about it in only English? I did not expect to do it but I had done it well. Good job!! I think I should pay some lesson fee to him but it might be disrespectful to him, right? I would like to invite him to my home and also provide a good Japanese style hotel when he travels in Japan to show him my gratitude.

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How to drive a car in the snow

2007,1,20



It has been very cold since yesterday. Actually this morning light snow was falling. It stopped around noon so there is no snow on the ground in our area. Driving a car on a road covered with snow is very dangerous. It's easy to slip. Be careful. If you find your car covered with snow and you have to drive a car on that day, there are some points to consider about driving. First of all, you need to remove snow on your car, especially on the windows. This will allow you to open the door of the car and allow you to see outside. Then, you should put snow chains on the tires. You need to do that, or your car will slip easily on a road. Once you've started the car, don't forget to drive under 25 kilometers per hour and keep driving 50 meters behind the car ahead. If you drive fast, your chance of getting into an accident increases significantly. As soon as your car starts to slip, step on the brake slowly. That will cause the car to stop safely.

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About friendship

2007,1,19



We became friends with each other when we were in the third grade of elementary school. We became classmates. I empathized with her ability to do many things and she gave me a lot of information about many things such as books and comics. Our personalities are quite different. I'm practical, decisive and severe with money, and on the other hand she is more romantic and indecisive. But we have been keeping in touch and have been good friends. Now I sympathized with her a little bit because she got divorced recently.

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A terrible murder 2

2007,1,18



About one week later a 32-year-old wife was arrested for ripping apart her husband. Actually the two parts of a body were found in Shinjyuku and Shibuya, very busy areas in Tokyo, last December. She hit her husband with the bottle of wine and cut his body in the living room. She threw them away in some places in Tokyo. She brought his head to Machida by train. Oh my gosh!! I can't believe it. We shivered to hear these two pieces of news.

✚ A terrible murder

2007,1,17



Today it's spitting and I think the rain is cold but it's not so cold to change to snow. Actually this winter is warmer than usual.

What do you think about the two terrible murder cases that happened recently? I'm going to describe them. At the beginning of this year parts of a body were found in a dentist's house in Shibuya. Both he and his wife are dentists and they have three children, a 23-year-old guy, 21-year-old guy and 20-year-old girl. The eldest son is a student majoring in dentistry and the second son also wanted to be a dentist but he failed the entrance examination of university three times. He was studying hard because in Japan the entrance examination will take place soon. The youngest daughter was a junior college student and she was trying to be an actress. Actually the body was hers. The family besides the younger son and the daughter was spending New Years holidays in their hometown in Tohoku. The younger son was supposed to study at a school in Kanagawa during the holiday. Just before the father left their house to go to the hometown he told his father, "The shark that one of my friends gave me died. It will smell bad but don't open my room." When the family came home, there was a really bad smell all around the house. The mother couldn't help opening her son's room and ended up finding parts of her daughter's body. Who do you think killed her? The police arrested the second son. "Did you mean your sister was the shark?" According to the newspaper they had been quarreling for three years. She blamed him while watching TV and he got angry and hit her head with a stick. After that he cut her body into several pieces with a knife and a saw in the bathroom and hid them in the closet in his room. Now I started feeling ill. I would like to stop my pen.

✚ Words of personality

2007,1,16



- ① It's hard for cynical people to have a lot of friends because they tend to hurt the other people around them.
- ② Her eccentric atmosphere sometimes attract young men.
- ③ She is really egotistical. I can't believe how she's always thinking about only what benefits her.

- ④ I can't help admiring his imaginative character.
- ⑤ She is very indecisive. It takes about 10 minutes for her to order lunch. She can't decide by herself if she wants to eat a sandwich or a hamburger.
- ⑥ He is picky about women and it's a reason why he can't still get married.
- ⑦ I expected my sons to be sensible.
- ⑧ She's really sensitive. She always cry when she watch movies even if the movie is a sit com.
- ⑨ Sometimes we can find sophisticated people from their attitude.
- ⑩ Try to be thoughtful or you can't be a leader.

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about NOVA ②

2007,1,15



Recently NOVA held a Level up Contest 2006. They have been holding that contest for 10 years so the Contest 2006 is the 10th anniversary contest. I've met a woman who received the prize from that contest and studied English in Canada for 3 months. It was actually their prize, wow... This time I applied for the contest for the first time. I wrote a short essay in Japanese; why I decided to study English at NOVA and how I tried to level up. I handed it in with 3 pictures that I was taken in Mt. Morris and LA to a Japanese staff in the middle of December. The deadline was the last day of 2006. On the 11th of January 200 students who will be invited to the celebration on the 21st.were announced. Sadly I was not invited. It's OK because they say they selected only 200 students from over 10 thousand applicants. They say they examined winners strictly. But I would say how could they read 10 thousand essays strictly in only 10 days. Besides they had New Year holidays during those 10 days. In my opinion it's impossible. And for more one thing I was surprised when I received a discount ticket as a prize of applicants. We can use that discount tickets to buy books and Voice tickets but the deadline of it was the 31st of December. Moreover they closed every school on the 27th. How could we buy books in such a short period? There are a lot of paradoxes in their policy. Not only me but also many students complain about their policy sometimes. And they are also worried about the bankruptcy of the company. Now it is in the red. Not only Japanese students but also teachers sometimes complain about NOVA. They give teachers only 10 paid days off and house rents of NOVA apartments are pretty expensive... something like that. From these points of view I can't trust NOVA. Now I would like to stop writing my opinion about NOVA. Does it sound like my sour grapes ?

 about NOVA

2007,1,14



Recently I usually take man-to-man lessons on TV on Saturday morning and Sunday morning. It uses special equipment, the Internet circuit and a usual TV. It's really convenient for me because I can take lessons just after eating breakfast in my living room. (We can make a reservation freely through 24 hours and also cancel the appointment for free if we call to the office by just one day before the appointment.) And I don't mind wearing good clothes and make up because the sound is pretty good but the picture is very bad. Hahaha. I can also speak with a lot of teachers from many countries. We can't choose our teachers. It depends on NOVA's system. Some of the teachers were very nice and some of them were not so good for me. But it's OK with me because it's important for me to speak with several kinds of native speakers to improve my English. And I've also come to be able to guess their countries from their accents and atmospheres. Another good point of the TV lesson is I don't have to hear a Japanese staff's commercial talk. I like their system but I don't like their commercialism. I mean they always try to sell more points and the other materials even if I still have a lot of points. They always said to me, "You are a very excellent student. Now we can sell you 20 points cheaper than usual. I recommend you to buy more points now." Actually I can't know their fixed price because they always have a sale. Even if they are expensive, I will buy them when I think they are useful for me. They are only noisy and make me feel distrust of the company. I think you know about the Voice class of NOVA. I sometimes participate in that class and spend four or five hours there. It costs only 2000 yen even if we stay there for about 7 hours and we can participate in that class of every school of NOVA in Japan. There are a lot of NOVA along the Tokaido line so I can participate in Voice classes near my office or near my house after work. It's open until 9:00 pm. Sometimes Voice class was very useful for me and I enjoyed a lot but sometimes I felt it was a waste of time. It depends on not only teachers but also the other Japanese students. Today I participated in the Voice class at Tujido NOVA and enjoyed a lot because there were only three Japanese women including me. I had a lot of opportunities to speak with teachers from America, England and Australia in English and we spent friendly time there. NOVA is very convenient. I can take lessons on TV at my living room and when I want to speak with real teachers face to face I can do it by participating in a Voice class. I bought a lot of points including Voice tickets for three years in October in 2004 just after I met you in LA. Probably I will use them up by August or September. I don't decide yet if I will continue NOVA after that or not. (Sorry, I wrote a lot of

things about NOVA. Once I began to write about NOVA, I couldn't stop it. Probably I'm always thinking about pros and cons of NOVA.)

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✚ I like VOA.

2007,1,13



It sounds good but now I want you to talk with me about a little bit difficult topics. I mean I don't want to talk everyday English with you. Studying English is only my hobbies but I still would like to improve my English. Now I really enjoy listening to VOA special English. Especially I like "American Mosaic" and "This is America". How about talking about these topics? It's necessary for you to read them before lessons but they are written in easy English. (Actually they are not so difficult even for me.) You can read them in only 5 minutes. And ask me some questions about the theme and give me some useful comments. It's really your comment about my English that I expect from you.

<http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/american-mosaic.cfm>

<http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/this-is-america.cfm>

And I would like to make an appointment flexibly. Basically I would like to take lessons on Monday evening and Thursday evening from 9:30pm to 11:00pm. As I know you are busy and I'm also busy, can we decide the next lesson day and time at the end of the lesson? And if you become busy suddenly, please send me an e-mail on my cell phone. I also can do the same thing.

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✚ Hi! I miss your lessons.

2007,1,12



I'm very glad to receive your e-mail. What a long holiday you had been spending! I can't believe it because we Japanese usually have only a one-week holiday. I had been busy last summer so I couldn't participate in a Voice class at Tujido NOVA. And I was very surprised and also disappointed to hear you had to go back to the U.S. when I went to NOVA in autumn. But I met Chiaki after that and she let me know your e-mail address. She was pregnant at that time and I think now she is staying at her parents' home in Hokkaido to deliver the baby. I'm going to show you one picture. Neil visited my house with his Canadian girlfriend on New Year's Day and I

dressed her my old Kimono. I should have invited you to my house but NOVA prohibits teachers from visiting students' home. That was a shame. (It's a secret about Neil to NOVA. Hahaha.) Thank you for telling me about the practice over skype. My skype name is " masahomama " and I can also use MSN messenger. My hotmail address is " masaho0614@hotmail.com " If you find me on line, please send me your message and talk with me. Will you stay in Panama? That sounds wonderful. You have traveled all over the world and lived in several countries. It must have been good experiences for you. I still remember you had eaten curry and rice (?) with the famous politician, Taro Kono at the Diet Building in Japan. I've never drunk tea with a member of the Diet though I've been living in Japan for so many years. Hahaha. I miss the lessons and Voice classes with you. Thank you very much again for your reply.

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energy saving

2007,1,11



Now it's winter in Japan. But I rarely turn on heaters because the temperature of my house is usually over 20 degrees. I mean I live in a 5-story condo; it's a concrete building. The houses; under, above and both sides heat my house. I can save energy and it's good for the globe. It's also good for my finances. I recommend you to live in a middle room in a building.

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Discipline at school

2007,1,10



I still remember my former male teacher who taught me when I was in the sixth grade of elementary school. He had a short stick; he called it a hustle punch, and hit bad students sometimes with it. Now if a teacher did such a thing, he would be charged and fired. In my generation, a teacher was expected to be strict whereas nowadays things have been extremely changed. Teachers can't discipline students severely anymore. Unless something changes, our society will be wild in the future.

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The generation gap (G37)

2007,1,9



In my parents' generation, a mother was expected to only take care of kids whereas nowadays they are expected both to work at the office and raise kids.

Back in my grand parents' era, families would never have cars not like these days where we have a couple of cars per family.

No one really has family dinners anymore like they used to have.

Everyone from this generation seems too busy to work but before it wasn't like that. They really enjoyed their joyful days with their family.

The number of children per family has been steadily declining over the years.

The view on getting married and having children has done a complete about face since the beginning of the eighties.

If things keep on at this rate, the population in Japan will decrease.

Unless something changes, traditional kids' games like tag could disappear altogether.

Family size has changed so much over the last few generations.

Something that's changed quite a bit over the last few generations is actually the number of siblings.

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Madarao ski resort

2007,1,8



Just a bit ago I came home from Madarao ski resort in Nagano. Actually my son asked me to go there together because he expected me to take care of his kids. I had a good time both skiing and baby-sitting. I noticed nowadays snowboarding is big and there is less skiing around than there used to be. I was afraid that it would be a blizzard but we were lucky; the weather wasn't so bad. It was snowing only a little and there was enough snow to enjoy skiing a lot. I was skiing by myself for about one and a half hours each morning and afternoon. I was also playing with my grandson in the snow. We were sliding on a gentle slope in front of the hotel. I pulled up the blue plastic sled on which Taiga was sitting to the top of the hill and then we slipped down the slope. It was quite fun and he was very glad.

✚ **The Japanese style strategy**

2007,1,7



At a boutique

“I would like to buy this dress. How much does it cost?”

“You look very nice in it. When would you like to wear it?”

“I don’t have a special purpose but I like it.”

“I see. You are a good customer so I’ll give you a secret information. Please come here again next week and you can get this one for half price. We’re going to have a sale and offer these goods for a special price. Now I can’t sell it to you at the bargain price but I will keep this one for only you.”

“Thank you very much. You are very kind.”

5 days later

“Nice to see you again. Now can I buy it at the bargain price? That sounds wonderful. Everything here looks very cheap. I would like to buy that one as well.”

“Thank very much again.”

At a beauty parlor (in the year end)

“Good-bye and have a good new year.”

“You, too. Waite a minute I would like to give you this hand cream. Actually this is our special gift for New Year to customers. It’s still in 2006 but would you mind receiving it? We prepare only 50 so probably you can’t get it when you will come here in January. You are one of our best costumers of us. Please don’t hesitate.”

“Thanks. You are always very kind to me. See you again in the New Year.”

✚ **a weather forecast**

2007,1,6



I’m going to a ski resort from now. We were supposed to go there by car but the weather forecast says there will be snowstorm there so we changed our plan. I’m going to take the Nagano Shinkansen.

✚ Legal term

2007,1,5



Today I had an opportunity to talk with an American in English. He asked me about the terrible incident that happened just one year ago: the American navy soldier killed the Japanese woman in Yokosuka. “Was he tried at the Japanese court or at the American court?” “The Japanese judges sentenced him to life imprisonment. Usually we couldn’t get an offender of an American sailor from the American government. But in this case it was so terrible that they gave the sailor over to the Japanese police easily.” Anyway speaking about the trial in English was too difficult for me but probably he understood what I would like to explain about it.

✚ Long time no see!

2007,1,4



Hi! Roger, Happy New Year and long time no see. I’m going to a ski resort in Nagano this weekend.

1. What does ‘P.Y.O.’ stand for?

It means, “ Pick your own”, right?

2. Why do not pick the red ones?

Take care not to pick the red ones because they aren’t ripe. They are not delicious: too early to eat.

3. What happens when the boysenberries are ripe?

They become easy to pick.

4. What did Izumi do yesterday?

She went white water rafting.

5. How much do pay for boysenberries?

It costs five dollars and forty per kilogram. It seems to be very cheap compared to Japan

✚ Kimono 2

2007,1,3



My New Year holiday is almost over. Happy time has flown past. I have been a little bit lazy but I will have to get up early in the morning tomorrow again. I'm sighing deeply now. Yesterday I took out my old Kimono from my Japanese style closet. They say we had better air out kimono at least two times a year to protect them from mold. I did it for the first time in about five years. I was sometimes conscious I had to do it but it seemed to be a little bit inconvenient. Fortunately they were safe and I was hanging them all night and morning. This afternoon I tried to set them in the closet but I forgot how to fold Kimono. Actually we fold Kimono in special ways and cover them with special Japanese paper. I looked the way up on the Internet and barely finished. It took over 2 hours. My parents purchased them for me when I was single but I didn't have a lot of opportunities to wear them. I wore them only two or three times. Who will wear them in the future? I don't know. Yesterday the Canadian girl seemed to be really glad to wear my Kimono and I was also happy to see her. I will dress foreigners in my Kimono who visit my house from now on. It's a kind of good idea.

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Kimono

2007,1,2



Happy New Year. Are you having good New Year Days in Ireland? This afternoon (2nd) Neil visited my home with his Canadian girlfriend. I served some traditional Japanese foods for New Year Days like Ozouni (rice cakes boiled with vegetables). After that Sherry (sorry, I'm not sure about her spelling) wore my old Kimono. Actually she only slipped it on because to wear Kimono is very difficult. Now usually we go to a beauty parlor to wear Kimono perfectly. As you know Kimono is our traditional clothing but now nobody wears Kimono in our daily life except special people. We wear it on the special days such as a wedding, a graduation ceremony and so on. Some people wear them on New Year's Days. It needs a lot of strings and special skill and it also takes about one hour to put on Kimono. Of course some Japanese have the skill but I'm sorry I couldn't fit her



for a Kimono well. Anyway I took three pictures of them and your son asked me to send them to you. Please enjoy seeing these pictures. Take care and have a good New Year.

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✚ Happy New Year!

2007,1,1



Happy New Year! How are you enjoying the New Year's Day? This year I'm staying here in Fujisawa with only my husband during New Year's holiday. I have a lot of free time now. I was supposed to go to a ski resort with my son's family but we changed our plan recently. I mean we will go there this weekend, during the three day weekend. And I will also visit my mother in Osaka at the end of January because I have to attend my aunt's anniversary in Osaka. She passed away 2 years ago. Did you buy the same AU cell phone as mine? Now I can use it so so: I decided to use it as a telephone, a music player, a camera and a FM radio. Of course I can send E-mails and C mails by it. If I use EZ web, it requires a lot of money. It has too many functions for me to understand how to use it perfectly. For me it was really difficult to understand the thick instruction manual. Even if you can read Japanese very well, it must be hard work to understand it for foreigners. Anyway please correct my English. This morning my son who was staying at his American friend's house called us from San Francisco. We talked with each other for a little while and then he turned the telephone over to his friend. At first I said to him in English, "Happy New Year. It's still in 2006 in Ca. but actually here in Japan we have a fine New Year morning." He answered to me in English but he resembled my son in voice. I told him in Japanese with a laugh, "You are kidding. You can't trick me. I know your voice because I'm your mom." Actually it was really an American that I talked with through the phone. He must have been very surprised to hear the sudden change from halting English to unintelligible Japanese."



The health system in Japan

2007,2,28



I think the health system now in Japan is quite good especially in our area. There are lots of doctor's offices and also some quite big hospitals where I can go there on foot in 10 minutes. But recently they say doctors' working conditions are quite hard especially if they work for hospitals. Many of them want to open their own doctor's offices because of the busy work as employment doctors. In some country areas the lack of doctors who are working for the public hospitals is rising. Now medical students don't want to be obstetricians because of their hard work. In some rural towns pregnant women can't deliver their babies in their hometown because there is no obstetrician there. They have to do it at the hospital far from their home. And the other big problem in the health system is the decrease of the foundation of health insurance. I used to pay only 10 per cent of the fee but nowadays I have to pay 30 per cent when I have a treatment from a doctor.

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A season of hay fever

2007,2,27



Recently we can see a lot of people wearing white masks on their face. The infamous hay fever season has already started. Fortunately I don't have a hay fever. The symptom of the patients

looks very terrible. They must feel drowsy every time. A lot of patients are suspicious of conventional medicine. Taking pills don't seem to get rid of their discomfort. Alternative medicine like acupuncture might alleviate some heavy symptoms. I tried acupuncture three times when I felt a sharp pain on my right shoulder. It calmed my terrible symptom. Also I guess there's no harm in trying it. But it might depend on a person.

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the new bathroom

2007,2,26



Finally we renovated our bathroom. On Saturday three carpenters came to our home at 8 o'clock and they completed the installation of the bathroom: including the bathtub, wall, ceiling and floor by 3 o'clock. Surprisingly they put together the prefabricated bath so quickly. That's incredible. But we couldn't use the bathroom throughout night because the caulking still wasn't dry. I was so excited that I opened the door of the bathroom over ten times. In Sunday afternoon the other worker visited our home to fix the gadget called "24 hours bathtub". That's very convenient. It always clean and warm water in the bathtub. It filters hot water in the bathtub so we can take a bath anytime we want without cleaning ourselves. I think it's one of the most wonderful inventions since sliced bread.



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✚ Japanese ghost stories

2007,2,25



When I took an English lesson, an Australian teacher suddenly told me to explain to him a present famous haunted place and a traditional Japanese ghost story. I'm a kind of practical woman and don't believe the existence of ghosts. I don't have a lot of knowledge about such kind of stories. Anyway I tried to speak about them while remembering my faint memory and using my poor imagination.

Have you ever heard about Kotsubo Tunnel in Zushi? It's one of the most famous haunted places in Japan. In summer you can watch a lot of programs concerning it on TV. It's close to the old cemetery and it used to be an execution site. One day a pale face woman stopped a taxi and got on it just in front of that tunnel. She was sitting in the rear seat but she suddenly disappeared while the taxi was passing through the tunnel. Surprisingly the driver found the rear seat wet. Actually the tunnel is a 30-minute drive by car from my house. I drove there several times but I've never met that woman. Of course I don't want to meet her. The next story is the Japanese traditional ghost story. Have you ever been to Himeji Castle? This is a very scary true story in that area. You might have seen the old well called Okiku san's in the grounds of the castle. It

happened during the Edo period. Okiku san was a young beautiful girl working as a maid for a big Samurai residence. He had a very important family treasure, ten dishes. One day Okiku san broke one dish by mistake. Her master got very angry and killed her by his sword. After that every night the ghost of Okiku san appeared in his room and counted dishes when it became the midnight, “ One, two, three. “ Just before the tenth she wailed and disappeared while crying plaintively. The Australian teacher said to me,” Many students told me that story but every story is a little bit different. One of them told me that Okiku san fell down into the old well by herself. Um, interesting. Whose story is true? “

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Exercise

2007,2,24



An alternative movie seems to be too difficult for me to understand.
His works might be too artsy to be popular with ordinary people.
The Back to the future series are typical entertaining movies.
The Eddy' s comedy is hilarious.
Take care. She is too intense. She will never part from a handsome guy.
I' ve had enough now. Could you get me a light snack.
He has belonged to a mainstream faction. It' s his way of life.
Her friendship is really superficial. She only wants to be acquainted with rich people.
This book is really suspenseful. If you start to read, you would stick with it.
I prefer thought provoking books to entertaining books. Reading light books seems to be a waste of time for me.

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To my friend living in NZ

2007,2,23



I talked with my friend whom I met in NZ last autumn through MSN messenger by using the web camera. Unfortunately while,talking my computer began to freeze. I restarted it immediately. After that I could hear her voice again but I couldn' t see her picture moving. She told me that she could see me moving perfectly. This morning I sent thefollowing e-mail to her.

Yesterday my MSN messenger couldn't work well. Some trouble might have happened with my MSN messenger. This morning I found there was no writing on the table of the MSN messenger. I would like to read the article that we were talking about last night. Would you mind letting me know the address of the article again.

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a vicious circle

2007,2,22



The teens seem to be very difficult ages. In general teenagers are against adults and society. They prefer strange fashion, hairstyle and noisy music. They are apt to sit up until the middle of the night and get up late in the morning. Actually my sons used to be late for the high schools sometimes. Of course it depends on each person. Every morning I meet two rude high school girls on the subway. They are always sitting on the floor neglecting the other passengers. They do their make up, chat loudly and sometimes eat sweets there. Today surprisingly they were singing loudly. A very bad song, only noisy. I should scold them but I don't want to do it. Everybody might think the same as me. We don't want to be mixed up with such stupid girls. If their parents kept an eye on them, they wouldn't be such rude girls. Why are they so ill mannered and selfish? Basically it's the fault of their parents. But their parents would say, "The school is at fault. This is a failure on the part of teachers and my daughter isn't a little kid anymore. It's her own responsibility." Their parents can't be held responsible for their disgusting daughters. And teachers might say, "Only teachers can't control them. The society is to blame. Parents, school and the society should educate them to be good citizens together." When they become mothers, they will not discipline their kids well. It's a kind of vicious circle.

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How can I ask a favor politely?

2007,2,21



To a stranger at a checkout counter:

" Sorry but I'd really appreciate it if you let me go through the checkout line before you?"

" " What?" " I realize it's kind of rude but I'm really in a hurry. I would like to buy only this coke."

" Oh, no. I'm also in a hurry. You can buy it from a vending machine." " I see."

To my friend:

“ Do you mind giving me a minute? My mother in law is going to come to my home from her hometown in Hokkaido tomorrow morning. I was supposed to welcome her at Haneda but I can't take a day off tomorrow because our very important client will suddenly visit Japan from America tomorrow. I have to go to Narita to meet him. I know you are busy but if it's OK with you could you look after my mother instead of me? “ “Huh? Sorry but actually I have a plan to take an English lesson. Now I can't cancel.” “ I see. I don't have any friend besides you to ask such a favor. Of course, I'd be willing to prepare the lesson fee and wages.” “OK.” “Thank you. It would really help me out. I'll even treat you to dinner tomorrow evening. What restaurant do you prefer?”

To my staff:

“ I'm afraid it's not really feasible. As a matter of fact the report is due on Monday but we didn't finish it at all. I realize that you have already made plans during the weekend but would you mind coming to the office at 6 am on Saturday and Sunday to complete the report?” “ What? I'm sorry but I thought that maybe I might not come here so early in the morning. Actually I have a lot of things to do during this weekend such as taking my kid to the doctor's office. If it would be all right with you, can I come here at noon? “ “ Umm, I'd really appreciate it if you would come here by the morning.” “ I see. I will ask my husband if he would do it instead of me.”

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How can I ask for help?

2007,2,20



To my coworker: “Sorry but as you know I'm very careless. I've forgotten my wallet at my home. Could you lend me one thousand yen? I'm sure I will pay it back ㇏ to you tomorrow.” “ Sure, no problem.” “ Thanks!”

To a stranger in front of a ticket machine: “ Excuse me. Usually I wouldn't ask, but I was wondering if you would lend me three hundred yen?” “ Huh?” “ Just now I've noticed that I forgot my wallet at my home and I can't miss the train soon. I'm going to have a very important interview. I can't be late for it. My name is Masaho. I promise that I will send you 300 yen by stamp as soon as possible. I'd really appreciate it if you would lend me.” “ OK, I will give you 300 yen. Don't worry. Break a leg!” “ Oh, thank you very much.”

To my roommate: “ Have you get a minute? I know it’s a lot to ask but would you mind lending me rent money for this month? I spent a lot of money last Sunday at the department store and it’s just before payday.” “ Again? You always ask me to lend you money. You should budget to pay rent money instead of asking me every time.” “ I see, you are right. But it’s just for a few days and I promise I will pay it back as soon as I get my salary.” “ Only this time.”

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The season of the final income tax return

2007,2,19



In Japan now it’s a season of the final income tax return. Many people are waiting in long lines from the early morning at the national tax offices. Every day my staff goes to the national tax office to help their job and also to copy a lot of documents. I have to interview some part time workers. We can draw up our tax papers by ourselves through the Internet. I mean there is a very convenient Website of the National Tax Agency. Please let’s fill out income tax returns by using the PC and mail it to the office! It’s easy to make it if you understand the income tax system to make it. And you need not spend one day waiting in a long line from the next year. (This is an advertisement copy of the tax office.)

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How to use “being without”

2007,2,18



Being without the Internet, I couldn’t speak with Monte through Skype.
Some people say being without George W. Bush as US President, the Iraq War wouldn’t have happened.
I think being without McDonalds and Coca Cola, a lot of Americans wouldn’t be overweight.
When I studied world history, I thought being without wars, many young solders wouldn’t have lost their lives.
It’s true that being without music, our pleasure would be reduced by half.
I guess being without your choice, I will not be a manager. Would you mind if I would ask you that you would recommend I would be a manager?

✚ It's easy to confuse "borrow" with "lend" and "rent".

2007,2,17



"Can I borrow 10 dollars from you? I'm sure I will pay them back to you tomorrow."

"Ok, I'll let you borrow 10 dollars."

"Would you mind lending me 10 dollars?" "Ok but please pay me back in three days."

"You can borrow 6 books from the library but you have to return them in 2 weeks."

"Can you lend me this book for a while? I will return it in a few days."

"This apartment looks very nice. How much can I rent it for?"

"Could you rent this car for 20 dollars per one day?"

✚ Winter

2007,2,16



Winter is the season for funerals. According to my experience many people pass away during mid winter and mid summer. Actually my three aunts in law died from December to January and I also attended the funeral of my ex coworker's father yesterday.

✚ Unexpected questions

2007,2,15



Sometimes foreigners ask me several questions that I can't expect: such as, "What is the difference between a temple and shrine?" and "Tell me about the difference between Kyoto and Nara?" And I always feel that it requires of me not only English ability but also a lot of knowledge and imagination to explain about these questions. Today an Austrian guy asked me why we write the name of Yoko Ono in only Katakana and why Ichiro doesn't have a family name. I answered like the follows. "Umm, I'm not sure but probably she is now really international. Now she might be an American. She might have got an American citizenship and changed her name from that

written in Kanji to that we can write in Katakana . Ichiro's real name is Ichiro Suzuki. His family name, Suzuki is one of the most common names in Japan. And Ichiro is also very common as a male name. There are thousands of Ichiro Suzuki in Japan. Of course we can write his real name in Kanji but he began to use Ichiro written in Katakana as a trademark when he became the professional baseball player in Japan. We called him Ichiro, while he was playing even in Japan." I have to use my brain too much. Their questions are really unexpected for me but it's effective not only to improve my English but also to understand Japan from diversified views.

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Some opinions concerning raising children

2007,2,14



1 It's the parents responsibility to pay for all of the costs of having and raising children.

I completely disagree with this opinion because children are very important our common wealth. They will support our society in the future.

2 If possible, grandparents and other extended family members should look after children so parents can work.

I partly agree. After 2 years old, taking care of children at daycare centers seems to be better than raising them privately. To tell the truth I don't want to bring up my grandsons by myself. It's kinds of hard work and I don't want to have responsibility for them anymore even if I love them so much.

3 Fathers should be able to take as much leave as mothers when a baby is born.

I partly agree. It's important that fathers support their partners. But who can breast-feed babies? Only mothers can do it.

4 Mothers who wish to return to work should be provided with free daycare.

That might sound strange but I completely disagree with this opinion. If mothers want to get salary by working, they should pay a fee to daycare centers. Our society has to support children but actually bringing up their children is parents' responsibility at first.

5Employers shouldn't have to pay parental benefits: the government should.

I partially agree. Both employers and government should pay them. It seems obvious to me that if employers want their employees work loyally, they should ensure their employees' everyday lives.

6 People are having fewer children these days because there isn't enough government support.

I partially agree. There haven't been enough daycare centers and we have to spend a lot of

money to raise children. Now pediatricians and obstetricians are decreasing. Nowadays society is not suitable for having a lot of kids. In addition young couples don't seem to be patient enough to take care of little kids.

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Pros and cons of computer free

2007,2,13



Family life would be better with computers because they can communicate easily by using e-mails and skype. On the other hand it would be worse because some fathers and children are so involved with video games that they tend to hate speaking with mothers. Getting a lot of knowledge easily through the Internet would be better for studying but some students began to only copy from the article when they write their reports. Looking at the display of PCs all throughout the day is really bad for the eyesight. Sadly I can't find good points from using computer. We can send e-mails quickly for free instead of writing letters by hands. But I'm afraid I've forgot how to write Kanji.

We can get a lot of information about health through the Internet but actually it's not healthy to be sitting down in front of a computer from morning till night. We can keep lots of records in a PC easily but take care not to break a hard disk and not to have your PC stolen. We should save the data on a CD. If kids always play games on a PC, I'm concerned they are apt to lack exercise. They also might be poor at communicating with another person. Anyway in my opinion PC is the one of the wonderful inventions of human beings and now I can't imagine the everyday life without a computer. We always have to take care not to use PCs in wrong ways.

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The Internet

2007,2,12



The Internet is very convenient. I don't know exactly when people could start to use it but I began to use it nine years ago. It was a little bit earlier than ordinary Japanese people. At first I only checked many kinds of things through websites. Then I was taken with making a home page of mine. Now I can also use the Internet instead of an international call. Today I downloaded google earth. It's amazing. We can fly to North Korea in a matter of seconds and check the

buildings. I'm going to write how no Internet would change these things. Writing to friends: If we can't use e-mails, we have to write letters, go to post offices, purchase stamps and post them off. It takes about one week to send letters from Japan to America. I'm sure we send letters fewer times than e-mailing. Music: When we want to listen to new music we had to go to a record shop and buy the CD or record it from a radio program. But now we can download a lot of music through the Internet. Reading the news: Of course we have to subscribe to a newspaper being without the Internet. Studying: I heard that some children in the North European countries are studying at home by using the Internet instead of going to school. They can't go to school easily because of heavy snow. We also study English through the Internet from foreigners living in foreign countries even if we live in Japan. Shopping: To be honest recently I bought some underwear through the Internet. They were so popular that they were sold out at stores but I could get it from the maker easily through the Internet. Finding information: It's one of the best points of the Internet. Now everybody has an opportunity to get a lot of information equally. But it depends on how a person can use such information effectively. Hobbies: I used to belong to a golf club of the Internet. I could play golf with a lot of strange people. I mean we can deepen our knowledge and companionships through the Internet. Other: We can check if the person is safe or not with each other by using Skype or MSN messenger even if we live in different countries. I always set my mind at rest when I notice my son in LA is on line without speaking with him.

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The renovation of the bathroom

2007,2,11



Now we have a plan to renovate our bathroom. A bathroom is apt to be dirty easily. Actually we renovated our bathroom about eleven years ago but the bathtub and the floor have already started to discolor. There is some mold and stains on the floor and wall. I really love cleanness but gave up cleaning them by myself. It's kind of a hard task to order the renovation. At first we had to decide which construction company was the best and also choose which maker's articles were proper. We visited several showrooms of house furnishing and sent up for estimates from a few construction companies. The salesman visited our house three times and we were having the new bathroom fitted. There are so many pieces of equipment now that it's not easy to decide our plan. Which color do you think is best for the bathtub? Do you need a triple mirror for the washstand? How high do you prefer it? How about the floor? I recommend you that you use this new material. It's easy to clean. What color scheme do you have? Sorry but this type can't fit in

the space. It needs a larger space. Today we finally signed the contract with the company. The salesman said to me just before he came back, "Thanks but you can change the color until tomorrow. How about going to the showroom again to check the color scheme from now so you don't regret something?" We went there this afternoon and actually changed some colors such as the color of the floor :from beige to gray. I decided that the bathtub would be pink because I want to refresh my mind.

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The most important things

2007,2,10



When I was young, I read a book and it taught me that we should master three important things if we want to be independent. What do you think they are? For the first we should earn money to live by ourselves. For the next we should take care of ourselves. It means we should learn how to cook and how to do housework. Finally we should be independent mentally. It means we have to get the ability of thinking by ourselves. In my opinion parents have to teach their children these important things instead of making them master special technique to solve the examination paper.

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a three-day weekend

2007,2,9



We are going to have a three- day weekend. Actually this Sunday is a national holiday, the commemoration of the Founding of the Nation. In Japan if a national holiday falls on Sunday , the following day is an extra holiday. But if it falls on Saturday, We can't get an extra holiday. In that case I usually feel I lost a good holiday.

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An entrance examination of private junior high schools

2007,2,8



Recently many private junior high schools held their entrance examinations. Lots of twelve year old children took the examinations. I saw many boys and girls with their mothers on the train. A daughter of one of my staff took the test and she passed for the school that she really wanted to enter. I'm not sure but probably that school is a pretty high-level girls school. The mother, my staff, was very glad and she told us, "My daughter had been studying very hard. We began to cry when we knew her success." Actually she took four days off to take her daughter to some schools.

After school the little girl went to Jyuku to prepare for the tests and the mother brought a supper box (not lunch box. She always ate supper at the Jyuku.) to her every day. Their efforts were great but I think it seems to be a little stupid effort. She is only 12 years old. I hope her energy doesn't burn her out before she will be an adult.

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How can I say about our address?

2007,2,7



Pease let me know the meaning of " in the southern state of Louisiana". I think it's not so difficult phrase but some times I'm confused about this expression. Does it mean " in Louisiana that places in the southern area in the US." or " in the state that places in the south of Louisiana." Previously you taught me that I should say "the city of Fujisawa" instead of " Fujisawa City". But can I say " Kanagawa Prefecture"? Can I say, " I'm living in Fujisawa which is in Kanagawa close to Tokyo." ?

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Anti-GM foods

2007,2,6



I always buy foods at a grocery of a cooperative and hear the announcement like the flowing. " We don't sell GM soybeans. Our Tofu is not made from GM soybeans. You can buy our products in peace." Honestly I didn't really mind about GM foods but today I read an article about GM foods. There were some advantages and disadvantages concerning GM foods on it. One of them is, " Any adverse effects on health are unknown as no long-term studies have been undertaken." Now I decided I should try to buy natural foods as many as possible.

 **Practice**

2007,2,5



- ① Recently that small company was bought out by the bigger competitor.
- ② When he was laid off, everybody sympathized with him because he has three little children.
- ③ He is very competitive. And it's a reason why he always works harder than his coworkers.
- ④ I don't need only dedicated employee. The worker whom we really need is a man of ability.
- ⑤ Many companies had to downsize with the bad economy.
- ⑥ Have you already got rid of the jet lag?
- ⑦ I'm afraid that I will be outdated.
- ⑧ Its necessary for us to be retrained not to become outdated.
- ⑨ We Have to streamline our company not to be defeated by our rival.
- ⑩ You had better update your skill if you don't want to be laid off.

 **E-commerce**

2007,2,4



I've noticed that these days I rarely buy books because I can read many things on the Internet. To drop by a bookshop to browse used to be one of my favorites things but recently I've never done such a thing. Even if I want to buy some books, I order them through the Internet. Amazon is very convenient. We can look for the book that we want to get easily at home and they deliver them in a few days. When I was a student, I had to go to several bookshops to buy only one book. It really wasted time. Surely e-commerce is very useful for consumers. But I'm concerned about what happened to local small bookshops. The small bookshop near my house was closed recently. I also would like to make reservations of a room at a hotel through the Internet. But I don't want to purchase clothes through the Internet. I can't imagine that the clothes look good on me or not by only checking through the Internet. I really want to try it on. Well, I mean I would like to purchase something that is the same wherever I would buy through the Internet. On the other hand I want to check by myself when I want to buy goods that have a lot of different forms like clothes. From such a view I think it depends on goods if e-commerce will be a success or not.



Setsubun

2007,2,3



Today is Setsubun in Japan. Setsubun is a day before the beginning of spring. It's still cold but we say spring begins from the 4th of February since long long ago. This night we have a custom to spread soy beans from our house to get rid of Oni that is an imaginative devil. We say, "Oni, go outside. Fuku, come in!" Fuku means happiness. Oh, I've forgotten to buy soybeans for Setsubun. From now I have to go to a supermarket.



The tax reform

2007,2,2



From this year our income tax (national tax) and resident tax (local tax) are changed. According to this reform income tax is reduced from January in 2007 and resident tax will be increased from June in 2007 for almost everybody. But basically the sum total of both income tax and resident tax will be the same as it used to be. From this year the tax rate of the residential tax will become 10 percent for all income. There had been 3 kinds of tax rates until last year. For less than 2 million yen the tax rate was 5 percent. From 2 million yen to 7 million yen it was 10 percent. More than 7 million yen it was 13 percent. If you want to get more knowledge, please click this address. This is the web site of Ministry of Finance.

<http://www.mof.go.jp/jouhou/syuzei/zeisei06/html/contents/01/index.html>



Nintendo Wii

2007,2,1



I played the very popular video game, Nintendo Wii, in my son's home. It was amazing. I played bowling, golf and boxing. We grip controllers and swing our right arms as if we play bowling. And we can see our balls rolling on the lanes on TV. I can't play real bowling well. I always drop a ball on the lane, then the ball rolls slowly. The ball finally ends up turning to the right. My ball on TV

moved the same as the real ball. I couldn't believe it. When we play golf, we grip the controller by our two hands and swing it as if I play real golf. It's not so difficult as playing real golf because I don't fail to hit the ball. When I play boxing, I have to grip two controllers in my two hands and push hands ahead as if I hit my opponent. My son could knock down the animation easily but I couldn't. I jumped on the floor and sweated. I enjoyed a lot.

Talking about tastes in art

2007,3,31



I prefer realistic art to abstract art because I can't comprehend what artists want to represent by the abstract art. I like Modigliani's works. He drew a lot of portraits of women. All of them have long necks and look anxious. I think they are too dark to decorate on a wall of my living room. Concerning The Monna Lisa, it just isn't my thing. People say she has a mysterious smile and of course I agree with them. But I just imagine that she is always looking down on us with her smile. I might feel a little bit scared of her. Anyway it's one the most famous paintings in the world. Someday I'd like to visit the Louvre and see her there.

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From a book of riddles

2007,3,30



There is one book on my desk published in 1991. It's a book of riddles. I don't remember clearly when we bought this book but I think it was a present from my sister to my sons. I would like to introduce some of them. I want you to guess the answers. At first, I can run throughout fields and put white caps every stumps in the fields. Who am I? For the second question, I'm running from the mountain to the sea. I'm shining looking like silver band and visit many towns and villages. Who am I? For the third, I can go everywhere in the world but I'm always sitting in the corner. Who am I? For the fourth, I was born in a forest and have grown up there. In winter they will take me to a town and I will be decorated very beautiful. Who do you guess I am? For the last question, we are living in a small house and have destinies to be burned one after another. What do you think about us? I think they are not so tricky. You can find answers below. How many questions did you get? Snow, a river, a stamp, a fir tree, a match

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Cherry blossoms began to bloom. There is pretty famous sight of cherry blossoms near my office. There are rows of cherry trees along the river which is in front of my office. I can enjoy seeing cherry blooms on my way to the office in the morning and on my way home in the evening. I can also see them from my desk through the window. There is a pink world outside of the window. That's wonderful. It's not such a busy street usually but today I found lots of people who were seeing cherry blossoms there. Some of them were sitting on the bank and drinking under the trees. I think it's too early to have a party tonight. They have come out a half now. Next Sunday will be the best day to have a party. Anyway I'm sure it's the best season now in Japan. Please enjoy seeing cherry blossoms near my office.



Now we are eating delicious food and chatting cheerfully with each other in this gorgeous hotel where we can't have dinner by ourselves. I'm sorry but it's time to end our wonderful party. Thanks to the stewards, we are having a lot of fun. At first we really appreciate their efforts.

And then we should say thank you very much to Ms. Y. You have been working for such a long times and always taken care of us as the general staff. And I also hear the part time worker, Ms. S will move to another office from April. Thank you very much for your help. I'm a little bit sad to say good-bye but I hope for your health and active lives from now on. Let's say thank you to these two ladies while clapping our hands at the end of this party.

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About inheritance

2007,3,27



According to the Japanese civil law, all siblings have rights to inherit the property evenly from their parents regardless of their sexes. For example, if a late person had a wife and three children, the wife can inherit a half of his property and each kid has to divide the other half equally. I mean one kid can get one sixths of his father's inheritance. Of course the father can draw a will and decide to give all of his property to his first son. But the other brothers still have rights to require a half of their original rights. Each kid can inherit at least one twelfth of the property of his father. Needless to say, all representatives can decide their own heritages after conference. If all heirs agree with it, only one person can inherit all inheritance. It's really difficult for me to explain such a complex regulation in English. Can you understand what I wanted to explain?

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Three guys from the Czech Republic

2007,3,26



Today a railroad accident happened at Totsuka. It happened about 15 minutes before I arrived at the station. There was a train bound for Tokyo stopping at the opposite platform. That train must have hit somebody. And there was an ambulance and several police cars near the station. They announced many times, "Just now an accident happened. Now we were trying to rescue a victim. All trains of the Tokaido line are stopping now." All of us were very disturbed. There are two lines, the Yokosuka line and Tokaido line at Totsuka. It's a little bit difficult for strangers to find which train they should ride. Actually at that time trains of the Yokosuka line were moving. I found three foreigners who looked very confused close to me. They seemed not to be able to understand what happened. I explained about the situation to them and they really appreciated it. They

spoke English fluently but I noticed their pronunciations sounded a little bit strange and they were speaking a strange language with each other. They were job trainers at Hitachi from the Czech Republic. There are some office buildings of Hitachi near the station. I was also very glad because my English was helpful to them.

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Now I have a bad memory.

2007,3,25



Now I can't help recognizing my memory has come to be quite bad. I'm sad but it's one evidence of ageing. I used to have a good memory and it was my good point. When I was a girl, my mom asked me a lot of things: when she bought the clothes: where she put a special dish away – something like that. When somebody visited our home, I could sometimes guess her name correctly saying “ I know her name because I've met her once at the market.” Nowadays I can't remember people's name easily. I have a lot of opportunities to meet many people for the first time on business in April because in Japan the financial year begins from April. When they introduce several men to me, I'm afraid I will not be able to keep their names in my mind. While I was chatting with my colleagues, I often forgot book titles, names of places and people's names. At that time can I say,” Now I've forgotten it but I will remember it in 10 minutes. It's slipped my mind. It's on the tip of my tongue.”? By the way, I think studying English is really good for my brain. It improves my memory.

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A picture of the office

2007,3,24



This is a picture of the office where my son is working now. It's a pretty famous ad agency which has gotten a lot of awards. They try to create new styles of ad works. I find the office quite modern and contemporary. The atmosphere seems to be really free and bright. It's pretty different from a traditional style office. It looks attractive for artists to work in such an artistic office. Now I can understand why he prefers working here to the Japanese long-standing company.



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+ Practice

2007,3,23



The British government decided to extend the period of their compulsory education.
 The Times newspaper is one of the most famous newspapers.
 Students are expected to study longer.
 Britain may improve not only their skills but also the economy.
 Young people don't agree with the legislation of the compulsory education.
 Education is very important if they want to make their country increase in prosperity.
 Qualifications are required when we attempt to work as specialists.
 British youth sometimes complain against their politicians.

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+ When I was a recrute,..."

2007,3,22



It happened on the first of April about 30 years ago but I still clearly remember my first day at work. The freshmen were supposed to gather at the auditorium of the office building at 9 o'clock. Of course I went there earlier than the appointed time wearing the pink suit. My mind was full with hopes and fears. After checking I had to wait for a little while among many strangers. Somebody appeared at 9 o'clock and called about 30 people's names including my name. He led us to the other building, which is a 5-minute walk from the main building. One girl said to me, "Where do you think we are going? Do we have to work for the police office?" Actually she was Midori with whom I played golf yesterday. We finally arrived at the office of the board of education and received written appointments one after another standing in lines. One of them was my present husband but I didn't talk with him on that day. It was a really cold day and I've forgotten if cheery blossoms bloomed on that day or not.

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✚ The vernal Equinox Day

2007,3,21



Today is the Spring Equinox Day. The lengths of day and night times are equal today. We say spring starts from today and there are no more cold days. In Japan we usually go to our ancestors' graves, clean them and put flowers in front of them. I'm not certain but it's a kind of Buddhist custom. By the way, in the U.S. they started daylight saving time from the eleventh of March. They used to begin it from the first Sunday of April but they changed their law to save more energy. I think we should start daylight saving time in Japan as well as many western countries. If we start it, we can not only save energy but also enjoy our lives outdoors. Probably the business community is against the introduction of daylight saving time. It seems to require a lot of money to change computer systems and clocks.

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✚ Please let me know how to continue the sentence.

2007,3,20



I wrote before, "There was this one time when I visited there in my entire life." And you couldn't understand what I wanted to say in the sentence. To be honest, I found the phrase "There was this one time when I ..." in my textbook. How can I continue the sentence from this

expression? I think it means “ 私がそこを訪れたのは、人生でその時一回だけだった。” I expect you to show me the usage of this phrase.

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✚ **I'm a witness. (Don't worry. It's fiction.)**

2007,3,19



When exactly did the mugging happen?

Well, I'm sure it happened about 8 o'clock. I saw them just after I got off the subway.

How many people were involved?

Only one person. I distinctly remember he is a man in his sixties.

What can you remember about the muggers?

They were two young guys. Probably they were in their early twenties.

What were they wearing?

Sorry, I don't remember clearly. Maybe one of them was wearing a pink T-shirt and the other was also wearing T-shirt. But I've forgotten the color of his shirt.

Did they have any distinguishing features?

I have a vague memory of them, but one of them might have blond hair.

Were they carrying any weapons?

Yes, I remember clearly. One of them had a baseball bat.

Can you describe exactly what happened?

Yes, the two guys attacked the old man who was carrying a brown attaché case. And the surprising thing is actually the old man was very strong. He counterattacked against them and they ran away. Of course they couldn't rob him of any money. He must have been a pro boxer.

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✚ **Destiny or fate**

2007,3,18



Today I talked about “ destiny” and “fate” with my English teacher from England. Basically I don't believe in destiny because I think we should create our lives by ourselves. But sometimes I think it's my destiny and accept the result. For example, my son took some entrance examinations of colleges and passed only one test. At that time I would say, “It's your destiny.

God decided that college is most suitable for you. You should enter the college.” I talked about such kind of opinion but the teacher couldn’t understand me. He told me that I should have spoken about the thing that would happen only in the future. In English does the word “ destiny” mean the event in the future? I think in Japanese “ Unmei” means not only events that will happen in the future but also everything that we can’t decide by ourselves. I was born in the fifties and I think it’s my fate. My son lives in the U.S. and it’s also his destiny. Of course he decided it by himself but if the circumstance didn’t allow him living in a foreign country, he wouldn’t have done it. Situations around him let him live in America. God might have controlled the situation around him. It’s sort of his fate. What do you think about my feelings?

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✚ My memory of flight

2007,3,17



I vaguely remember of my first flight in an airplane. I’ve forgotten when it was now, but I think I might have flown to Kumamoto in Kyushu when I was a university student. I had a schoolmate who was from Kumamoto and I visited her house by myself during summer holidays. I can’t remember my first impression of flying now, but maybe I was so excited. After that I had a lot of opportunities to fly. I have a clear memory of going abroad for the first time. I went to Hong Kong with my husband in 1988. It’s hard to believe, but I had never been abroad until that time.

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✚ Yon Sama

2007,3,16



Today I took a lesson from a Korean American who came to Japan about 6 months ago. I explained to him how Japanese middle-aged women got into the Korean actor, Yon Sama. His name escapes me right now but anyway we loved his TV drama titled “Sonata in winter” very much. Now the boom is dropping down but the great boom started about 3 years ago. The drama was being broadcasted on TV and many people watched it. Many Japanese began to be hooked on him; especially middle-aged women fell in love with Yon Sama and bought a lot of his goods: DVDs, photographic collections and so on. We also visited South Korea to see the locations of that drama. It’s said that the drama reminded us of the pure love that most Japanese people had

lost at that time. We were moved a lot by his love story. Regarding me, sorry I was not interested in him. One of my friends recommended to me that I should have watched the drama so I watched it one day. I was watching it while lying down on a sofa and had a nap. It seemed to be a little bit boring for me. I noticed I'm not so romantic. But I had been to Korea twice before the boom and fell in love with Korean foods. They are quite delicious.

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What's the difference between hurry and rush?

2007,3,15



Don't ask me to do a chore to me. I'm in a rush.
Sorry would you mind speeding up more? I'm in a hurry.
Hurry up! Don't take a long time to do your make up. The party begins at 7.
We'd better get going. We have to complete our job by tomorrow.
Let's make tracks. The owner will come back soon. (For what kind of situation can you use this idiom? Only robbers use it?)
If you don't get a move on, you will be late for school.
Get cracking on your homework. Then you can play outside.
Step on it or we will miss the train. (We use this idiom when we drive a car because it means "step on an accelerator, right?)

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stock trading

2007,3,14



I inherited some stocks from my late father over ten years ago. They are stocks of heavy industry companies like Shin Nittetsu. Actually I was not interested in dealing and I didn't have any knowledge about stocks. After that my stock prices started to drop down. Particularly, the price of Shin Niottetsu had been terrible. I couldn't receive even dividend for quite a long time. I thought, "I don't know when my father got these stocks but he might have thought they would help his daughter someday. Well, I don't want to waste his will. I will keep them. Someday the Japanese economy will recover and the price of my stocks will increase." Recently I noticed the price of Shin Nittetsu is rising a lot. Now it's one of the most remarkable stocks. But I still don't

have knowledge about stocks. It might be time for me to begin to study about stock trading.

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Two topics

2007,3,13



Tonight I read an article about Makaty in the Philippines in the newspaper. It's a very rich city because it places itself in the center of economy in that country. They have some unique welfare policies for aged people. The Mayor presents birthday cakes to all citizens who are over sixty. He also gives traveling expenses and pocket money. Wow, that's wonderful! And today's biggest news in Japan was about an airplane trouble. The airplane landed at Kochi airport without the front wheel safely. Some critics really praised the captain for his courage, coolness and good skill.

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The great role models

2007,3,12



The great role models

For the new brand of sneakers: In my opinion we need a young and cool athlete to promote the new sneakers. Usually young boys admire such an athlete and they want to look like him by wearing the same sneakers that their idol has.

For a credit card: The middle-aged executive would be better as the spokesman of the credit card. The credit card is a sort of status symbol so he must give satisfaction to the people who want to get the card. He must look sincere, decisive and smart.

For golf clubs: Of course I recommend that we should ask Tiger Woods to be a role model. Actually he is the greatest golfer we've ever had and every golfer in the world knows him now. I'm sure he will raise our company in value but how much should we pay for him?

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✚ People whom I really admire

2007,3,11



I really respect my daughter in law. What I admire most is her dedication. She is always taking care of her mischievous kids without complaint.

Someone I admire a great deal is Mark who is working as an aid worker. His courage and determination are an inspiration to us all.

I feel our mother is an example to us all. She taught us a lot about compassion.

I've always looked up to Chris. If it wasn't for his example, I would never have started to study English. (もし、彼の見本がなかったら、私は英語の勉強を始めていなかっただろう。) He was the first person to teach me real English. Few native English-speaking teachers have shown such example. (ほとんどのネイティブの英語の先生は、そのようなお手本を示してくれない。) Who can teach us foreign language besides him? Japanese people are usually a little bit moderate. I don't want to boast about my sons but to be honest I really look up to them. They've made their dreams come true. They also encouraged me a lot because of their trying.

I found the following sentence in the textbook. "If you could invite anyone you wanted to a dinner party, who would it be and why?" I think they should put whom between anyone and you. Do they miss the relative pronoun "whom"?

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✚ Who is happier?

2007,3,10



Who do you think is happier, Princess Diana or Princess Masako? Well, it's a quite difficult question because I've never met them or talked with them. According to the press conference, our Prince said that he really loves his wife, Princess Masako. On the other hand Prince Charles had the lover who is his present wife. I think Diana could enjoy more freedom than Masako. She could get divorced but I'm sure Masako can't divorce the Prince what ever happens. Japanese code can't allow her to do such a thing. Anyway being a member of the royal family must be hard work. Do I want to be a Princess? Hahaha, I can't become a Princess what ever I do. Rather than being a princess, I prefer to be a commoner even if I live in a small and old condo.

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✚ The Bridges of Madison Country

2007,3,9



Today I had been tidying up my house since morning and I happened to find the previous best seller, "The Bridges of Madison County" written in English in my bookshelf. Who gave me this book or did I purchase it by myself? I remember nothing about it. It is jacketed with the wrapping paper of Yurindo, the famous bookshop in Kanagawa. I might have bought it by myself but there is no imprint of reading. It reminded me of the time when I read the novel translated into Japanese. I couldn't help crying while reading it. Will I be moved to tears even if I read it in English?

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About humor

2007,3,8



My favorite TV show is a situation comedy that really cracks me up.
It's kind of difficult to understand the humor of his comment because of the dry phrases.
She is so shy that she always giggles when she talks with her company.
He is good at impressions of famous people.
You kid me. I can't believe it.
He has been working as a stand-up comedian who performs in a shabby nightclub in the local town.
Don't be silly. I'm fed up with your puns.
This story is twisted. I'm not interested in such irony.
When I heard her speech filled with wit, I became a fan of her.

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some questions

2007,3,7



First of all I have some questions concerning my last e-mail.
In my last e-mail I wrote, "Let's hike in Tanzawa, the highest mountain in Kanagawa weekend after next." and you commented, "What do you mean by after next?" I think "the weekend after next" means the weekend that will follow the next weekend. Today, the 7th is Wednesday and the last weekend was the 3rd and the 4th, right? This weekend means the 10th and 11th and the next weekend means the 17th and the 18th, right? And the weekend after next means the 24th and the 25th, right? Next Wednesday is the 14th and the Wednesday after next is 21st,

right? These phrases seem a little bit complicated even if I say in Japanese. My dictionary says “再来週 (さらいしゅう)” is translated into “the week after next” in English. 2007 is obviously this year and 今年 in Japanese. And I’m sure 2008 is the next year and 来年 in Japanese. How about 2009? I think 2009 is the year after next and 再来年(さらいねん).

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Company houses

2007,3,6



Japan was said to be a country where people had been working for only one company our entire lives. Actually I have been working for only one local government since I graduated from the university. Nowadays the situation is changing and changing. Many workers tend to change their jobs. But many employees still live in company houses. My son is living in a condo in Nagoya but of course it’s not his own house. One of his coworkers bought that condo but he had to transfer to Tokyo. Then the company rents his house and lends it to my son. I don’t know how much the company pays him for the rent but my son pays only 20 thousand yen to the company for the rent including the parking space. It’s very cheap. The difference is footed by the company. I thought this way must have been a Japanese style but actually American companies do the same thing. Now my second son is living in Boulder and his company also pays the rent of the apartment instead of him.

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A new washstand

2007,3,5



We finally got a new washstand. It took 3 days to renovate it. The first day they removed the old washstand, the screen and floor cover. The second day they wallpapered and spread the new floor cover. The third day they set the new shining washstand with the gray washbowl. I decided to use it carefully and always keep it clean.



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+ Zoorasia

2007,3,4



I went to Zoorasia that is famous for its okapi, a very rare animal which belongs to the giraffe family, in Yokohama yesterday with my son's family. I was looking forward to seeing it but regrettably I couldn't. Because the zoo was too huge to look all around and also there were some big playing fields so Taiga was absorbed in playing with amusements such as a jungle gym, a slide and so on. Anyway I enjoyed it a lot. The thing I was most surprised about was actually an elephant. Just when I saw him or her, it was going to the bathroom. It was like a little rock and a flood.

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+ Exercises

2007,3,3



Take care not to get altitude sickness if you climb up Mt. Fuji.
You can fill your canteen with clean water for free here. It would help you while you are climbing up the mountain.
As it was very hot last summer, many people died from dehydration all over the world.
Have you already prepared your gear for camping?
Let's hike in Tanzawa, the highest mountain in Kanagawa the weekend after next.
If you want to enter this building, you have to get a permit from the office.
We can hire a porter in Nepal quite cheaply.
Her dream occupation is a ranger working in a national park.
There are a lot of trails in the mountain. It's very important to bring a map when you trek there.

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✚ **I feel it would be just yesterday.**

2007,3,2



31 years have passed since I started to work as the civil servant here in Kanagawa. 31 years sounds like a very long time but I feel it would be just yesterday when I began to work. During these 31 years I got married and brought up two boys while working at the office. Now my sons have grown up safely and I'm a little bit tired with my job. Our compulsory age is 60 years old. I began to hope. If possible, I would like to retire from my job a little bit earlier than 60 years old. I have a lot of things that I really want to do after retirement. First of all I would like to live in the U.S. at least 3 months and improve my English. Now it's time that I begin to prepare for my studying in the U.S.: when and where I should study English and how much it will cost.

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✚ **NZ's favorite car ad**

2007,3,1



I read an article written in a web site of a newspaper in NZ. It says that recently the Australian authority banned from broadcasting an advertisement film of Korean Car Company Hyundai made in NZ and it would be kind of silly. Actually it was chosen as the most popular ad film among kiwis. I also watched the film. A toddler boy with a diaper is driving a car and picks up his girlfriend, very a quite little girl, and they drive to a beach to surf. At the end of the film a narrator says," Hyundai

Santa Fe, the next generation is here.” Honestly I can’t help agreeing with the Australian decision. Even if it’s fiction, strictly saying it shows illegal action. A toddler can’t get a driver’s license and shouldn’t drive a car. What’s more they shouldn’t use seat belts. They ought to stay in child seats in the rear. Such a film shouldn’t be shown in public. I’m convinced Japanese ad agencies can’t make the film like that. I’m afraid that New Zealanders are very easygoing and might be a little bit behind the current society. What do you think about this news? How about in the U.S.?



Animal rights

2007,4,30



Animal rights

I firmly believe that animals have the same rights as human beings.

I’m a strong believer in animal protection.

I think it’s morally wrong to do animal testing.

Personally, I’m of the opinion that animals shouldn’t be killed for fur coats.

I feel that it’s the responsibility of owners to make their pets comfortable.

I suppose it could be argued that animals shouldn’t be used for animal testing.

Some people might suggest that it’s their destiny to obey human beings.

There are those who believe that we can do animal testing to produce new medicine.

If you look at this from the point of doctors, you should admit that animal testing is a necessity.

I’m not convinced that animal testing should be prohibited, because it’s necessary to create new effective medicines.

I don’t think I can entirely agree with your opinion. After all, it depends on the case if we should kill animals or not.

You have to look at the other side of the situation. I mean the life of a human being is the most important thing in the world.

In the end I don’t agree with animal testing unless it’s a necessity for the development of human

beings.

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the golf course near Mt. Fuji

2007,4,29



How are your days in Mt. Morris? Just before I talked with Monte via Skype. He told me a funny short story and I could completely understand it. Please ask him about it. 2 years have passed since I stayed in your hometown. I miss those days and playing golf with you was a lot of fun. Yesterday I played golf at the golf course at the foot of Mt. Fuji. Unfortunately it was foggy and very cold yesterday there. I don't know exactly how high the golf course was but the weather was like February here in Fujisawa. All of us wore very thin clothing because we couldn't imagine it would be so cold. I wore my raincoat and survived the coldness. Anyway please correct my English.

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Animal headlines 2

2007,4,28



The world's dogs refusing to be pets

Now we can find many dogs which are wearing clothes. Their owners think they look cute with costumes but originally dogs are not animals which should wear clothes. They began to resist being pets.

The great disappearing ant mystery: none to be found (何故アリは消えたのか?)

Ants are famous for being hard working. They had already gathered enough food to live. Now they are enjoying their happy days under the ground.

Spiders suddenly reproducing in ten times greater numbers (クモが突然 10 倍に増えた!)

Recently they noticed that the movie " Spider man " was quite popular in the world. They might misunderstand they can earn a lot of money.

Cows stop producing milk

At the present day the society is full of lots of stress. Many human beings have a mental disease. It's the same for cows. Some cows are stressed and now they can't supply milk any more.

Kangaroos invade Australian cities

As it's known, the population density is not so big in that country. In addition to that, people have been protecting kangaroos for long time because they live in only Australia. Now the number of kangaroos is more than that of human beings there.

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Animal headlines

2007,4,27



Animal headlines

If I read these headlines, what stories can I imagine behind these headlines? The following sentences are my creation.

Bactrian camels develop a third hump

Camels are very important animal in deserts. They can travel for a long distance without water because they use their nourishment in their hump. They need so much nourishment everyday that now many camels have three humps on their backs. It's a kind of evolution which was created from necessity.

African elephants becoming carnivorous

In Africa there are lots of carnivorous animals such as lions and panthers. What's more it became hard for elephants to find their original herb food. Nowadays some of them began to eat small animals. It seems to be incredible but it's actually true.

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Why is the guy innocent?

2007,4,26



Pretty long ago a British girl's body was found in the cave in Kanagawa and one Japanese guy was arrested for killing her. The other day the judge ruled that he is innocent in this murder case.

I think it's 100 percent sure he is a criminal. The police couldn't find any evidence that shows his guilt in this case. So the judge couldn't help ruling he was not guilty. If there is no proof, we can't punish the suspect. It's a very important basic theory of the criminal law. But in this case the ex suspect must be the killer. Who killed her besides him?

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Talking about myself

2007,4,25



I guess I'm pretty good in stressful situations.

I would say I'm quite determined. (These expressions are quite modest and, right?)

I'm not all that good at making quick decisions.

I tend to be a bit impatient at times.

Are you the kind of person who likes a challenge? Yes, I would say so. But to be honest, I'm tired now and can't try to do a new job. What would you say your strengths are? Well, I think I'm fairly good at dealing with people. However now I've noticed there are lots of awkward fellows and I'm fed up with getting along with such people. How good are you with computers? I'd say I'm reasonably confident. I can make websites and use many types of software like Word well. Would you be interested in working outside? Possibly, but I'm not really cut out for physical labor. Have you ever considered going into design? Actually, I don't think I'm all that creative. (デザインの仕事をしようとかんがえたことがありますか？ 私は、それほど、創造的だとは思いません。)

My translations are correct, right?

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Talking about work

2007,4,24



Talking about job requirement

To be a doctor you need calmness and decisive.

You can't become a doctor unless you are smart.

To be a designer you need creativeness and originality.

You can't create new works unless you have originality.

To be a good mother you need patience.

You can't become a good mother unless you listen to what your kids want to say.

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A new mayor in Nagasaki

2007,4,23



Yesterday was the local Election Day and we elected mayors and members of local councils in many districts all over Japan. In Nagasaki they also elected the new mayor after the death of the former mayor, Mr. Ito. After his death, two men ran for the mayor: one of them was actually Mr. Ito's son in law and the other was an ex manager of the city government. I'm sure everybody was convinced that the son in law would be elected as the mayor. It was a kind of avenging battle and we usually elect a relative to replace a dead candidate. But surprisingly the ex civil servant won by a few points. Nagasaki citizens judged that they need a mayor who knows about Nagasaki exactly. The son in law was working in Tokyo as a reporter and he had never lived in Nagasaki. It is said the wife of him, the first daughter of the late mayor broke down into tears saying, "Oh, no. My late father can't be relieved in heaven." However I think their decision was good. And probably the late Mr. Ito is mumbling, "It's OK with me. The new mayor was an excellent man. He must become a good mayor. Everybody has their own roles. My son in law had better continue being a reporter. Mayor is not a hereditary occupation."

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Urban regeneration and development

2007,4,22



There used to be a big factory in front of our station but about 5 years ago it was closed down. It needed to be taken care of because it was kind of dangerous to have a huge vacant building. I'd like to see a vibrant stores there. If more shops were opened, people would be able to purchase much merchandise. It'd be good to build a shopping center so that people could buy necessities on their way home. Recently they decided to build a shopping center, a hospital and a spa in the site of closed factory. Wow, that sounds fantastic. I'm looking forward to seeing it and going there. 3 years have passed since they started the construction. The huge site was improved, which has led to the north area of the station being busy. The situation has been changed, so now many people spend a lot of money in that area. On the other hand, the big supermarket was

constructed, and therefore small local shops that didn't try to improve were unfortunately close down. People who live in the other area also have been attracted and now they visit there by the train and car. As a result, our area will prosper as a whole.

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Weak point of my English

2007,4,21



Today I tried to solve another trial examination of TOEIC again. To be honest this time my score was worse than before. Actually I couldn't finish all the questions. It took quite a long time for me to read some long texts. Probably the former examination was a little bit easier compared to the real test because today I solved the official workbook. Anyway I got 134 points out of 200. According to the conversion table it ranks between 690 and 770. It's OK with me now. I also analyzed my weak points. About listening parts I can do not so bad. Regarding grammar parts I can get good scores. About the last part of reading long articles it takes quite a long time for me. And there are lots of difficult words I've never memorized. I decided I would solve at least 2 questions a day from now. It would be useful for me not only when I take TOEIC but also when I read websites, instructions and books written in English.

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our vocations

2007,4,20



This morning I have a little bit of a hangover. Because last night I met my former coworkers and drunk a jug of beer, shochu and sake. I could drink a lot of alcohol and hold my liquor when I was young. But recently I don't want to drink so much. Drinking slightly is better for me but yesterday I drank too much. I chastised myself this morning. And now I feel a little bit sad because I noticed the difference of feelings regarding the job between them and me. We used to work very hard at the same department but now I can't help recognizing that I lost my eagerness for my job. One of my former bosses told us that the civil servant was his vocation. He retired about three years ago but he is still working for our government. According to his story, now he really wants to enjoy free time but he decided to work for the extra governmental organization for the coming two years because the organization needed him to readjust it. I respect him but I felt somewhat out of

place with him.

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✚ Nagasaki

2007,4,19



Why was the mayor killed? Actually the killer wasn't a tough criminal. According to the newspaper, he had been a kind of troublemaker. When he was driving a car, his car was damaged because there was a hole on the road. Therefore he demanded money from the city government but of course they refused. He had a grudge against the government so he killed the mayor. It doesn't make sense and sounds stupid. We can only pray for the souls of the late Mr. Ito.

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✚ Terrible incidents

2007,4,18



A terrible incident happened in America. The Korean student shot 32 people at random and committed suicide at the university. I'm wondering if prejudice and discrimination against Asian people would increase in America. Why do they allow ordinary citizens to keep guns in America? It seems to be too dangerous. While I'm thinking such things, the Mayor of Nagasaki had a bullet put through his back in front of his office in a very busy place. Now we have local elections and he was also the candidate of the mayor. He was campaigning. Nagasaki is famous for being Atomic bombed. So they love peace. I think Hiroshima and Nagasaki are symbols of peace in Japan. The newspaper said the murderer is a member of gang. In Japan we can't get guns legally besides guns for hunting. How did he get it? Probably gangs are keeping a lot of guns which they could get in the black market. Anyway I hope such a kind of incident will disappear.

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✚ TOEIC test

2007,4,17



I've been asked by many people, "How high is your score of TOEIC?" Somebody asked me about

my level of English recently. Actually I can't answer properly because I haven't taken TOEIC and I have no idea about it. I can only explain my English level is 3 at NOVA but I know it can't be understood outside of NOVA. I finally decided to take TOEIC test in this year. The other day I bought a workbook of that test and tonight I tried to take a practice examination whose form is the same of the real test. Of course I solved all questions in 2 hours. It was pretty hard work for me to solve 200 questions in 2 hours. It required a lot of energy. I barely finished all of them just before the finish time. After that I marked my own paper timidly. Wow, I could get a good score!! I didn't expect such a score. I could get 83 points of 100 in the listening part and 86 points in the reading part. Anyway I want to prepare more by solving more practice questions. Since I take a test, I really want to get satisfactory results.

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About coffee and alcohol

2007,4,16



It may be an improper expression; I'm kind of addicted to coffee. Every morning I brew coffee for my husband and me. I usually use grinded coffee and a filter to make hot coffee. It smells good and without a cup of coffee, I don't feel I'm awake. I don't drink alcohol so much but I love it. In Japan we say alcohol is superior to any medicine. It's appetizing and makes people cheerful. But sometimes alcohol becomes harmful. In what ways is alcohol harmful to society? For instance it causes domestic violence if a husband drink it a lot. The men who drink a lot are violent toward their wives and wives can't escape from them even if they want to. Many women are living in fear of their husbands. Now it's one of the big problems in Japan. Our local governments offer some secret shelters for such wives. I've never smoked in my entire life. To be honest when I was a student, I smoked once or twice but I stopped immediately because I became ill after that. I'm convinced that there isn't anything worse than tobacco. It leads lung cancer. What's worse it injures not only a person who is smoking but also people who are around him.

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Wedding custom 2

2007,4,15



I'm not sure why they drink Sake three times. Perhaps its because Sake is sort of holy.

I don't know much about wedding Kimono and hood, but maybe they mean white means purity and hood signifies submission.

In England it's normal to sprinkle rice on a couple. Is that the same in America?

Is it true you have a party for only the groom before his wedding?

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Japanese wedding customs

2007,4,14



It's traditional for a groom and bride to drink Sake three times from the same small cup.

It's considered unlucky for guest speakers to mention about things which make people associate cutting, for example scissors and knives.

It was once believed that a bride wears a white Kimono and hood.

In the past the custom was strict. Nowadays it's flexible.

The tradition of drinking Sake three times is thought to originate from Shinto religion.

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Dear Ken,

2007,4,13



I received an e-mail from a New Zealander whom I met last September.

Dear Ken,

Thank you very much for your e-mail. I'm glad you still remember me. I look at the website of Roger almost everyday so that I know two Japanese women were staying at your house with their little kids. You must have had good but a little bit noisy days with them. Sorry but I didn't receive your e-mail about when the comet appeared in the night sky in the Southern Hemisphere. Though it was not big news in Japan, I recognized that news. I sometimes check the websites in NZ because I miss your country. Now Sue is in England, isn't she? You must miss her, mustn't you? Do you cook by yourself? How old is her mother? I hope she will find a good nursing home. Now it's getting warmer and warmer here in Japan. We can see a lot of cherry blossoms here and there. Take care and please don't forget me. I hope I will visit you again someday and please let me know if you and your sons visit Japan. I will show you many places in Japan.

✚ **I was treated as a slave.**

2007,4,12



Japanese people are infamous for our traditional overworking. When I was working at the main office, I had to work until at earliest 9 pm almost every night. My boss believed working over time was very important and the best thing. Even when he didn't need to work for a long time, he stuck to his desk while chatting with one of his staff. After that he usually went to drink with his staff. It was his pleasure. I didn't want to go to the bar with such a disgusting man. Sometimes he had me standing in front of his desk over one hour and wisecracked to me. I always felt I was treated as a slave and said in my mind, "I'm not your slave."

✚ **Slavery opinions again**

2007,4,11



Sorry but I don't know exactly about the society of developing countries, so that my opinion is concerning only Japan. Of course there is no slavery now in Japan but they say the difference between wealthy people and needy people is getting larger and larger. Recently I often hear the word "working poor". It means some people can't gain steady jobs and they also can't earn enough income even if they work in earnest. During the business depression years it's really tight for new graduate people to find employment. Some of them still work as part time workers and can't get good salaries compared to full time workers. And foreign people from Iran, Brazil and so on are working as temporary staff at factories and construction sites. It's kind of inappropriate but I think these situations are modern day forms of slavery.

✚ **About slavery**

2007,4,10



According to the world news, recently they had a special ceremony of a termination of slavery 2

centuries ago in Africa. I'm not familiar with slavery but it must be one of the most miserable truths in our history. Slavery reminds me of the movie "Gone with the wind" and the novel "Uncle Tom's cabin". It means my knowledge is very shallow.

Sometimes I feel I'm a slave to technology. It means my alarm clock wakes me up at 6 am and cell phone calls me sometimes even if I enjoy watching TV. And after dinner my kitchen sink treats me as a slave. There are a lot of dirty dishes and I have to do dishes even if I'm exhausted. I have a dishwasher but I prefer doing dishes by myself. I like studying English. Now it's one of my favorite hobbies but sometimes I can't help feeling I'm a slave to English. Because I feel to write English everyday is my duty.

-△-



Tax payment certification

2007,4,9



Today I was working as an interpreter at my office. When I was checking documents, one of my staff came to my desk and asked me, "Sorry, but there is a foreign woman in front of the counter and she can't speak Japanese. Please ask her what she requires." I was very nervous because many coworkers listened to us carefully. She was a Filipina and her Japanese husband runs a business. He needed a proof that he paid a tax but she only showed us a small scratch paper on which her husband wrote simple words. We couldn't understand what kind of certificate she wanted to get. "Did a bank require the proof? Your husband tries to borrow money from the bank? When did your husband start his business? I think you need this proof and you have to pay 400 yen to receive this proof. Is it OK? If the bank needs another document, please come here again. But we can't return the money to you? Is it OK?" Probably I had to use some special English terms like "tax payment certification" but I didn't know the words at all. I even didn't know the word of certification. She didn't know the special words, too. Now I think I've mastered how to explain difficult matters in easy English. And I noticed it's very important to communicate well with foreigners. (Actually it's very rare that foreigners who can't speak Japanese visit our office. At Yokosuka office many U.S. navy soldiers visit the office to pay car tax. But it's easy to treat them because we understand why they visit there. Only show them the forms and receive the taxes.)

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✚ What a dilemma !

2007,4,8



(This is fiction in order to practice how I can use the subjunctive mood.)

One of my coworkers popped out to buy a card for his parents' wedding anniversary. While he was away, our boss asked me where he was because she had urgent business with him. How should I have explained to her? If I had covered for him, he wouldn't have been scolded by her. But I would have been blamed that I told a lie. If I had found out the truth, she might have reprimanded him. Then he must have had a grudge against me. I finally decided not to tell the truth. I answered to her, "I'm sorry I don't know where he is now. Probably he went to the bathroom or another place in our building. I'm sure I will tell him to go to your room later."

"Thanks for letting me know." If the business had not been so important, there would have been no trouble. But it was very important and what's more, he came back 30 minutes later. Who spends such a long time in the bathroom? Both of us ended up being dismissed. Now I really regret my decision and he also blamed me. "Why didn't you call my cell phone? If you had called me, I could have come back immediately." But I didn't know his cell phone number. I think he should have let me know his cell phone number. I think he misplaced his priorities.

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✚ Some slang

2007,4,7



Now in Japan, especially in big cities, a lot of convenience stores open 24/7. (Please let me know how we should pronounce 24/7.)

Matsuzaka will be the ace of the Major League.

Don't ask her because she is such an airhead.

She was all ears while her boss was whispering to one of her coworkers.

I really get into that cloth but it's an arm and a leg.

Please listen to them keenly. You have ants in your pants. You annoy us.

Now he is at the end of his rope. His wife wants to get divorced. It's because he has not been honest.

I think he is an average Joe. He loves baseball, listening to music and hates studying hard. (How can I say, if a person is a woman? Average Mary?)

I was axed the other day because I had been chatting with my coworkers all day long. Now I reflect on myself.

Now I have a cold but I'll be back on my feet in no time.

Always being a back seat driver would spoil kids.

Bob is a kind of bad egg in our office. He is always complaining and bothers us.

I'm sure people shouldn't bad mouth Nagoya. There are lots of beautiful and kind women and also foods are delicious. Now I'm thinking to move there after retirement.

Please don't ask me to lend any money. You are barking up the wrong tree. I don't have a dime.

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Discussing dilemmas

2007,4,6



Mr. S who has a wife and a daughter is being offered an overseas position by his boss. The country he will have to work is actually a Muslim country in the Middle East. It's a kind of big decision if he accepts the offer or not. (Please correct my English and also tell me if my translation is right or not.)

Considering the consequences

Taking the job could possibly mean he could be promoted. (その職につくことは、多分昇進することを意味するのだろう。)

If you turn the position down, it's likely that you would make your boss angry. (もし、その地位を断ったならば、上司を怒らせることになるだろう。)

Our daughter might have the opportunity to become bilingual.

His wife won't be able to communicate with neighbors well.

Her daughter might have to study among Muslim students. (彼の娘は、イスラム教徒の生徒に混じって勉強しないといけないかもしれない。)

She will be forced to recite the Koran. (彼女は、コーランを唱えさせられるだろう。)

She may have trouble with classmates.

If I accept the offer, I'm going to end up staying there for at least five years. (もし私が申し出を受け入れたら、少なくとも5年間は滞在しないといけないことになる。)

Expressing opinions

The positives outweigh the negatives. (悪い点より、いい点の法が多いよ。)

We can't afford to pass this up. (私達は、これを断る余裕なんて無い。)

If you don't go, you'll be kicking yourself later. (もし行かないならば、後で後悔するよ。)

You would have to be crazy to go. (いくなんて、気が狂っているに違いない。)

Reflecting on past decisions

If I had decided to go that country, then maybe I would have been promoted. (もしその国行くことを決めていたら、多分、私は昇進していただろう。)

If we had known about the country more, we would have accepted the offer. (もし、その国のことをもっと知っていたら、私は申し出を受け入れていたのになあ。)

He would have been better off, if he had worked abroad. (もし海外で働いていたら、もっと暮らしむきが良くなっていたのになあ。)

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Prince Harry

2007,4,5



It's said that British Prince Harry will go to war in Iraq. What's your opinion about this news? Do you think members of a royal family should fight on the front line or they shouldn't because it's too dangerous for them? In my opinion they should because they are living through our tax.

Almost everyone doesn't want to go war but they go because of their loyalty to the country. If the Prince fights at war, it would encourage the people. They have a lot of privileges: living through tax: getting admiration from the nation. Instead of such advantages they should show their duty to the nation. I think it's as a matter of course that royal members go to war with the young soldiers of their country.

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Brainteasers 2

2007,4,4



Q: When I was drinking beer in a bar, a strange guy entered the bar and sat down next to me. He didn't look so rich and his face was sunburned. He told me that he had been searching for a gold vein in a desert and finally discovered it about two weeks ago while passing his hand over his smooth and sunburned chin. "It was very hard work in the end. From early in the morning to the evening I was working outside under the shining sun. There was no shower and barber. I couldn't even drink a beer. I've just gone to the barber and had my beard shaved. It's comfortable." I immediately noticed he is a liar. Why do you think I found out his lie?

A: If we listen to his story carefully, we can easily find his trickery. He was working under the sun with his beard. That means even if his face is brown, his chin must be white. I think he is a kind

of careless idiot.

Q: A father and his son had a car accident and unfortunately the father, who was a doctor, passed away. But they took the seriously injured boy to an emergency hospital. At the hospital a surgeon shouted, “ Oh, no. He is my son.” and fainted. Is a surgeon ghost?

A: No, she is not a ghost. Actually the surgeon is the boy’s mother.

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Brainteasers

2007,4,3



Q: She is my mother’s only sister’s husband’s sister in law. She had no brothers. What can I call her?

A: I think she is my mother. So I call her my mom. At first I was confused. After that I wrote the family tree on paper. My mother has only one sister and she, my only aunt must have only one husband. So he has one sister in law. His sister in law is my aunt’s sister. She must be my mother.

Q: We have to cut a very heavy ten- foot plank into ten equal sections. It takes one minute to cut one time. How long do we spend to get ten equal pieces?

A: It take 9 minutes for us to get them. It’s easy for me to solve this question if I draw a line on paper. We have to cut it 9 times to make 10 pieces. I remember when I was an elementary school pupil, we used to solve such kinds of questions in the math class.

Q: Imagine there are two airplanes. One of them flies for Paris from NYC at 500 miles per hour. The other one heads for NYC from Paris at 450 miles per hour. Both of them start at the same moment. When they meet with each other over the Atlantic, which plane do you think is closer to Paris?

A: They are at the same distance to Paris. The speeds of these planes are different so we are easily confused. We might begin to calculate on the paper but please be cool. The planes are exactly in the same place in the air. It means there is no difference of the distance from Paris.

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✚ **talking about the impact of**

2007,4,2



I really feel genetic research has so many potential benefits. I wouldn't be surprised to see that it will ultimately lead to a cure for cancer. It would be excellent if people were able to get over cancer. Cybernetic implants will be commonplace 20 years from now. Thinking such things is really exciting. I'm quite concerned about the prospect of human cloning. I hate to think what would happen if human cloning were commonplace. It would be really scary if I found another Masaho in front of me. Human cloning will have to be banned. Human cloning is very worrying. If we allow human cloning then it will only be a matter of time before scientists create a lot of cloned human beings. (もしクローン人間をつくることを許したら、科学者がたくさんのクローン人間を作り出すのは時間の問題だろう。) Is my Japanese translation correct?

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✚ **14 th Japan-US Cherry Blossom Festival**

2007,4,1



Today I went to the U.S. Navy Base in Yokosuka to see the cherry blossoms. It was really my first time to enter the Base. It's actually the U.S. in Japan and surprisingly there are a lot of cherry trees. And they were in full bloom today and today was a very sunny day. I arrived there at 10:30 so I could enter there easily. But it came to be very crowded soon. They also let us see the USS Shiloh. As there was a long long line of people waiting in front of it, I gave up visiting into it. When I left the Base, I found a lot of people still waiting to enter at the gate. We must have our belongings checked by the sailors to enter the Base. The Base is very huge and many sailors were standing around to stop us from entering the prohibited areas. There were a lot of signs written in English but I couldn't read some of them. Oh my dear!! How long have I been studying English? I lost my confidence completely.

I can watch vedeos again.

2007,5,31



Thanks for your information. Now I watched some videos on your web site. Actually the omelet looks delicious. You are good at cooking, aren't you? Your room also looks very nice. You live in a wonderful room in the center of Tokyo. The facilities for travel are very good. The rent must be very high. Onsen with coin laundry is very common in Japan. There is the same style Sento near my office. Anyway I can watch your video and enjoy it again. That's really good.



Some common quotes about crime

2007,5,30



“ The best place to learn to be a criminal is in jail.” Prisoners can chat with each other in jail about what kind of crimes they committed and how they were arrested. So they can get a lot of knowledge about how to steal money successfully.

“ Once a criminal, always a criminal.” I think it means if someone commits a crime once, he can't get rid of his record.

“ Obviously crime pays, or there'd be no crime.” Some criminals can get a lot of money and are not arrested. It some times gets a good result so crimes never disappear in our society. (I'm not comfortable with this understanding. Is it right?)



Animal similes

2007,5,29



I was as busy as a bee in my thirties. The Yokozuna looks as strong as an ox. The moment I met him, I noticed he is as stubborn as a mule. He is said to be as wise as an owl. I hate him because he is as sly as a fox. A young boy who is as brave as a lion saved a drowning little girl in the river. It's a waste of time to explain such an idiot who is as blind as a bat. She is as proud as a peacock so nobody wants to become her friend.



About the previous crime

2007,5,28



Just ten years have past since the unbelievable crime happened; the junior high school boy killed 2 little kids in Kobe. The criminal killed the 11 year-old boy, cut his head off and put it in front of the gate of the junior high school. Besides he sent some letters to the police. “ Arrest me if you can.” After several years' penal servitude at the juvenile corrective institution, he left there. It is

said now he became the 24 year- old young guy and is working somewhere in Japan. He regrets his crime now and sends money to the victim's parents to express his reflection. However the victim's father who is a 51 year-old doctor says that the only one thing they want is his son return to them.

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✚ Asking politely to stop annoying me

2007,5,27



My neighbors are really noisy. At 5 o'clock in the morning they start to play rock music every day. I decided to ask them to stop their rule.

Excuse me. I don't mean to be rude, but can I ask you one thing? Could you please stop playing music in the morning? (Would you mind not playing music early in the morning? I was wondering if you could stop playing music at 5 o'clock.) It's just that it's loud and too early so please, if you wouldn't mind.

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✚ Dealing with awkward situations

2007,5,26



Dealing with awkward situations

My friend lent me her car but I ran into a guardrail. I had to apologize and explained what I had done.

" You know how you lent me your car the other day."

" What are you trying to say?"

" How can I put this? The thing is I damaged it last night. I'm so sorry."

I realized that I wouldn't be able to meet the deadline concerning my report. I have to tell it to my boss. He must get angry.

" Do you have a minute? About that report, you see it's kind of hard work." " Could you get to the point? " " What I'm trying to say is actually I don't think I can complete it by next Monday, the dead line."

I lost the costly necklace that my friend lent me.

“ I’ m not sure how to tell you this but please don’ t get angry. “ “ What are you getting at?”

“ What I mean is I’ m so sorry but I can’ t find your necklace in my house.”

By mistake I dumped my friend’ s important book which I borrowed from her.

“ I’ m afraid I have some bad news but please don’ t be surprised.” “ Would you just say it?

“ “ OK. Basically, what happened was I lost your important book which you had lent me last month by accident. ”

My friend invited me to her home and served a lunch which she had spent a quite long time to prepare.

“ This has quite an unusual flavor.” “ So you are saying you don’ t like it? “ “I’ m not saying that. Its just quite spicy.“

My sister changed her hairstyle. She worries about her new hairstyle.

“You’ ve cut it pretty short.” “ You mean too short, right? “ “ No. Not exactly. It’ s just a bit different from before. It will grow soon.”

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How to use gerund and infinitive

2007,5,25



Some verbs need to be followed by only gerund but then there are some verbs after which we should put only infinitive. I will make some examples. Are they correct?

I missed catching the bus this morning.

I usually avoid arguing with my colleagues.

She is capable of being a good manager.

Your job includes making the budget.

She refused transferring to the new branch.

He suggested lending some money to her.

She has been working since 8 o’ clock.

I’ ve already finished writing the letter.

Would you mind considering looking for the book?

She was expected to complete the difficult plan.

Everybody agreed to make the new contract.
I promise to meet the deadline.
She appears to be in good health today.
The old building still remains to be renovated.
He failed to solve the problem.

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Participial construction

2007,5,24



I read an English grammar book and it says we generally don't use participial construction in speaking English. Is it true? However there are some idioms that use participial construction. The following are examples. Judging from her attitude she is a still teenager. Some women including me really hate him. According to the weather forecast it will be rain tomorrow. Concerning the study of English I'm still motivated. Considering my age it seems hard to master English. Given my condition, I'm satisfied with my result.

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A clothing store for old ladies

2007,5,23



Today I attended a local meeting and party and talked with a 75 year-old man. He has been running a clothing store for women for over 50 years. His business used to be very prosperous but now it is declining. What's worse he had an operation on his backbone last winter. But he told me many customers were asking him not to close the store. He sells clothing for only old ladies and if he closes his store, where can they buy good underwear with lace for old ladies? Average customers are only five a day and they spend at most 10 thousand yen. His store holds a parking space for 6 cars but who uses the parking lot? Many people around him are laughing at him and of course his business has been red for a long time. "It's my reason for living. I still drive to Asakusa by myself to purchase stock. Many grandmothers visit me, chat with my wife drinking tea and then choose some cheap cloths. They want to dress up when they go to day care centers." "Wow, that's a good story. Actually my mom told me there was no good dress for old ladies in department stores. Please enjoy running your business. It's important."

Mandatory minimum sentencing laws

2007,5,22



What is the MMS law ? It's the law concerning punishments. If a criminal commits crime several times, he should be sentenced to a very heavy punishment compared to the first offender by this law. In my opinion, people who sin again and again can't repent of their crime. So I can't help agreeing with this law. Of course it depends on their offences what kinds of punishments they should be given. The death penalty is too heavy if criminals have only stolen money sometimes.

Personal transfers

2007,5,21



June first is the day of personal transfers in our office. We are usually transferred on April first but this year is different because we had the election of the governor and councilors. This afternoon some young staff were informed of their change. They will tell the transfer to the managerial posts next Friday. There are a few problematic staff in my department but it is not so terrible. Now my two assistants are very efficient. I'm sure they will leave the present office from June. I'm really sorry to say good-bye to them but we should obey the decision. And I don't know if I have to move or not.

World Rivers

2007,5,20



The Amazon is the great river in South America.
The Ganges runs from the Himalayan Mountains to the Bay of Bengal.
The Nile is the longest river in the world running from through the northeast of Africa. It is called one of the three greatest rivers as well as the Mississippi and the Amazon.

The Mekong is the biggest river in Southeast Asia. The area of its lower delta is very important to produce good rice.

The Thames is the famous river in England. The length is 338 kilometers.

The Seine, which runs 780 kilometers in France, is a kind of symbol in Paris.

The Mississippi rises from the lake in Minnesota and runs into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Donau is the famous river in Europe. There are several famous cities such as Vienna along the river.

The Rio Grande is the river that defines the border between America and Mexico.

The Yangtze is the largest river in China. The basin has been the center of traffic, industry and culture in China.

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Terrible crime

2007,5,19



These days atrocious crimes happen often. I studied law at university and I know the theory of criminal law. There are some arguments about whether the death penalty is justice or not. Thinking about the current cases, I'm convinced offenders should be given excessive punishments. Regarding yesterday's incident, that crazy man should be sentenced to at least a life sentence. We can't regenerate such an easily excited guy even if he stays at jail.

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the trouble on the website

2007,5,18



Sorry but I can't watch your videos including your breakfast and a coin-operated laundry. We use optical fiber and I believe it is not owing to our condition. We have 3 PCs at home and I tried to watch them by using the other PCs but I couldn't. Strangely I could watch the videos which you posted before April. I will try it again through my son's PC someday. I use my own PC every day at the office but I can't try it there. They warn that the employee shouldn't use the Internet to look at websites except for our business purposes. Some workers were disciplined for looking at websites like stocks, hobbies and so on during office hours. Moreover these days they tell us never to use the Internet at the office after work. I think it's too strict but I don't want to be

punished. Anyway please ask about the trouble on your website from the other students. I hope I will be able to enjoy them soon.

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Tamiflu

2007,5,17



Tamiflu is a medicine that is said to be effective for flu but this winter it brought about big problems. Some teenagers fell down from high buildings after they took it. It seems to give hallucinations to some people – especially teenagers. Now the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare bans from prescribing Tamiflu for teens.

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The belated gift for Mother's Day

2007,5,16



Today I received some packs of sweets from my daughter in law. I found them very delicious after eating one of them. They are kind of famous cakes produced in Iwate. Now we can get various foods all over Japan through the Internet. There are lots of web sites that introduce many local special products. The more convenient the world becomes, the more we can enjoy our daily life.

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About cloning

2007,5,15



I'm not a expert of science so I don't know about cloning exactly. Actually I don't have a strong opinion about cloning. Good points of it seem to be the following. At first, we can produce excellent cattle. For the second, we can use it to improve medical science. I can't imagine any other good points. One the other hand, I can guess a lot of bad things. It's against the natural providence. They might apply that technique for human beings and easily use it badly. I mean if somebody makes a cloned human being, our society must begin to be upset. We will not be able to recognize who is the true person. And we might finally believe nobody.

I hear 10 percent of couples can't have their own babies. Actually my elder sister didn't give birth. As luckily I have two sons, I can't understand their real minds. But I think we shouldn't create stem cell eggs of human beings. If they really want babies, they should become foster parents. There are lots of poor kids who don't have warm homes. We also shouldn't discriminate against people having no kids.

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vaginal synovitis

2007,5,14



I have been feeling a pain on my right index finger for over 2 weeks. These days I have to push seals on lots of documents and it requires quite a bit of strength. I also use the computer almost all day long and use my right index finger to deal with the mouse. When I use the keyboard, I also use that finger too much. I must have been overdoing it. Anyway I feel a sharp pain if I bend it. Tonight I wrapped a bandage around the finger to protect it. It's very inconvenient. Can I say this symptom is vaginal synovitis?

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Expressing levels of enthusiasm

2007,5,13



What do you wake up looking forward to? (何を楽しみに起きるのですか?)
Every morning I look forward to reading newspapers while drinking coffee. I usually make an effort to catch the up-to-date news. Brewing coffee is my favorite part of housework. (コーヒーをいれることは、家事の中では好きなことです。) I feel a sense of accomplishment if I can serve freshly brewed coffee. I'm usually pretty motivated to study English. (英語の勉強はいつもかなりやる気がある。) When I was young, I got a kick out of watching movies. (若い時は、映画を見るのを大いに楽しんだ。) I'd always been one to go to movie theaters every weekend. (毎週末には映画館に行く人だった。) I went out of my way to go to the big theaters in Tokyo. (私はわざわざ東京の大きな映画館に行った。)

Expressing lack of enthusiasm

What do you wake up dreading? (何を心配して起きるのですか?)

There are times I can't be bothered to do the dishes. (お皿を洗いたくない時も時々ある。) I don't have the patience to cook dinner every night. (毎晩夕食をつくるのにうんざりしている。) I don't have the patience for ironing. I don't really have any motivation when it comes to going grocery shopping. (食料品を買いにいく気は全くない。) I dread cleaning our room when I'm tired. (疲れている時は、部屋を掃除したくない。) Checking many documents doesn't interest me in the slightest. (たくさんの書類を調べるのには、全く関心がない。) Going to a busy place is the last thing I want to do. At school, I'd do just about anything to avoid being a failure. (学校では、落第しないために何でもした。) I'd just as soon study hard than get a bad grade. (悪い成績を取るよりは、むしろ一生懸命勉強をしたい。) I just can't be bothered to even spend a lot of time to study hard. (私は、一生懸命に勉強するために長い時間を費やす気が起きないだけだ。) One of my dreams has always been to be a good English speaker. (私の夢の一つは、ずっと英語の上手な人になることだった。)

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Infant conversations

2007,5,12



Speaking with Taiga was really funny. I can't translate them well but please enjoy our conversation.

At the station

My sister: Nice to meet you. Let's hold hands.

Taiga : No. I don't know you well. I can't hold hands with strange grandmas. (to me) Who is this yellow grandma? Can I hold hands with her? (Actually she wore a yellow jacket.)

At my living room

He was painting with the blue crayon on the ironing board because its height was suitable for a little child.

Taiga : Hi Grandma. Is this a table which makes clothes crisp ? Someone painted something blue here.

Me: Who soiled it besides Taiga? Nobody used blue crayon except you.

Taiga: (being embarrassed) I'm sorry. I might have done it but I didn't do it on purpose.

✚ You Tube

2007,5,11



Regarding the You Tube videos on your website, I can load almost every videos including You Tube besides yours. It's really really mysterious that I can't watch only your videos, but it's true. And I'm sure about how to load You Tube videos. Anyway about computers something strange happens sometimes. Occasionally I can't receive e-mails which somebody actually sends to me. My son can't download Skype to his new Apple computer which the company supplied to him. He can use Skype through another Apple computer. He is a kind of professional with computers but he can't understand the reason for it. By the way, my first son's family is still living in Nagoya now and they are to move to Tokyu in July and they are looking for their new house close to Kiba where his office is. Actually today they came to Tokyo to look for the new house and I was taking care of thier two kids while my daughter in law was visiting several pre-schools for her son. I didn't have confidence to baby-sit two wicked kids by myself so I asked my sister to help me. We had a lot of fun with the two kids but it was very hard work for us, slightly old women. I'm exhausted now and lost my sprit of studying English tonight.

✚ noise

2007,5,10



Thanks for the videos taken in the U.S. but sad to say, I can't watch them. It takes a quite long time to load them. After 15 minutes, it didn't finish loading yet. So I gave up watching them. I don't know why. These days there are lots of noises in my area. They are noises from the aircrafts over our town. I think now an aircraft carrier is staying at Yokosuka Navy Base. They are flying from the carrier to Atsugi airport. Fujisawa is between Yokosuka and Atsugi. Recently they say the Defense Facilities Administration Agency is planning to sound proof our houses. I'm looking forward to having it. Anyway please correct my English.

✚ The copyrights of movies

2007,5,9



We should pay money when we watch a copyrighted movie. There are some means to watch just released movies for nothing on websites. However doing such things is sort of stealing. It disturbs the copyright and hurts movie company's income.

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✚ Why are fake pharmaceuticals wrong?

2007,5,8



They might be cheap compared to authentic products and actually there is no visual difference between the real and fake brands. However it's really dangerous to take fake medicine. They might not contain active ingredients. What's worse, they sometimes contain poison.

How to protect copyrights of music and exclude pirated materials.

There are lots of pirated CDs. It is said they don't care about copyrights in China. More over, now we can easily download copyrighted music for free through the Internet It's a kind of big problem for the music industry and it seems to be inevitable that they can't protect the copyright perfectly.

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✚ Replica bag

2007,5,7



Recently I read an article in the newspaper about counterfeit bags and purses. At airports customs officials find a lot of replica goods and take them away from passengers who try to bring them into Japan. Most of such fakes are from China and Korea. If somebody imports them to sell in Japan, it's illegal. However according to Japanese law it's not illegal to buy them in foreign countries to use as your own. They say in France it's actually illegal. Why is it guilty to import fake brand-name handbags? Because it disturbs the property rights.

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✚ Who would you trust ?

2007,5,6



(Please let me know the difference from “Whom would you trust?”)

Now I’m too busy to go to the bank to open my personal safe there. Whom can I ask to do it in behalf of me?

Expressing opinions about people’s reliability

I Have faith in my husband because actually he is the person closest to me.

I think I should go with my son as a substitution for me.

I can always depend on my sister to open my safe.

Perhaps my friend is better suited for the job because she lives near the bank.

I have to go away for 3 months from next week. Whom should I beg to house- sit?

Id feel better if my sister looked after my house.

I’m apprehensive about having my neighbor look after my house because she has never entered my house.

I have my doubts about my neighborhood kid as the house- sitter.

Declining someone’s offer of help

That’s very kind of you, but I don’t want to bother you.

Actually, I was hoping to get my sister to look after my house.

My sister has already offered to help, but thanks for asking.

Really, I don’t want to put you through all the trouble.

I know you have more experience, but I thought it would be a good opportunity for the neighborhood kid, Miyoko, to house-sit.

Please don’t take this wrong way, but I’ve already asked my sister.

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Difficult expressions

2007,5,5



During this Golden Week I have nothing to do besides housework. Actually my son’s family was supposed to come to my home but they canceled just before the holidays. My son is busy at work now so he is working hard while many people are enjoying holidays. But I don’t want to spend time to patter around. I have been spending a lot of time reading some books concerning the TOEIC test. I found a lot of expressions that I’ve never heard. Below are samples of those.

The rich are not necessarily happy.

The president authorized him to make the contract with ABC Co. for fifty million yen.

What do you say we go to the movies? (映画に行くことはどうですか?)

The planetarium is worth visiting.

I asked him to attend the meeting in place of her.

Recently we scarcely can find custom tailors in the town. (最近は、町中でほとんど仕立て屋を見かけない。)

Would you prefer to pay with credit card or shall we send a bill?

I have only a 20-dollar bill.

They may have decided to call it a day. (彼らは仕事を終えることにしたのかもしれない。)

Let's call it a day. (今日は終りにしよう。)

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." is known as The Golden Rule. (「他人からしてもらいたいことを、他人にしてあげなさい」は黄金律として知られている。)

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How to close a conversation

2007,5,4



There are five ways to close a conversation. I'm going to write the phrases that we should say in each ways. Please let me know if they are appropriate ways or not.

Excuse the other person

I'd better not take up any more your time.

I hope you don't mind, but I have to get back to work.

Excuse yourself

I guess I'd better be going.

I'm awfully sorry, but I've got to be going now.

Thank the other person

Thank you very much for your time.

Make a promise (to meet again)

We'll have to get together soon.

Well, keep in touch.

Wish the other person well

Let me know how it goes.

Well, take care.

I hope everything goes well.

✚ The impressionists

2007,5,3



When I was chatting with Monte through Skype, he asked me to introduce some Japanese pictures that his client wanted to use for the calendar. He also sent me an e-mail to make sure what he asked me. This is my reply to Monte.

Thanks for sending me your e-mail. Now I can understand what you want. Actually at that time I could almost catch you but I didn't know the word for "an impressionistic picture". Of course I know such painters like Monet and Renoir. Actually in Japanese we call such painters "Inshouha" and that Japanese is the literal translation of English "the impressionists". You also told me that she wanted a foggy landscape, right? I think you need a picture like the one that I attached to this e-mail. I will try to find the picture that you need but I'm not sure if I will be able to find it or not. Anyway I'm going to send a sample and let me know your opinion. See you later.



✚ How to interrupt

2007,5,2



One of my friends is very chatty. She is always telling a long-winded story. How can I interrupt her and change her topic?

By the way, I have to finish cleaning in 30 minutes.

That reminds me, I'm going to call him.

Speaking of that new store, you had better go there right now.

At the meeting one of my colleagues is observing his idea for quite long time. How should I interrupt him?

Oh, there's something else I wanted to say. We have to finish this job in 2 hours from now.

I know this is changing the subject but let's discuss the plan first.

If I could interject at this point, I'd like to add something that we should consider first.

Excuse me for interrupting, but this might be a good time to mention the new problem.

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Showa Memorial Day

2007,5,1



The 29th of April was the first Showa Memorial Day. It has been a national holiday in Japan for a long time. It used to be the Emperor's Birthday and after the death of the Showa Emperor the government established the new national holiday, the Greenery Day, on that day. From this year they changed the Greenery Day from the 29th of April to the 4th of May and we began to call the 29th Showa Memorial Day. What's Showa? Originally it's the name of a Japanese emperor's era. Our former emperor passed away 18 years ago and his reign was called Showa. The present emperor's era is Heisei. They are used in only Japan. I think it sounds strange but we still usually use Heisei instead of the Christian Era in our government. When we are asked when we were born, we usually answer, "I was born in Showa ...". Anyway it's better for me that they add a new national holiday. The more we get national holidays, the better we feel.

Suggesting alternatives

2007,6,30



Please imagine I'm a landlord of an apartment building with a parking problem. Residents want me to provide more parking spaces. Now I'm attending the residents association meeting.

Now I'm thinking of a good solution for your request. I can buy the pretty large piece of land next to the present parking area to provide you more parking spaces. But would you mind paying 20 percent more money for the rent? I have to request a loan from a bank to get the land and also pay a lot of interest every month.

I think there's more than one solution to this problem. Let's consider my option. Why don't you consider renting the land? That way we can pay the rent much less than a 20 percent increase.

We haven't considered looking into our present parking area. I've noticed there is so much dead space. Another possibility might be to cut a lot of trees and divide each parking lot again so that we need not pay the additional rent.

At the end of the day, I asked a gardener to cut my lovely cherry trees to increase the parking spaces. Of course the residents paid me the temporary money to level the land. .

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Mr. Miyazawa

2007,6,29



Yesterday the Japanese former Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa passed away from senility. It is said that he was really famous for his marvelous English and the only one Japanese politician who could negotiate difficult matters with English speaking foreign high class officials without interpreters. There are many anecdotes concerning his English. He was always reading English newspapers at the dining room in the Diet House and someone told him he should have read Japanese newspaper because he was a Japanese Diet member. He answered asking why that person didn't read English newspaper to understand the diplomatic relations. American journalists who had heard his English declared that his English was much better than President Clinton with his Southern accent. President Bush threw up on Miyazawa's knees, when he attended the party in the Japanese official residence. Mr. Miyazawa explained the President's symptom skillfully in English by himself at the press conference and American reporters were relieved at his good explanation. He sometimes corrected interpreters' mistakes at international meetings. How did he master English? Before World War Two he studied English by reading English books, as an ordinary student. When he attended the American and Japanese students conferences, he fully realized his English was good for nothing. He started to study English keenly again. After World War Two he had to meet with GHQ in English as a young bureaucracy and ended up improving English. Anyway he was a Japanese great international politician.

Internationalism

2007,6,28



Japan has been a homogeneous state and many people still would say that we should pride ourselves on it. If I'm asked about destinations of immigrants, I would answer they are Australia, Canada and America. The similarity of both Australia and Canada is their territories are huge and the populations are not so large. Their population densities are not so high and therefore they need immigrants to improve their industries. In my opinion we have to spread internationalism and multiculturalism rather than nationalism and racism in Japanese in the future but we should never forget Japanese good points.

Speed limit for German Autobahn

2007,6,27



The German Autobahn is famous for its unlimited speed. They can drive on that highway as fast as they like. Now they are discussing if they should introduce a speed limit there or not to reduce the amount of CO2 emissions. The Germans seem to love speed. Their cars like Porsche, Mercedes and BMW look very powerful compared to Japanese cars. I think Japanese cars like Toyota and Honda are economical on gas and strong. Owning an imported car like a Mercedes is one of the status symbols in Japan. But I never want to purchase such a car. The power of that car is necessary to avoid dangerous situations but I'm convinced that a Japanese car is enough when we drive in Japan, a small country.

Billy's Boot Camp

2007,6,26



Billy's Boot Camp is a fad in the U.S. and it's getting more and more popular in Japan. Billy is a 51 year old black tough guy and he had been working as a trainer in the U.S. army. He has been changing a lot of soldier's bodies. Now he became one of the most popular exercise trainers in America. Now we can purchase his Japanese version exercise videos with the special material

like a tube. I watched his video on You Tube website. He cheers many people who are dancing behind him with a funny call while leading the way. It looks interesting and pleasant. But it must be hard work to continue this exercise. Nobody can be slim easily.

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Cheers! 2

2007,6,25



I'm attending a graduation party of Pat, a girl who is my next door neighbor. Everyone! Listen up! This smart and pretty girl, Pat received a degree of Fine Arts from the ABC College today. Congratulations! I've known her since she moved here at the age of 5. I'm sure you all remember she was so tomboyish. I remember she broke my window playing baseball when she was an elementary school kid. She hit a big home run into my house. Now she's grown up to be such a lady and found a great job. Pat should very proud of herself. So, let's raise our glasses to Pat.

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Cheers!

2007,6,24



I would like to make some short stories for parties. For Ken's farewell party. Please assume I was his teacher at the junior high school. May I have your attention please? I'd just like to say a few words about Ken. As you all know I've known him for ten years. He was a junior high school student when I met him for the first time. I noticed he had a great talent of art as soon as I started my class. His paintings were so great. Now he graduated from college and got a scholarship to study in Italy. That's wonderful however I'm a little bit worried about him. I know he hates eating pasta and doesn't speak Italian at all. How can he get along with Italians? I don't know. Anyway he will do well because he is so smart. Best wishes for Ken and congratulations!

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The way we were

2007,6,23



It's also a famous movie of Redford's. The Japanese title is Tuioku, which means retrospect. To tell the truth, it's more famous for its theme song which Barbra Streisand sang. The Jewish poor girl fell in love with the very handsome, rich, talented and easygoing guy. They got married and had a girl baby but the baby was born on the day that was their last day of married life. Because their life styles and principles were quite different. She was a sort of activist of communism and he couldn't understand her way of life. She told him, " People live where their principles are." He answered, " I can't breathe with you." (I don't have confidence with these original parts. It's really difficult to catch their lines.) After 10 or 15 years past their separation, they happened to meet again in front of The Plaza Hotel in NYC. She was giving out fliers of communism to pedestrians with her group. On the other hand he looked like a wealthy and successful man with a new beautiful wife. They noticed each other, chatted and said good-bye soon. But after a little while he appeared again by himself and hugged her tenderly. His face looked really gentle and sad. Every audience at the theater including me was crying while watching this last scene. We were really moved by the difficulty of keeping a good relationship. I used to chat about this film with my friends at school. Someone asked why the cute guy loved such a strong and ugly girl. Another friend had an opinion love was different from marriage. She has a responsibility for the divorce. No, it depends on his love affair. And I had a question as to why they got divorced on the day when their first baby was born. Anyway everybody was attracted to his beauty. It's my most favorite movie in my entire life and many middle-aged women the same age of me still say the same thing even in Japan.

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Jeremiah Johnson

2007,6,22



I had an opportunity to talk about movies of Robert Redford with a young Australian girl. Surprisingly she told me that her favorite movie was "Jeremiah Johnson" which was produced in 1972, a kind of old movie and I think it's not so famous. Have you ever heard of it? I'm a huge fan of Redford so of course I've watched it and have a videotape of it. Its Japanese title is Oinaru Yujya, it means a great brave man. Sometimes Japanese titles of American movies are quite different from the originals. Redford played the hero and he enters an Indian society in the Rocky Mountains and begins to live with Native Americans in the movie. Today I found the old tape of its film which I recorded in 1990 from TV. I tried to watch it again but sadly the tape couldn't work well. It loosened. I'm not sure when I watched it for the last time. I collected a lot of videotapes of

movies but I will not watch them again. Now DVDs are much more popular and convenient. Times are changing but we can enjoy movies forever thanks to the developing technology.

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The rainy season in this year

2007,6,21



The other day the Metrological Agency declared the rainy season had already started but it hasn't rained yet in our region since that time. Today was fine and very humid. In my memory I didn't use my umbrella both yesterday and the day before yesterday. I don't know the reason why there is no rain this year but we are worried about the lack of water during this summer. And it's not good for the harvest of rice and other products. We can't use an air conditioner at the office until the beginning of July under the policy of saving energy. Working in the very humid room makes us crazy. It's not efficient.

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An explosion in Shibuya

2007,6,20



Yesterday afternoon a machinery building of an exclusive spa in Shibuya suddenly exploded and three women employees were killed. The spa was only for women and famous for its gorgeous mood. It was opened in January in last year and drew water from a deep underworld. It is said there was natural gas under the ground and the gas caught fire. Since there were around one hundred women in the spa, fortunately nobody except several employees and pedestrians near the building was injured. Does the company that owns the spa have to indemnify the victims? I think they should. I think if the employee is a regular worker, a survivor can get enough money from the company but if she is a part time worker, they can't receive so much money compared to the former.

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Tengu in Mt. Takao

2007,6,19



What's this picture? Tengu, Japanese old fabulous monster is spreading the white paper where he wrote "The unfair judgment" in front of many reporters. What kind of suit did he take? The Japanese Ministry has a plan to build a highway through Mt. Takao and they decided to make a tunnel under the mountain. Many residents who love the nature of Takao don't agree with the plan and they filed a lawsuit to stop the construction. But the local court dismissed the suit so he is appealing his dissatisfaction to the journalists. Why does he make himself out as a Tengu? Because there is a temple of Buddhism in Mt. Takao and a Tengu is a symbol of the temple. It is said that the Tengu has been living in Mt. Takao since ancient days. The Tengu is a kind of goblin with a red face and a long nose. He is a sort of god of the mountain.



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✚ To my American friend

2007,6,18



Thank you very much for your e-mail. You didn't tell me anything inappropriate at all through Skype. I think your memory is quite good because you told me about your swimming pool at that time. The filter of the pool was broken so you took it down with a thirteen-year old boy who is a son of a chiropractor. The chiropractor has a boat and you had a good time with him on the river. I asked you to let me stay at your home after I retire from my job. I sent e-mails to three community colleges near your house to ask them about ESL classes in May. However they have not responded to my e-mail yet. You told me that you would ask them about my questions instead of me someday. These items were part of our conversation on Saturday in Japan. (in the middle of the night on Friday in the U.S.) One thing I'm worried about is that you were always eating something while we were chatting. I think eating in the middle of the night is not healthy. I really want to tell you that you are always a gentleman. I think there are a lot of mistakes in my

English. I'm so sorry. Take care and see you again in 2009. If you have free time, please chat with me again.

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Telling stories and expressing skepticism

2007,6,17



Did you hear that a young woman got married with a cat in England?

A cat that what?

Seriously. It was back 2 weeks ago.

Are you pulling my leg?

What happened was the British girl who really loves her cat held at their wedding ceremony.

How could a woman marry a cat?

As unbelievable as it may seem, I watched it on a BBC TV program.

Why would the girl decide to do it?

Believe it or not, she loves the cat so much and wants to give him her property.

It seems pretty unlikely that a woman gets married with a cat, and besides the law must ban people from doing such a foolish act.

According to the TV show I watched yesterday, many people celebrated their marriage.

You can't believe everything you watch on a TV show. You can't catch the English narration perfectly. The cat must have attended his master's wedding ceremony while wearing the tuxedo.

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Headlines

2007,6,16



Understanding headlines written in English is really difficult for me. For example, what's the meaning of "Police Search for missing toddler"? I think it means, "Now police are looking for the little kid who disappeared from his or her home." "India To Host Olympics" means India wants to hold the Olympic games in their country. "Man Saves Family From Drowning" expresses that a brave man saves a family who were drowning. Are my understandings correct?

According to the news there are a lot of troubles concerning NOVA. As far as I could work out,

the articles are true. I'm worried about the future of NOVA because I still have lots of tickets for the lessons. But so far I haven't lost my money paid to NOVA.

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How to relate events

2007,6,15



Last week the government announced plans to cut funding beginning next month. This week concerned people made dramatic protests.

Last week the President suddenly fainted and was admitted to a hospital. This week an official for the White House has reported that he has made a full recovery.

Last week fraud charges were brought against millionaire Hori. This week the court acquitted him of fraud.

This week the government is seeking asylum for people from North Korea. This week refugees have been placed in detention by authorities until further notice.

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To my son

2007,6,14



Thanks for the beautiful bouquet. To tell the truth, today was not a good day at the office. Some troubles happened as usual. But I forgot everything that bothered me when I found your wonderful birthday present. I think it has been tough for you since you began to work. Earning money is not so easy. Anyway please have good days. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Colorado.



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✚ NOVA

2007,6,13



I was reading in the newspaper that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry ordered NOVA, the English conversation school company in Japan, not to make the long term contract with students for 6 months. Many students had been complaining that they couldn't make reservations of the lesson even though the company told them they could take lessons easily when they want. NOVA is likely to make their management worse.

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✚ The COMSN problem

2007,6,12



COMSN, the Japanese company that takes care of old people based on the nursing care insurance law, was appointed that they had been broking the law and receiving benefit illegally. At

first the company's administrator intended to sell the business to their group company to avoid the punishment of the government. After they realized it's against the public opinion, the CEO apologized to the nation at the press conference.

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Yamaguchi Gumi

2007,6,11



Yamaguchi Gumi is the biggest Yakuza gang in Japan. I'm not familiar with the Japanese underworld and I've never spoken with gangsters. How can police check the gang's finances? I think they earn a lot of money illegally by selling drugs, pirate editions and so on. Of course they are outlaws but some people love their society. I mean they respect duty, sympathy and relationships between members. We have a lot of movies which describe their lives. Sometimes they do good things in spite of their antisocial existence. The most famous benevolence they did was actually they helped many people when the big earthquake hit Kobe. Their main office is in Kobe and they offered food and daily necessities to many sufferers.

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A small bridge, Enoki Kobashi

2007,6,10



During this weekend I visited my mom in Osaka with My son's family by car. On the way to Nagoya we dropped in a gas station and I noticed that it was near my elementary school although the sight was different from the old days. I walked around there and found a small and old bridge called Enoki Kobashi which is arched over a railway. I always went to school crossing that bridge. And over the bridge I could see my good old school. At the time I was a little girl, the school building was a wooden two-story structure. Now it is made from concrete and looks very great. I was very surprised because the bridge was very small. For children it seemed very magnificent and it was hard to cross it at a stretch. After going upstairs we used to take a break on the top while seeing trains passing through. Without the bridge, kids living in the opposite area couldn't have gone to school easily. How many children have gone across the bridge since it was built? My heart was filled with past memories. After that I also found the kindergarten near the bridge where I spent one year. It was quite different from long ago but the name was the same as it used

to be. I don't remember exactly where was but probably it is in the same place as it is now.



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✚ the new words I want to memorize

2007,6,9



He convinced her of his sincerity.

The most promising freshman might be him.

We should try to sell all inventories to get out of bankruptcy.

Study hard, otherwise you will fail the examination test.

Here are two kinds of drinks, a wine and a beer. Take whichever you like.

Would you mind waiting here for a short time until I come back?

Although it costs a lot, I recommend this one.

He has been working as an apprentice for the famous restaurant since graduating from school.

There are so many miss forecasts. Now, we don't trust the Meteorological Agency.

He was so hungry that he ate two portions of lunch.

Please don't expect so much from me. I'm not so young and beautiful.

At the time I met him, he wore a blue shirt.

I intended for him to help me but he was away.

I attribute my happiness to my family.

I can't be sure about my schedule next week.

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my right index finger

2007,6,8



Today I went to a doctor's office to get my swollen right index finger checked out. He X-rayed my right hand, neck and shoulder. He told me that my bones were OK. Cartilage of the index finger seems to be swollen. It was because I used my finger so much. My symptom will disappear someday. Only time can cure it. "I will prescribe some poultices and an application for you to ease the pain." Actually I have been putting a seal on so many documents since the beginning of April. After checking each paper, I had to put my seal on it. And I began to feel a pain from the end of April. Now I can't grip anything well by my right hand. It's really inconvenient.

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The world economy

2007,6,7



Now it is said Japanese business is increasing but the individual income is still not so high. The interest of Japanese banks has been very low, at highest only zero point five percent. On the other hand interest rates of foreign countries' banks are very high, especially NZ banks. They are over five percent. I thought I should have saved my money in a NZ bank account. My husband was against me. Now Japanese yen is cheap and NZ dollars are very strong. It means at present it's not a good period to buy NZ currency. We should consider both the interest and the exchange rate to deposit in foreign banks. To invest in foreign properties seems to be difficult and risky. I'm not good at economy and I don't want to waste of my money at all. I really want to make the most of my savings but I'm afraid of losing it. I finally decided to save it in the Japanese banks as usual. I'm such a coward.

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Current news in Japan

2007,6,6



Early in the morning of the last Saturday or Friday, four people who were drifting in a small tiny wooden boat were found in a small port in Aomori, the northern area in Japan. Actually they were escapees, the father in his late fifties, the mother in her early sixties and two young sons, from

North Korea. Surprisingly the poor family came to Japan across the rough Japan Sea in that boat. In fact they wanted to go to South Korea but they couldn't do it because the guard of that country was strict. Now the Japanese government is looking into them in the police office. After the investigation probably they will be able to go to South Korea. I can't find the article concerning the reaction of North Korea. I'm not sure but they don't seem to notice the incident.

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Black humor

2007,6,5



The following is conversation between a painter and an owner of a gallery. Is it kind of black humor?

"I'm just about to call you." "What happened? Did somebody buy my paintings?" "Yes exactly, but I also have bad news for you." "What do you mean? Who bought my pictures?" "Your doctor made a contract." "Uh?" "He asked me if your paintings would be valuable or not after your death?" "What did you answer?" "Of course I assured it and he decided to purchase them without hesitation." "Oh, my..." "You should get checked out as soon as possible."

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Some practice

2007,6,4



Child soldiers are still fighting in over a dozen conflicts worldwide.

UNICEF is the international fund established in 1946, which is working for children all over the world.

Being 13 is too young to decide if he should serve in a war or not by himself.

Guns are provided for such young boys during the war.

Civil war still happens many times in African countries.

Myanmar is infamous for its military regime, which confines a famous woman activist.

Violence is should be banned in democratic countries.

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✚ You are what you wear.

2007,6,3



I think it's true 50 percent of the time for me. My clothes appear in my mind. When I was young and wanted to get a boyfriend, I really wanted to look cool and spent a lot of money for my clothes. When I wanted a good position at work, I wore suits and high heels. I thought such kind of fashion gave my boss a good impression of me. Now I don't want to be promoted any more and I prefer easy fashion. Of course I always care about coordination even if I like an easy style. This top matches those pants. This sweater must look good with that skirt. The strangest fashion I've ever seen is actually the high school girls' trend. They wear long training pants under skirts. What's worse they dye their hair blond. They don't look sophisticated at all. They only look stupid. Nowadays we can see some young guys wear bellbottoms. They were actually very trendy in the seventies. It's a good example of revival fashion.

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✚ Japanese traditional comic entertainments

2007,6,2



Have you ever been to Yose? Yose is a Japanese traditional comedy theater where we can enjoy Rakugo and Manzai while sitting on a floor. Rakugo is a kind of a stand-up comedy but a comedian wearing Kimono relates a comical story while sitting on a stage. Their stories are elegantly funny and classical. Some of them were written quite long ago. To be a Rakugoka, the comical storyteller requires a long time for training. The young candidates have to live in famous Rakugoka's house to be trained by their masters. On the other hand, Manzai means a talking comedy which is performed by a duo. There are several styles of Manzai but basically two comedians are chatting about funny stories while standing on a stage. Their styles are different than each other. Some of them are slapstick, satire and the others use puns. Their stories are not classical; they try to speak up-to-date stories every time.

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✚ the reason why I came home late

2007,6,1



I was very busy at the office yesterday because it was the due date of the corporation tax. We had to tidy up many papers until 7 o'clock. Moreover it was the last day when our old members could work together. We went to the restaurant to have a simple party after work. I was supposed to come home by nine thirty but during the party it began to rain hard and thundered. So I couldn't go out into the rain.. That's why I was away until ten o'clock.

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The rainy season

2007,7,31



It had been very hot and there was a shining sun in Osaka but we still have the rainy season here in Tokyo. When will the rainy season be over here? The Meteorological Agency didn't declare the end of the rainy season in the Kantou area yet this year. It has been overcast today and we had scary thunder last night. It is said that this summer they have a lot of cicadas in Osaka. Actually I always woke up early in the morning due to their loud chirping while I was staying in Osaka. We usually turn off the air conditioner when the temperature is under 28 degrees Celsius to save the electric energy at the office. As soon as the airconditioner stops it gets very muggy and we can't help opening the windows. I'm fed up with these ridiculous days.

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✚ Election Day

2007,7,30



Yesterday was the polling day. We elected members of the House of Councilors. The election system is a little bit complex. There are two ways to vote for members. One of them is we vote one candidate who represents the prefecture electoral district and the other is we elect the member who runs for the all Japan district candidate. For this way we can vote the political party that we think is the best or one candidate whom we think is the best. We can select one from the two ways. The systems were changed several times so I think many people can't understand the way completely. To be honest I didn't know I could vote the individual for the second system until I arrived at the polling place and read the explanation there. Anyway the Liberal Democratic Party was beaten as the media had predicted before the Election Day. Why was Prime Minister Abe beaten completely? In my opinion the members of his cabinet seemed to be too stupid for us to trust them.

✚ a break again

2007,7,29



Just before I came home from Osaka where I had been taking care of my mom at the hospital. Now her condition is quite good. She can stand up and go to the toilet with the walker by herself. Of course she needs training to walk well by the specialist and it's the only one reason why she can't come home. By the way my grand son Taiga broke his left lower arm last Sunday while making believe he was playing shop with his brother. He fell down from the chair and injured his arm. Now his arm is in a cast. His cast will come off three weeks after the accident. In Japan we have a proverb that says, " If it happens twice, it will happen one more time." My mom broke her leg and three weeks from that time my grandson broke his arm. Next who will break his or her bone? Probably me? I should take care not break my bone.

✚ Exercise

2007,7,26



Please prove yourself to be right by yourself.
Having a good score ensured him that he would enter the college which he really wanted.
Now prices include consumer taxes in Japan.
His explanation clarified the meaning of this difficult English phrase.
She alternated reading and writing English.
It's pouring rain today so we will go picnic on an alternative day.
You can choose this one, alternatively that one.
Would you mind calling me in advance?
I have a daily routine of studying English.
I will give you the duplicate key of my apartment so you can open the door freely.

Exercise

2007,7,25



Road pollution might be solved by electric cars in the future.

Traffic fumes should be reduced by the care of drivers.

Highways have a lot of advantages but they also cause bad effects to the environment.

Healthy lungs are very important to live longer.

Noise pollution is often stirred by young guys drinking at midnight.

Being out of breath he entered the room.

Eighteenth birthdays are meaningful for Japanese because we can get a drivers license from that day.

Pollution studies are one of the most important fields these days because now global warming is the most apprehensive matter in the world.

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Traffic pollution

2007,7,24



Cars are very convenient and we have been receiving a lot of advantages from cars since Henry Ford produced his first car about 100 years ago. But there are pros and cons about everything and cars are not an exception. One of the demerits of a car is actually traffic pollution. It became a big problem in big cities when cars became popular. Car exhaust contains dirty gas and it damages the environment. Have you ever heard the Japanese slogan "Idling Stop"? It means we shouldn't idle an engine when we don't drive a car to reduce traffic pollution. Now we are trying to spread electric cars to protect the earth from traffic pollution. How much do they cost? Can we drive it as fast as a gasoline car?

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The nuclear plant in Niigata

2007,7,23



They say the Japanese government decided to allow the International Atomic Agency inspection of the nuclear plant in Kasiwazaki in Niigata. In my opinion it's a good decision because now many people can't trust Tokyo Electric Power Co. even if they say the leak of the radioactivity from

the broken power plant is below the safety level. At first they announced the wrong amount of the radioactivity and then they corrected it, a little bit more. It's the biggest electric company in Japan and probably their technique and knowledge are high class but now they are very confused. We should leave the investigation to a fair international fair institution.

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Describing trends, discussing cause and effect

2007,7,22



Now I'm looking at the graph of cell phone subscriber rates from 1995 to 2011. It reached 300 million in 2003. It had increased steadily from 2000 to 2003. There had been a huge rise in the number of users from 1995 to 2000. There was a gradual increase after 2003. The fact that the subscribers are increasing is probably a result of its convenience. The increase in the numbers of users is most likely due to its technological development. The stagnation in cell phone users could be an effect of the spread of cell phones among many people. I think the rise in cell phone subscribers is going to improve the safety in society. But some people say the increase in cell phones will probably cause the social problem. The rise in teenagers who use cell phone could lead to the increase of juvenile delinquency. By the way how can I pronounce "cell phone subscriber rates 1995-2011"? ...from 1995 to 2011...

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Abbreviations

2007,7,21



USA is the abbreviation of the United States of America. NATO stands for North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We call such kind of abbreviation that we pronounce the one word acronym. BBC means British Broadcasting Corporation. VOA stands for Voice of America. How about NHK? I wonder if it would be an abbreviation of the Japanese public broadcasting association. NO, definitely not. Let me see. It's difficult. Um..., I gotcha! It's from Japanese. It represents Nippon Housou Kyoukai. Why then, have you ever read the International NHK website which is written in English? Please let me know whether its English is natural or not: a kind of Japanese style English or not. I prefer the NHK website to VOA and BBC because the main themes depend on Japanese events. It's easy for me to understand it even if there are lots of difficult words and expressions.

<http://www.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/index.html>

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✚ How to speak on the phone

2007,7,20



I don't have an opportunity to speak with English native speakers on the phone now in Japan. When I call to my son's cell phone in America, sometimes the phone is dead and a woman speaks English very fast. Sadly I can't catch her well but I think she might say as follows. "Now the recipient can't answer your phone. Please record your message after the buzz." or "The power isn't supplied now. You can leave your message after the sound." By the way, can I say "Sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Would you mind saying it again?" when I can't understand what the partner is saying?

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✚ from my friend

2007,7,19



I'm relieved that your mother was OK. My mom broke her femur on the last day in 1997 at the age of 73. She had to lie on her back for a while and she had the mistaken idea that many people's conversation were hers because she couldn't see around her. I was very worried about whether she became senile. It's good for your mother that she could sit up on the bed and was quite well. I don't think it's a problem for someone else about a fracture so I visited her at the hospital. I go to the residential area close to the hospital to learn how to arrange flowers in Japanese style twice a month. Today was my lesson day and I visited her.

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✚ To my old friend in Osaka

2007,7,18



Thank you very much for visiting my mom at the hospital this afternoon. My sisters including the first sister who is usually living in Tokyo are taking care of my mom there from morning to

evening. However nowadays nursing students are exercising there so they weren't beside our mom. My mom realized you soon even though it had been a long time since she met you last time. My sister e-mailed just before and told me, " Your old friend K dropped by the hospital on her way home from flower arrangement lesson this afternoon. I should have been there. She also gave out sweet cherries and ripe peaches. It's very kind of her. We really appreciate it." Thank you again I hope to see you again soon in Osaka.

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✚ Criticizing and defending past action

2007,7,17



Today is my sons birthday so I prepared a big dinner. It took about 3 hours to cook and I had been waiting for him until 9 o'clock but nobody came home. I was so hungry That I began to eat by myself. It wasn't until I finished a lonely dinner,that my son came home.

Why didn't you come home earlier?

Look, you don't have to get angry so much.

Didn't you think that I would fix a special birthday dinner for you?

What? You didn't tell me about it. I've already eaten dinner at the restaurant with my friends.

I had been worrying about you. You should have called me if you ate dinner out.

Well, it's just I will eat this tomorrow. I will put these dishes in the fridge. .

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✚ All the best!

2007,7,16



Although my mom is still in the hospital, she is in good health now. My sisters' dedication to her enabled her to walk again. Now she is doing her best to rehabilitate. Sooner or later she will be able to come home. I can't help hoping, all the best.

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✚ The typhoon 3

2007,7,15



To start with the typhoon brought a lot of rain in Kyusyu. So, consequently, the torrential rain had loosened the ground. At the same time the howling wind stirred the big trees in that area. These caused the landslide and destroyed some houses including the post office. My best guess would be those buildings are located near the cliff.

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The typhoon 2

2007,7,14



Usually typhoons hit Japan from the end of August to the beginning of October. It's a big storm with heavy rain caused by tropical depressions. We call such storms typhoons in East Asia. It occurs in the North Pacific Ocean or the West China Sea and moves north to Japan. Almost every typhoon hit Okinawa at first and then they struck the Kyusyu area. After that it commonly will go along the Pacific shores of the Japanese archipelago while losing power. It ends up disappearing on the Pacific Ocean. It causes severe damage especially in the Kyusyu and Shikoku areas. Its pouring rain during a typhoon and landslides easily happen. Rivers are flooded and many houses are flooded up to the floor by the rains. TV news says the big typhoon will hit Shikoku and many people are taking shelter in public buildings now. After the typhoon it dries up clearly and we can see the blue sky.

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The strong typhoon

2007,7,13



Now a big typhoon is approaching Kyusyu. It hit the Okinawa area and did extensive damage there. Now there is a rainstorm in Kagoshima. Actually I was supposed to go to Osaka by airplane tomorrow morning and I already bought the ticket but just before now I canceled. Probably the airplane will be able to fly to Osaka but I'm not sure I can go to my mom's house from the Kansai airport. The Kansai airport is on the artificial island and there is a long bridge between the airport and the shore. The trains which go there easily stop when there is strong wind. If a train stops, how can I go to Sakai? I might be trapped there. What's worse, if typhoon hit Osaka and then hit Tokyo, how can I come back to Yokohama? I have an important schedule on Tuesday. I have to go to the office at all cost. Fortunately my mom's condition is not so bad now. She is recovering

smoothly. So I decided to cancel even if I should pay a penalty. We had better keep on the safe side than be sorry later.

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✚ It's not your fault.

2007,7,12



I'm still taking English conversation lessons through TV. While I took the lesson with a British teacher tonight, his computer was broken. I could hear him very clearly but he couldn't show me any letters and pictures. The British teacher moved to the other booth and we couldn't help stopping our lesson for a little while. At the end of the lesson he really apologized to me. "Today we had a good lesson but I'm so sorry to waste our lesson time." I responded him, "It's OK. It's not your responsibility. Just the computer was broken." Was my response proper?

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✚ Next Saturday

2007,7,11



According to the e-mail from my sister, my mom began to walk a little with a cane. "There is nothing that we want you to help us with, but if you would like to check her condition and encourage her, please come to Osaka during the next three holiday."

I've been busy making the budget plan at the office. Actually the due date is the day after tomorrow but I finally finished the task today. I'm going to explain about it tomorrow morning. I think probably my boss will be satisfied with my work. Well done! I decided to visit my mom next Saturday again.

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✚ My mom's surgery

2007,7,10



As I told my friends my mom began to rehabilitate, somebody thought her operation was very easy. Actually it took about 2 hours and the surgeon connected the broken bones by using a

metal stick: a titanium short bar. She had a local anesthesia under her waist but she was sleeping during the surgery. Strangely she woke up as soon as her surgery finished. Probably that anesthesia was very excellent. I'm not sure how much the medical bill cost. In Japan the welfare for the aged is pretty good so I think she has to pay only 10 percent of the whole expense. But the hospital is for only emergency situation patients so she will move to another hospital when her condition steadies.

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Rehabilitation

2007,7,9



Today my mom started her rehabilitation. She put her left foot on the floor and stood up timidly with two people's support. She felt a light pain doing it but it's really important to try by herself. She needs a strong mind. I think my mom is positive even if she is old. My sister told me that my mom had wanted to change her clothes and make up when her sister had visited her at the hospital with her husband the other day. "I don't want to see them in such a shameful style. Please bring my cosmetics and a good T shirt from my house." Anyway we really expect her to walk by herself again.

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How to deal with pushy salespeople

2007,7,8



These days some salespeople call me at the office to recommend me to buy condos and so on. At first I refuse them politely but if they continue their business talks, I deny them directly. Sales are not bad things however they should consider time and circumstances.

"Hello, would you like to make more money? Today I'll introduce you a good apartment in Tokyo."

"Sorry but I'm at the office now. I've got too much on my plate at the moment."

"It doesn't take so long a time to listen to me."

"Actually, I'm in the middle of something right now. So can I hang up now? "

"Wait a minute. When would be a more convenient time to call you back? "

"As I told you before I'm working here. Please don't call me again."

“ It’ s a really good deal for you. I’ m calling on account of you.”

“ Look! I’ m really not interested in buying any condo, and I’ d appreciate it if you removed my name from your calling list. It only bothers me.”

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A Red Feather campaign

2007,7,7



Something needs to be done to prevent needy people from starving. We should really try to help such people. A Red Feather campaign group is an organization that aims to raise donations and help poor people. One way they’ re trying to help is by collecting a relief fund in the end of a year. In the short term, I think it’s effective whereas in the long term I believe an extension of welfare services is more important. I can understand the importance of donations, but for me making shelters for homeless people seems a more pressing need. Making donations is certainly a priority, but I believe an improvement of the welfare policy is outweighed by the need for lost people. They have already saved hundreds of lives by giving food in the cold morning. Over the past ten years, they have provided warm milk to many hungry children.

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Airline logos

2007,7,6



They say new Belgian carrier Brussels Airlines changed their original logo which was shaped kind of like a “b” by using thirteen red dots because of many people’s complaints. In western society the number thirteen means bad luck and the airlines couldn’ t help adding one dot to their logo. Regarding airline logos, it reminds me of the old logo of Japan Airline. It expressed one of the Japanese symbols “ Tsuru, a crane” in red. It represented a pride of good service and safety: the best airlines in the world. They changed their logo after merging with other small airlines. Now JAL has a lot of troubles and requests the support of the government. Where has gone the pride of Red Tsuru ?



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✚ The operation 3

2007,7,5



My second sister and I arrived at the hospital just before breakfast. I fed my mom because she still couldn't sit up in bed. But she spoke a lot and looked in pretty good shape. I encouraged her and left the hospital to go back to Yokohama. I arrived at my office just before the end of lunchtime. I'm a little bit busy now and there are lots of troubles at work. I'm exhausted now. According to my sister's e-mail, this afternoon my mom ate lunch while sitting down in the wheel chair and she could eat about two thirds of the hospital lunch.

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✚ The operation 2

2007,7,4



This morning my mom's operation went well. Surprisingly when my sisters and I entered the operation room, we found her saying thank you to a doctor. And the doctor explained to us she will be able to start her rehabilitation the day after tomorrow while showing us her X rays. Anyway we were really relieved. My sisters will take turns in taking care of her at the hospital everyday. I really appreciate it and I took them out to dinner at a restaurant near the hospital.

✚ Why???

2007,7,3



I arrived at my sister's house around 9:30 in the evening. My sister told me how my mom fell down and broke her leg. There was no hurdle on the floor of her bedroom and therefore my mom felt really depressed and wondered how she became so weak. My sister and mom were just about to go to a library to borrow some books and she tried to shut the window in her bedroom. I think she might have stumbled on the leg of the bed.

✚ The operation

2007,7,2



My mom will undergo an operation the day after tomorrow. The doctor said, "Even though it takes approximately two hours, it's better for patients to have a surgery. Because the earlier they start to rehabilitate, the more efficient it is. If they stay in bed for a long time, they easily begin to deteriorate. The next day after the operation she will be able to move while sitting in a wheelchair. But don't forget the accompaniment of operation is risk. Especially because she is old. Do you agree with the operation? Please read the following agreement and if you agree with them, could you sign on the bottom." Anyway I'm going to Osaka tomorrow evening after work.

✚ The fracture

2007,7,1



This morning my 88 year old mom broke her hip joint. My sister living in the same condo in Osaka as my mom called an ambulance immediately and now she is in a hospital. A surgeon told my sister that there are two ways to treat her broken leg, one of them is to undergo surgery and the other is to only put her leg in a plaster cast. Even if she has a surgery, the doctor should observe her condition for at least 1 week because she is old. I'm worried about her but now we can only entrust her treatment to the hospital.

Skin condition

2007,8,30



Now I have a sunburn and ruddy face. I took a walk with my mom every morning for at least a half hour while I stayed in Osaka. I forgot to wear sun block. Now I really regret it. It's very bad for middle-aged women to have a suntan. It's a cause of spots and wrinkles.

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+ Difficult words concerning animals

2007,8,29



Carnivores are animals like lions and tigers that eat meat. In the wild nature they hunt smaller and weaker animals than themselves. Herbivores usually eat plants and their character is more like mild. Zebra and giraffe belong to them. Omnivores are animals which eat both meat and plants. Human beings are obviously omnivores but I don't know the other species that are omnivores.

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+ Fiji

2007,8,28



I'm going to Fiji from this Saturday and study English at a language school for one week. Why did I decided to go to Fiji? To tell the truth, I was supposed to visit my son in Co from September first to tenth and had already reserved the air tickets. Actually he got the first class tickets for me for free by using his mileage system. I was so excited to hear that. About one month before my visit suddenly my son's schedule was changed and I heard he would be away during that time. I was also already scheduled to take summer holiday and I couldn't change it. Oh, my... I decided to go abroad: somewhere in England or Canada to study English by myself. But there was not enough time to prepare and I couldn't reserve any tickets to go there and I happened to find the language school in Fiji. I was a little bit interested in living in developing countries and the beach must be very beautiful there. I really wanted to try scuba diving at least once in my life. I could do it there and the staying fee is much cheaper than London or Vancouver. I suddenly decided to go to Fiji. Now I'm looking forward to visiting there.

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Definition of words

2007,8,27



I need a lot of imagination when I use English. Sometimes my guesses are dead on. I found there are lots of similarities between English vocabulary and Japanese. What's the meaning of blackmail? At first I thought blackmail means a mail we can't find who sent it. No, it means demanding money or other things from someone by threatening. What's the difference between bribery and corruption? Bribery means giving money to get a good result and corruption means dishonest, illegal or immoral behavior including bribery.

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An Italian man

2007,8,26



Today I came home from Osaka by Shinkansen. At the Station in Osaka I couldn't buy a reserved seat in a nonsmoking car because they were full but between Osaka and Nagoya there were only a few passengers on the smoking car. Actually there was nobody around me so I put my bag on the next seat. A lot of people got into the train as soon as the train arrived at Nagoya. A handsome guy who looked like a foreigner had reserved my next seat and I immediately removed my bag saying "I'm sorry." He had black hair and a mustache. Also he wore a fashionable suit and a tie like a movie star. At first I couldn't imagine what country he was from. Actually he was a nice Italian guy. I was really happy to speak with such an attractive Italian and keenly felt it was good for me to have been studying English. Now I can understand why people say Italians are sexy.

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Preposition

2007,8,25



I think for Japanese the most difficult grammar about English is how to use articles and prepositions. I'm going to make some sentences to exercise the way to use preposition. I traveled to the island by boat. She slapped her son on the back when he won the race. He took the small boy by the hand and helped him cross the road. Help! My house is on fire. He threw his

fishing line into the sea. She dived from her father's boat and swam to the beach. The sun rises from the east and sets in the west. I couldn't put off going to the dentist and he gave me an injection in my gum. A boy threw a stone at the angry dog, trying to frighten it.

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To my friend

2007,8,23



Thanks for letting me know about the good book. To tell you the truth, I've already read the book review of the book and the summary but I haven't read the real book yet. As long as you recommended that I read it, I will browse through it at a bookshop like you. The author is quite famous for her essays and poems written in good Japanese, isn't she? It must encourage me to study English. By the way, do you still study English? I'm still doing it and also taking lessons at NOVA while being worried about their bankruptcy. After the inspection of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, many students left NOVA and demanded the repayment from the company. Now the stock price of NOVA is going lower and lower. I hope some big firm will takeover NOVA for many students not to waste their tickets. Moreover I finally decided to take the TOEIC test in this year so I will try to solve some questions in the workbooks little by little. I noticed that reading skill is important and useful for me even if studying English is only my hobby. When I visit a museum or something like that in foreign countries, I would like to understand the explanations there. Anyway thanks for your e-mail and recommendation of the good book. Take care and enjoy your job.

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Dentist

2007,8,22



It is said that a dentist is one of the occupations from which they can earn a lot of money. Moreover it requires very expensive facilities to open a dental clinic. As a result almost every dentist wants to make their sons and daughters to be dentists. To become a dentist they have to study at college for six years and after that they should pass the national examination to get the qualification. Actually the fee of private dental college is very expensive and it's not so difficult to pass the entrance examination as entering to medical college. If the children of doctors are not

so smart, they tend to become dentists. I know some such people. Anyway, to enter the national medical or dental college is quite difficult and studying at the private college costs a lot. . But I'm sure once they become doctors or dentists, they can earn much money.

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Kamikaze

2007,8,21



Why were they called Kamikaze? It depends on the two old historic battles between Japan and Mongolia in 1274 and 1281. The Mongolian ruler Genghis Khan attacked Japan twice. When the strong battleship approached Hakata bay in Kyusyu, the big typhoon hit there and sank the ship. It was really good timing. Seven years later he tried to assail Japan again but the same accident happened again. Wow, it's incredible. After that Japanese people began to believe that God raised those stream. They were miracles. God must have helped our country by the divine wind. Actually Kamikaze means the divine wind in Japanese. During World War Two, probably Japanese soldiers noticed America is much stronger than Japan. But they couldn't help hoping and believing the divine wind would help Japan again. So they ordered the young pilots with combat planes to charge the American ship by themselves and called them Kamikaze. But, the miracle never happened again. Only it killed many young pilots. Not only Japanese but also many Americans passed away during the war. It's really a sad history of ours. Now we can watch some movies concerning Kamikaze pilots and also read many letters, which they wrote just before their attack: death. They never wanted to die at the age of twenty. They must have wished to live longer. We shouldn't repeat the tragedy anymore.

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Skype trouble

2007,8,20



Did you notice that we couldn't login to Skype for two days? When I tried to login, I found the small mark of Skype was turning around for quite a long time. I thought my computer had some trouble and restarted it. But Skype didn't work and I checked the Skype website. There was a comment about the sign of problems on Skype. Now I'm happy that everything is back to normal. By the way, just after the restoration of Skype, Monte called me through Skype. He told me one

heartwarming story concerning Japan to me. Dear Monte, Thank you very much for chatting with me on Saturday night in the U.S. You spoke pretty fast so I concentrated on listening to you. The summary of your story is like below. In the fifties there was a Japanese girl baby living in an orphan's home in Kyusyu and an American couple adopted her and took her to the U.S. After graduating from college there, she got married to an American and became happy. In the nineties, she began to search for her real Japanese parents because she missed them. She contacted a church in Kyusyu and they finally found her relatives even though her parents had already passed away. She visited them in Kyusyu with her husband and they entertained her and her husband. They held a Japanese style party for the American relatives and she met her uncle there who was a Japanese air force pilot called Kamikaze during World War Two. Her husband was very impressed with the reunion and told the story to you. Please let me know if I could catch your story correctly or not. Take care and have a good day.

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Similar vocabulary

2007,8,19



The following words are really similar but they don't have the same meaning. I try to make some sentences to memorize the difference. I majored in law at the university. Opinions of the majority are against the war. Many employees are demanding a big raise. The big factory must improve employment in the region. The employer notified some employees about the layoff. The big earthquake caused the stop of manufacturing to stop. Now manufacturers are discussing how to solve the problem. The production is improving under his strong instruction. We should consider an advancement of productivity.

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Restructuring

2007,8,18



Our government office has been trying to restructure our organization. The authority has been reducing personnel, cutting down salaries and curtailing expenses. As a result, the motivation of employees is decreasing now. We used to be paid all fare when we went away on business but now we can't get it fully. They don't pay us the fare about the distance for which we have the

commuter pass. I mean if I live near station A and my office is close to station B, I have the commuter pass from A to B. Please imagine there is office C where I have to go. When I go to C on business, I used to be able to get the money to go there but now I can't get it. Because I can go to C by using the pass. In my opinion it's inevitable that they don't pay the fare. It's really reasonable. But to tell the truth, now I lost the small pleasure of going away on business.

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✚ **We should memorize these rules, right? No.2**

2007,8,17



On the other hand below are the samples of the latter. I encouraged my staff to work hard. My boss expected me to finish the job by tomorrow. Would you mind allowing me to join in the group? He failed to pass the test. I decided to offer him to help her. We promised to see each other again on the same day next year. I want to buy it. I'm preparing to study abroad.

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✚ **Global warming**

2007,8,16



Global warming is a phenomena that the average temperature of the world is getting higher and higher. It is said that one of the big causes of it is the effect of greenhousegas. As the result of it in Japan Sakura opens around 5 days earlier than the past days and autumn coloring is also getting later and later recently. Now its one of the most severe issues in the world. The things I usually try to do to avoid global warming are actually saving energy and using a shopping basket instead of plastic bags. My idea to reduce this problem is we should improve the utilization of solar energy. I would say we should increase our reliance on solar electricity generation systems and electric cars.

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✚ **We should memorize these rules, right?**

2007,8,15



There are two kinds of transitive verbs. One of them is a transitive verb whose objects are gerunds and the other is a transitive verb whose objects are infinitives. The former is like these. I will appreciate hearing from you soon. I don't mind your smoking. I enjoyed speaking with you a lot. Please don't touch it to avoid spoiling the quality. I will consider asking you. I miss playing baseball at school.

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The Obon holidays

2007,8,14



Now many companies are closed in Japan because of Obon holidays but I go to my office everyday. Actually Obon holidays are not national holidays so every governmental office shouldn't close during Obon holidays. Obon originally means the Buddhist summer period during which we recall our dead ancestors and welcome them to our homes. But now we call this season's holidays Obon holidays without regard to Buddhists. As I'm a civil servant, I can't take Obon holidays but I can take 5 days summer holidays freely from July to September. These holidays are called "working duty free holidays" in Japanese 職務専念義務免除休暇. Now I decided to stay in Fuji for a week in September by taking these difficult named holidays.

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Japanese school system

2007,8,13



We usually start our compulsory education at the age of six at elementary school. For 6 years we have to study there and after that we enter junior high school where we have to study more for 3 years. These are our compulsory education levels. The difference from the U.S. is high school isn't compulsory education in Japan. I didn't check statistics but I guess now over 95 percent of students go to high school for 3 years. And also about 50 percent of students enter junior college for 2 years or university for 4 years. High school and college are not compulsory so we have to pass the entrance examination to enter these schools. And there are big differences between each school in Japan. I mean some high schools are very high level and the others are not. Some schools are really low. And actually at the some of the bottom schools, about 50 percent of students drop out. We say Tokyo University is the most difficult university to enter and many high

level schools are competing with each other regarding how many students enter there from their own graduates. Usually the Japanese school year begins in April and finishes in March. But now some colleges are reviewing this system to adapt to the international students. I mean now we can enter some colleges from September.

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Kansas City

2007,8,12



Today's teacher was an American girl from Kansas City where actually Judy grew up. She told me that Kansas City belongs to two States: Kansas and Missouri. I've never heard such cities which are located in two prefectures in Japan. In America each state has their own laws so in that city sometimes some strange things happen. For example they can't sell alcohol on Sunday in one side but they can buy it in another area. People who are living in Kansas but working in Missouri have to pay taxes to the both states. Probably people obey the law of the state where their houses are located. Anyway I'd never heard about the story like that before and I was interested in her explanation.

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American culture and Japanese culture

2007,8,11



America is the strongest country in the world and their cultural influence spreads all over the world. I mean now we can find the hamburger shops from America almost everywhere and we can watch Hollywood movies in many places in the world. Actually when I was young, we admired American life style while watching American TV dramas. Now our life style is really Americanized: we wear blue jeans, eat hamburgers and enjoy American hit songs. Is it a kind of Cultural imperialism? Umm... but I know now Americans really love Japanese food and also they are fascinated with Japanese animation and Manga. They use a lot of electric appliances and cars made in Japan. So I think there is no disproportionate between American culture and Japanese culture. One thing I was really surprised about in LA was there are many kinds of races such as whites, blacks, Asians and Hispanics. We say America is a melting pot. Many Japanese want to study in the U.S. because in every field studies are advanced there. I'm not sure but probably

Americans have got the most Nobel Prizes in the world. I think it's the result of them having been accepting many students from all over the world and giving them a lot of opportunities to improve their studies. Many Japanese graduated from schools in the U.S. and they continued their research there instead of coming back to Japan after graduating from school. We call such effect a brain drain. Lastly, I think generally American culture is a little bit easy and rough. Contrarily, Japanese culture is serious and detailed.

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✚ a bedrock bath (岩盤浴 Ganban Yoku in Japanese)

2007,8,10



Today I went to a bedrock bath near my office after work. A bedrock bath is getting more and more popular recently in Japan. I really wanted to experience it at least once but I hadn't been there. The other day one of my staff told me about the bedrock bath near the station that opened last November. I entered into the building with a little bit excitement. Do you know what a bedrock bath is? It's similar to a sauna bath but its temperature isn't so high as a sauna bath. It's about 38 degrees Celsius and it's of course very humid in the room. There are some beds made of stone on which we can lie. We change our clothes to special robes and put big towels on the bed on which we will lie. At first we lie face down on it for 5 minutes and then we lie on our back for 10 minutes. After that we take a rest for 5 minutes while drinking a lot of water. We repeat this 3 times. Actually I sweated a lot and the robe became drenched after 1 hour. They say it's healthy because a lot of sweat exhausts waste matters from our bodies. In fact I felt comfortable when I left the bath but now I feel normal. I haven't realized the effect from it yet and I don't know if I will go there again or not. Anyway, we say seeing is believing.

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✚ The sad story

2007,8,9



Two junior high school boys drowned in the sea in our area on last Saturday. In the morning of the day three boys were swimming in the Hikichi River close to the Kugenuma beach and two of them suddenly disappeared into the sea. The next morning; in Sunday morning their bodies were found in Tujido beach; just 1 kilometer west of where they disappeared. A woman surfer found one body

at the beach early in the morning and then a fisherman found another body in the dragnet which he set. Oh, my... Actually they were students of the same school that my sons graduated from. Yesterday I saw a lot of students and mothers with black dresses at the funeral hall near my house on my way home. Probably their funeral ceremonies took place there. I think their age; adolescence, is very difficult age. They can go anywhere and do anything by themselves but they are still children. They can't judge well whether it would be dangerous or safe, good or bad. The sea wasn't calm due to the typhoon but they might have thought it was cool to swim in such big waves.

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How to apologize appropriately

2007,8,8



Thank you very much for your nice birthday present to me. I'm really looking forward to watching this musical. You are so kind.

I need to talk to you about something. It's about the tickets of this musical. Uh, there may be a bit of problem.

A problem? What kind of problem?

Well, the thing is, I can't find the tickets in my bag. I might have left them at home. The show will open in 10 minutes. Now I don't have time to go home. It's completely my fault. I'm so sorry.

Anyway let's go to a restaurant. I will buy dinner.

-△-

Drill 2

2007,8,7



Prior to the phone call, I left my home to go to the station.

She is responsible for meeting the deadline.

We can't expect the rise of stock prices during the recession.

This report must be submitted to the boss by Friday.

He wants to list the company's stock on the stock exchange

Over the last 5 years the Japanese birth rate has been decreasing rapidly.

At the end of 2004 I started to study English.

At the beginning of August the company went bankrupt.
She asked the boss to treat her well regarding the promotion.

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 **Drill**

2007,8,6



We can meet your requirements if you have a plan to order us.
We should work all night to meet demands.
Let's work hard to meet a deadline.
He is a man who takes any steps to be promoted.
They took strong measures to stop tax evasion.
The regular meeting will take place at the executive suite from 10 o'clock.
We usually make improvements in our production to sell more.
Have you already made reservations at the famous restaurant for dinner?
It's the most important thing for a private company to make profits.
At first we should conduct a survey to have a good result.
She has been conducting a study of that issue for 3 years.
Conducting a difficult research requires patience.
Some ministers of the present cabinet resigned.

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 **Congratulations!**

2007,8,5



Best wishes to the new arrival. Your new baby was a girl, wasn't she? She looks very cute and healthy. She is already staying at home with her mother. As you said on your blog, in Japan a newborn baby usually stays at hospital for at least 5 days. I think her name; Elisabeth is taken from your mom. I'm sure she will be a very beautiful girl.

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✚ What is the difference between “rise” and “raise”?

2007,8,4



Actually “rise” is an intransitive verb and it doesn't need an object. For example, we describe it like this. The interest rate has risen recently. The big highway bridge collapsed in the U.S. On the other hand, “raise” is a transitive verb and the object follows. We should say the bank raised the lending interest rate. His strict attitude collapsed him. I don't care about Japanese grammar when I speak Japanese. But I think I should understand English grammar if I want to improve my English. Now I'm confused a little bit. I need a rest. I'm going to lay the book on the desk and lie on the bed.

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✚ Aromatherapy

2007,8,3



Aromatherapy, it's an alternative remedy that cures stressful people by using comfortable smell like herbs and essential oils. It's getting popular and popular in Japan recently. There are lots of salons where they provide it for us in town. If you want to experience it easily, you can buy some kits of aroma and try it at home. I've never done it but I guess it must be effective to calm our mind. At least it couldn't be harmful. Good smells must cure our tired soul gently.

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✚ Yukata

2007,8,2



Today I took 3 hours off and went to Yokohama to see my friend from Kagoshima in Kyusyu. We can get a leave by the hour. My friend seemed to be very surprised at the bustle of Yokohama. “Living here must be convenient. You can enjoy seeing art at museums and watching plays at theaters easily here. It must be exciting to live here but I can't afford to buy a house. The real estates must be very expensive.” She sighed deeply. I met a lot of young couples wearing Yukata at the Yokohama station because we had a big fireworks festival in Minato Mirai 21 in Yokohama. One of them was a white young guy but Yukata didn't look good on him. We have 2 big fireworks festivals in Yokohama in summer but the first one was canceled due to the bad weather the other day. So tonight more people gathered in Yokohama to enjoy the fireworks than an

ordinary year. I ate dinner at the restaurant in the tall building near the station expecting we could see the firework but unfortunately the window opened toward the opposite direct of the sea and we couldn't view it. I just suffered from the very crowded train on my way home. Concerning Yukata, it's a simple style Kimono for summer. Judging from the Kanji of Yukata, we used to wear Yukata after taking a bath. But It's still uncomfortably hot to wear Yukata compared to wearing a muumuu.

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A car pool lane

2007,8,1



In LA there is a lane where a car with over two persons only can drive. I've driven in the lane in my son's car and he explained to me about that system but I've forgotten what they call that lane. Probably it's called a car pool lane, right? It might have been set up to reduce the traffic pollution. LA is famous for its traffic jams and the smog due to the traffic pollution.

the cool day

2007,9,29



Yesterday was very humid but it suddenly began to be cool today. I think we are very lucky to have four seasons. In Singapore the climate doesn't change, as it is always summer. I can't bear such circumstance.

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At the Changi Airport

2007,9,26



I came home from Singapore safely. Regarding English in Singapore people speak English but it's really difficult to understand their English. Their pronunciations are quite different from English that I'm used to hearing in Japan such as American English and British English. Anyway at the hotel and in the airplane they could understand my English easily. During this trip I realized that when we ask something in English, the simpler is the better. "Can you wake me up at 4 o'clock?" "Can I catch a taxi easily early in the morning?" "Can I have a blanket?" "One thing I was really

disappointed is happened at the airport. A United Airlines staff explained to me that I should pack a liquid toothpaste in a zip plastic case but I couldn't catch the meaning of zip. I couldn't respond quickly. He asked my son to interpret his explanation to me. Oh, my...

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The third day

2007,9,24



Today my first son's family went to the Island in Indonesia. I really wanted to see Peranakan houses which were built under the mixed culture of Malay and Chinese. We went to Emerald Hill Road which is close to Orchard Road and where many Peranakan houses are still located. The pastel colored, like pink and whitish blue houses were very cute and they reminded us of the Victorian houses in St Francisco. Then we decided to go to Johor Bahrut in Malaysia through the border by bus from Queen Street terminal. It's easy to visit Malaysia from Singapore. After a 40-minute bus ride, the big whitish gray building suddenly appeared in front of us. It was the immigration office of Singapore. Then after a 5-minute bus ride, the old and dirty wooden building appeared. It was the immigration office of Malaysia and a woman officer wearing a veil checked my passport. We are now in another world, in the Muslim society. A lot of women are walking with veils, Islamic music is being played and we can see a lot of Malaysian national flags: it might sound strange but it's similar to the Stars and Stripes. As soon as we began to walk on the bumpy road, a pushy group approached to us to force us to ride a car to go sightseeing. We realized that we shouldn't trust anybody here and decided to walk to the one of the famous buildings, Istana Besar. It was a huge beautiful building with a huge beautiful green garden but there was nobody except us. There was a Japanese garden in a plot of the land and we met a strange looking middle-aged man there. He was actually Japanese who has been living in Malaysia but at first we couldn't guess he was a real Japanese. As he explained the history between Malaysia and Japan and talked about a little bit of difficult things, we understood he was Japanese and received his advice. According to his recommendation, we decided to enter the museum which was in the big building. But we were surprised and disappointed again there. I mean the admission ticket for foreigners was much more expensive than the local people: it was 7 U.S. dollars. What's worse, the condition of the displays was terrible, even though it is always humid there. We were so hungry and thirsty but there was no sanitary and open restaurant in the town. Probably now it's Ramadan so Muslim people don't eat anything during the daytime. At the bus ticket center they also tried to cheat us. "We paid you by Singapore dollar. Why do you return the charge by

Malaysia Rengit? The rates were much different between them. It's the half worth of Singapore Dollar." I was really relieved when we passed through the border again. But now I miss Malaysia and it seemed to be a good and meaningful experience for me.



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✚ The second day

2007,9,23



My sons couldn't get up early in the morning as like as when they were boys. We ate a buffet style breakfast at the restaurant without the two guys. My husband and I took a walk with Taiga to a Hindi temple and a Buddhism temple close to the hotel. Around the Hindi temple we met many Indians and next to it there was the colorful Buddhism temple where many Chinese were praying. It was a kind of strange sight for me. In front of the temple there were lots of stores and street venders who were selling flowers, images of Buddha, foods and so on. After a little while suddenly it began to rain hard. It had been powering rain for 30 minutes. We had been staying

under the eaves of the shops until the squall stopped. After coming back to the hotel, we started to Sentosa Island all together by subway. When we visited there 15 years ago, the bridge to the island was under construction. Now we can go there by bus and monorail. The island is a kind of general leisure resort which they are still trying to develop. At first we entered the aquarium and then went to the lagoon where we can enjoy the wonderful dolphin show. I was exhausted under the shining sun near to the equator but the young guys were playing around vigorously at the beach and luge mountain. On the way to the hotel my husband and I hung around the famous and busiest street, Orchard Road, and ate dinner at the food court style restaurant. The young guys also enjoyed Orchard Street until midnight while we, grandparents were sleeping with the kids. Street vendors used to be their common restaurants in Singapore. Now there is no stall but almost all restaurants use the street vending styles. Probably the forcible Singaporean government prohibited street vendors and changed them to the sanitary style food courts. I mean in food courts there are several different kinds of kitchens along the wall and in the center there are lots of dining tables and chairs. We can order the food and drinks that we want at the cooking spaces and after they have fixed the dishes we can take them to the table to eat. It looks very sanitary and it's convenient for both customers and cooks. But disappointingly foods were not so cheap in Singapore. Only travel expenses, especially taxi fare, were much more low-priced than Japan.



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✚ the first day in Singapore

2007,9,22



Almost every airplane from Narita arrives in Singapore in the middle of the night. We arrived at the hotel about 2 a.m. and my son's family reached the hotel about 3:30. Although we couldn't sleep for enough hours, we were so excited that we ate breakfast at 9:30 all together. Let's start the tour in Singapore! Of course we walked to the statue of Merlion at first. It reminds us of Singapore because it's usually used as the symbol of a Singapore trip in the brochures. Then we went to the Singapore Zoo by taxi. There were lots of rare interesting animals, fish and birds there and I rode on the elephant with my two grandsons. In the evening we visited the Night Safari tour which was next to the zoo. The tram went through the road among the wild animals like lions and tigers. It was also amazing. But hanging outside in the high temperature required a lot of energy. We were really exhausted and the kids fell asleep during the safari tour.



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✚ The memory of our family trip in Singapore

2007,9,21



Just 15 years ago I traveled in Singapore with my family. It was our first family trip overseas. In particular this is my second son's first trip overseas. He was 10 years old and of course he couldn't speak English at all. After the departure formality he looked nervous and whispered to me, "Mom, we are staying abroad from here, aren't we? Please keep holding my hand not to get lost." After 15 years later he became a good English speaker and is working for the American company in the U.S. It's incredible. The next year of that time we traveled in Australia but we



had never traveled abroad all together since 14 years ago. I couldn't imagine at that time I would visit Singapore again with my whole family including my grand sons. Anyway I want to enjoy our trip in Singapore.

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✚ A tax accountant

2007,9,19



I had an opportunity to have dinner with some licensed tax accountants. One of them was a woman in her sixties and she said that she went to her office everyday even on Saturday and Sunday. She worries that someone sent a fax to her and wants to check an answering machine. After that she clears up the mess on her desk. She studied hard and got the qualification after she was forty. She want to continue her job until she will die. Now she doesn't enjoy traveling. Working as an accountant is her honor, pleasure and hobby.

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✚ About Fiji

2007,9,18



About Fiji

Fiji is a small country in the Pacific Ocean that is composed of the main island named Vitilevu and the other 330 small islands. The population is about eight hundred and fifty thousand. Over 50 percent of the nation is Fijian and about 45 percent is Indian. Indian's ancestors were bought to Fiji to work in sugar cane plantations by British people when Fiji was a colony of Britain. Now their official language is English but Fijians still speak Fiji and Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue in their own small society. Almost all Fijian believe in Christianity. On the other hand Indians are Muslim or Hindi.

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✚ I'm going to Singapore from Friday.

2007,9,17



Just one week has passed since I came back to Japan from Fiji. I'm still soaking myself in the memory of Fiji. Last Monday as soon as I arrived at home, my husband told me, "I'm going to travel in Singapore with our sons. Why don't you go there with us?" I was so surprised because he didn't say such a plan before I left my home to Fiji about 10 days ago. They suddenly decided to gather in Singapore. I mean my first son will go there with his wife and two little kids and my second son who is living in the U.S. will go there from Thailand. It's a kind of family reunion. I feel a little bit sorry to have holiday twice a month but I finally decided to go there with my family.

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Why did Prime minister Abe resign?

2007,9,16



Today a British teacher and also Monte asked me why Prime Minister Abe suddenly resigned. Every Japanese doesn't know the true reason. He became the Prime minister just one year ago because the member of the Liberal Democratic Party thought he was from the famous family and young, looked handsome and many Japanese would support him. But then some members of his cabinet had to resign because of their carelessness. What's worse, one of them committed suicide. The Liberal Democratic Party couldn't get a lot of votes at the former election. The Democratic Party of Japan beat them. After the election Mr. Abe renewed his cabinet and also made the general policy speech at the Diet. And then he suddenly announced his decision at the press conference. I decided to resign and now he is in the hospital. After all he is not a person to be a Prime minister. He is a kind of spoiled greenhorn. Ms. Fukushima, the leader of the Social Democratic Party, called him, "Bokuchan no nagedashi naikaku" It's really difficult to translate into English. Probably it means, "The greenhorn Prime minister was fed up with the difficult politics and gave up being the Prime minister and his cabinet."

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In Fiji do what Fijians do.

2007,9,10



Two Fijians picked me up about 6:30 and then picked Japanese students up by turns. They took us to the Nadi airport. One of them was Sachiko from Hokkaido who also studied English at SPFB School but our schools were different. Surprisingly she was a Japanese who asked me how to pay

the fee in Japanese in the bus on my second day in Fiji. But I'm sorry I was so nervous at that time to find HIS that I only answered like the following. " Just now, you should pay money to the driver." She was three years older than me and had been teaching English to the Japanese students in Hokkaido. We became friends soon and we were always chatting during the 8 hour flight in the plane while drinking Fijian beer.

I came home safely from Fiji about 8 pm. It was really really amazing to stay at a Fijian's home. During the first two days I was only surprised at their life style and scared about things such as dirty rooms, furniture and towels. (Sorry but it's true.) Where can I wash my hands after going to the toilet? Where can I wash my face? There was no washstand in the house. I had to wash my face outside. Why is the shower room so dark? Why does the water spring so little from the shower? Why is the shower water so hot and sometimes so cold? Because they use a solar powered system for hot water. It means they set the tank on the roof, the sunshine warms the water and they use it in the shower room. Why don't you wipe the table? Why are the sheets and pillowcases red? I don't know the reason but it might be their traditional style. The neighboring kids are always making noise until midnight and they start to fuss from 6 am next morning. Hens began to cock-a-doodle-doo around 3 am. How long do Fijians sleep? My host father's answer was like this," We can sleep anytime and anywhere: under trees and beside roads." Exactly it's true. I saw a lot of people taking a nap in the town and the fields in the afternoon. Why are kids walking bare feet? " They always lose their shoes so parents don't give them shoes." Finally I realized they were very kind and friendly and understood their life style. I really enjoyed my days in Fiji and noticed they are very rich in mind even if they don't have as many new convenient things as Japanese. When in Fuji do as the Fijians do. I came back to Japan without makeup while wearing rubber slip-on sandals.



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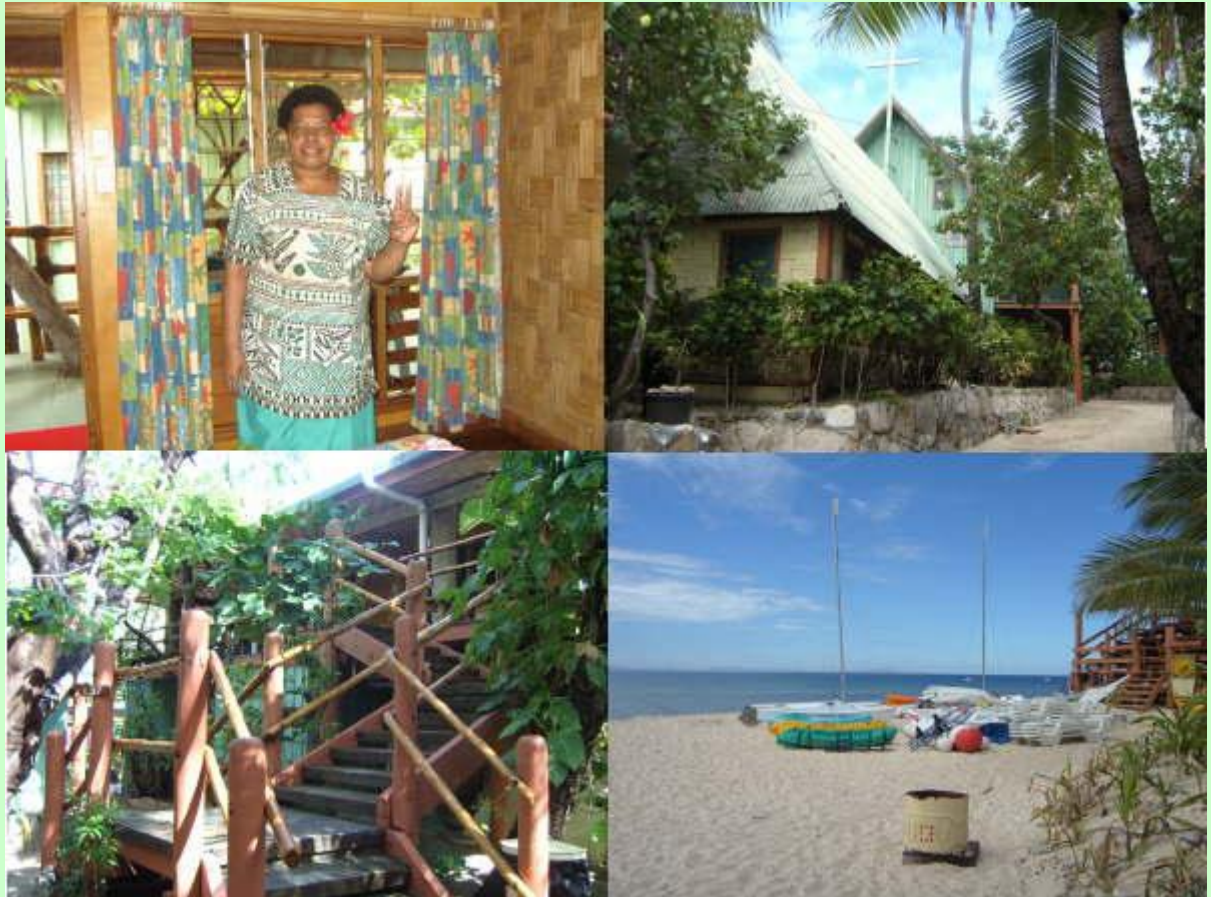


2007,9,9



I woke up in a log house hotel while hearing a loud noise of hard rain. After eating breakfast with the members of last night's dinner, I walked around the island. It was very small island and it took about 15 minutes on foot. Today was Sunday and some people were attending the Mass in a little church near the beach. Actually most Fijians are religious Christians. Willy and Vika read the Bible and pray to God in the living room at 7pm every night. At that time they wear the traditional waistcloth like a skirt. But only Vika goes to the church on Sunday. Willy told me he usually prayed at home and it was his style. Michiko and I left the island by a small boat and said good bye at the airport. After that I went back to Laotoka by bus alone. As today was Sunday, there was no store open and the town was very quiet. Willy fixed a very big lunch and was waiting for Vika and me. I took a rest and cleaned up my room. Now I packed almost every thing into my suitcase. Willy finished painting the special oil picture for me and packed it very carefully. He wrote the story of

his picture. After a simple dinner we watched TV of the South Pacific Games; it's similar to the the regent Olympic games. I will have to get up at 5:00 tomorrow morning because they told me that somebody would pick me up at my home stay home sometime between 6 am and 7 am. I fell into deep sleep while recalling the days in Fiji.



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✚ Beachcomber Island

2007,9,8



I got up early in the morning and went to the bus terminal to go to the airport where the shuttle bus would pick me up. At the wharf we got in the sightseeing ship and went to the small island, Beachcomber. We had to change to the small boat near the island. I came to the island alone but fluked some very international coincidences here. I ate lunch with three Fijians, a Malaysian guy and a Chinese Indonesian woman; four of them were working in NZ. And I also ate dinner with a Japanese woman in her thirties and three Irises from Sydney. In the afternoon I tried scuba

diving for the first time and probably the last time in my entire life. The good Japanese instructor, Norio helped me to dive in the bottom of the sea. Yellow fish, black striped fish, small blue fish and coralThey were so beautiful. I forgot the time. But unfortunately I couldn't control the high pressure of the air so now I have to go to an otolaryngology's office in Japan.



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✚ the last day at school

2007,9,7



It is said that in Fiji the people don't have the concept of propriety. They used to live in a small village and shared everything with each other. Today I caught a lot of fish so let's eat them with my company. I'm hungry now but there is nothing to eat at home. Somebody in the village will pick the coconuts from the tall trees. I can eat them. This is their sprit and custom called Kerekere. The Japanese guidebook says, " In Fiji if you find a stranger eating something in the

kitchen or sleeping in the room, don't be surprised. It's very common." Actually this morning I found a young Fijian guy sleeping on the floor of the living room. He was Vika's cousin who is working for the Navy. They suddenly decided to let him live with them. Today was my last day at the school. I went to school with the cordial lunch box of three boiled eggs, fried casaba potatoes and a mango fruit. Of course I shared them with my classmates. After school I walked to the downtown with one of the classmates, the Japanese retired teacher, to buy my souvenirs to take back to Japan. I prepared the Japanese dry noodle Soen for my host family. Willy began to hold the Kava ceremony outside with the Navy cousin. Sorry but I refused their invitation politely because Kava is too strange a taste for me.



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✚ a traditional Fijian dinner

2007,9,6



I heard the noise that Vika came home around midnight. When I got up at 6 am, they were still

sleeping and I went to school without saying good-bye. Just before noon, Willy appeared near the entrance of the classroom and handed me a lunch box. Oh, thank you! There were three boiled eggs in the plastic box. Today they cooked a very gorgeous traditional Fiji dinner. I observed how to make coconut milk. At first he cut an unripe coconut in half and threw the juice away. Then he sat down on a chair and laid a special tool under the bottom. He shaved the white part of coconut by the tool and gathered the chips in the container. After That Vika crushed them in her hands and filtered the white concentrated milk into a vessel. I was astonished while looking at her hands.



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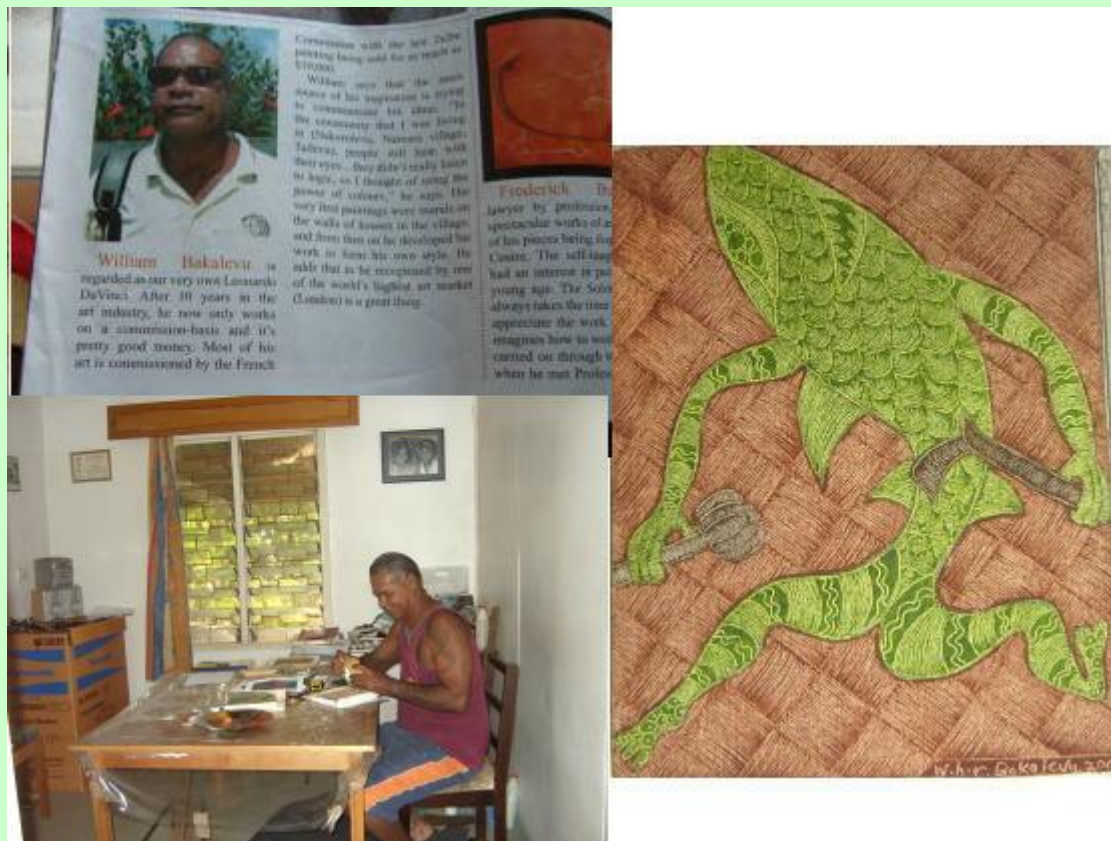
✚ He is a great artist!!

2007,9,5



When I got up, Willy was still sleeping. I found his letter to me to wake him up but I ate breakfast by myself and went to school on foot. He cooked a very delicious curry for dinner and we chatted about a lot of topics. Believe or not, he is a very famous artist who had exhibitions in London and Sydney. He told me about his idea concerning arts eagerly and showed me the file of the

magazine and newspaper articles about him. He was kind of the black sheep of his family but suddenly began to study hard and created his own way of painting based on the legend of his village. He really wanted to hold the exhibition in Tokyo but I'm sorry I don't have any acquaintance that is an owner of a gallery. I asked him to paint a small picture for me. After I went to bed, he was waiting for his wife to come back home from the ceremony without eating dinner.



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✚ the first day at the school

2007,9,4



Willy who looked sleepy prepared breakfast and took me to the school on foot. It took about 25 minutes from their house and seemed to be difficult to remember the directions because there were no landmarks, only fields. I met over ten students in my class and almost all of them were Japanese young students. I introduced myself in front of them, "Nice to meet you. Probably I'm older than your moms and study here for only four days but please count me among you." The

young Indian teacher was very beautiful and seemed to be a good teacher. One of the students was a Japanese retired teacher and he looked like the same age as me. The school policy was we shouldn't speak Japanese in the school. My classmates were very talkative even if our English was not perfect English. I enjoyed the lessons and after school the retired teacher asked me to visit the special school for deaf-mute children near our school. After dinner Willy served me Fijian's special bitter drink Kava. Actually it is made from the root of the Yagona (the name of the plant): they dry it and crush it into the powder. Just before they drink it, they put it into a cloth bag and filter it with water. It looks like mud water and they drink it with a bowl made of a hard coconut skin. I tried to drink it with hesitation. OK, one cup is enough. Willy continued drinking it again and again while listening to CD music until 3 o'clock.



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One of my purposes of coming to Fiji was to try scuba diving. I really wanted to do it at least once in my entire life. In the morning I went to the Japanese travel agency HIS in Martintar by bus to reserve the short trip around the Beachcomber Island Resort. After that I took a walk in Nadi Town and visited Sri Siva Subramaniya Suwami Temple (the Hindi Temple) and the market by myself. They were interesting. In the late evening Vika went to the small village near Suva (the capital of Fiji) with her relatives to attend her cousin's funeral ceremony. He was the famous singer named Sakiusa who passed away in Hawaii. Actually I watched the ceremony on TV and the Minister made a speech at it.



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✚ the first day in Fiji

2007,9,2



I arrived at the Nadi airport about 7 am and the staff of SPFB (the language school) welcomed me. Actually there are over 50 Japanese students and they took us to the Namaka School.

Everyone was very surprised at the poor school. The building looked like a barrack and there was a field instead of a playground. After the orientation we took an interview and paper test. They decided I could attend the highest classes of communication, reading, and grammar. After that they took half of the new students to Lautoka: the second largest town in Fiji but it takes about 1 hour from Nadi by bus. I was only gazing outside at the sugar cane fields from the window of the bus. They finally took me to my host family's house. They were a Fijian husband and a wife: the painter William and a tax officer Vika. It had already past 3 pm but they were waiting for me to eat lunch together. They looked like a kind couple and I was really relieved. After dinner I lay down on the balcony and talked a lot with Vika while looking at the beautiful stars.



I got angry.

2007,10,31



The bankruptcy trustees opened the ex president of NOVA ,Sahashi's room in the office building of MM center. It is a very big and gorgeous room and it cost two million seven hundred thousand yen per month to rent this room. There are red carpets, chandelier and leather covered sofas. And surprisingly the private space including bedroom, bathroom and a Japanese style teahouse follows next to the office. He spent about seventy million yen to renovate it. He took the company into his hands. I think he will be arrested because of some suspicions of crimes such as malpractice.



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✚ In my case...

2007,10,30



I don't want to take leave to say how much of my money I lost due to this terrible incident of NOVA. But it's true that I'm one of the students who will lose the most tickets. Now I have 454 tickets and 13 Voice class tickets. In the end of October in 2004, just after I went to LA for the first time, I bought 600 tickets and started to practice English conversation at NOVA. I checked several schools and compared them before I decided to pay a lot of money to NOVA. NOVA seemed to be very convenient and the most vivid of all of the schools I had visited and it was located just in front of my station. And I also found that if I buy 600 tickets, I could take one lesson most cheaply. Their system was the more tickets we buy, the cheaper we can get one ticket. But I had to spend all of the tickets within 3 years. I thought I could do it and also it must have taken at least 3 years to master English. I enjoyed lessons a lot and upped the level steadily. I could reserve lessons constantly and their talkative and eager Japanese sales women didn't bother me because I had a lot of tickets. I sometimes bought books there to make them glad. When I began to be tired of going to school, I changed my lesson style; I started Ochanoma lesson. I could take lessons at home easily and constantly. I was satisfied with NOVA's lesson even if I heard their bad rumors sometimes. In January in this year I found the article concerning NOVA in a newspaper. According to the newspaper, METI checked the company because of the complaints of lots of students. I was worried about NOVA at that time but I didn't read the other articles about bad things of NOVA after that. I thought they had not found illegal matters with

NOVA and the bad rumors were only rumors. My tickets ran short gradually and NOVA announced it was the last chance to buy 600 tickets cheaply in February. And they also told us if we get tickets during that sales period we could take good advantage of the service. It meant we could get tickets for special prices and we would be able to use the new 600 tickets until 3 years from the day when we started to use the new tickets. So I decided to buy the new 600 tickets during the sale. In June I heard the bad news that METI banned parts of NOVA's business. Of course I was afraid of their condition but I didn't imagine it would go bankrupt soon. I had used my first term 600 tickets in the beginning of July and started to take lessons by using the new 600 tickets. I thought "I can take lessons constantly until in July in 2010. I will be able to improve my English more." The more I studied English, the more I realized that I should study harder. After that they began to broadcast bad news about NOVA suddenly. I realized again that my prospect was wrong. They would go bankrupt sooner than I had guessed. I tried to use my tickets as soon as possible but it was impossible to use all of them in 3 months. Oh my Gosh! My husband consoled me. "You could take lessons very cheaply so you don't lose your money so much as you are regretting now." I think so now. Don't regret any more, Masaho! I decided to change my mind.

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Why did NOVA go bankrupt easily?

2007,10,29



Students purchase tickets before they enter NOVA and they use their tickets to take lessons. So students' tickets are their kind of debts. NOVA has to provide lessons for students for 3 years at the longest because their longest effective term of tickets is 3 years. It means they have to pay salaries for staff and rents of offices and schools for at least 3 years. The more students they have, the more they have to pay costs every month. It's really easy common sense but they didn't save money, students' advance payments. They use them to expand their business such as TV commercial and opening the new schools. They didn't have any property. Once they had a bad reputation, with the ban of METI on selling the long-term tickets, nobody wanted to buy tickets anymore. They couldn't get enough money to run the business but they have to offer the service. Everybody, even the bureaucracy of METI, couldn't guess the company would go bankrupt so soon, only four months later from the ban.

✚ Please support NOVA!!

2007,10,28



To tell the truth, I didn't like NOVA's management policy but I love their very convenient and flexible lesson style. I found the notice board where many people are calling on some companies to support NOVA through the Internet. Now the only one thing I can do to continue my lesson as well as the past days is to show my eagerness to many companies that are thinking about their help to NOVA. I decided to write my comments there like the following.

I think there are a lot of possibilities to improve the Eikaiwa market in Japan in the future aging society. Actually a lot of middle-aged people were taking lessons and participating in VOICE classes of NOVA and their levels of English are quite high. There are so many people who want to study English to enjoy their elderly days. They also have quite a lot of money. I'm sure they will be spending their money in the market. It's really difficult to gather so many customers from the beginning. You must invest in NOVA.



✚ The teachers of NOVA

2007,10,27



Now around 5000 foreign teachers of NOVA are adrift. It must be very hard days for them to lose their jobs without certain information in the foreign country, Japan. According to the news the Australia and British embassies announced their support for them. As NOVA is a private company, the Japanese government only can help the employees under the law such as the unemployment insurance law even if they are foreigners. But if I were their mother, I would think what the Japanese government is doing now. "It's the company's responsibility to pay salary and the Japanese government shouldn't allow the company to do such things. It's the fault of the government. If they can't do it, they should pay money instead of the company." I know it doesn't make sense but it must be the feeling of angry people.

✚ NOVA

2007,10,26



This morning NOVA finally applied the Company Resuscitation Law. The three directors dismissed the President Sahashi from the position and decided to apply the law. Actually he didn't attend the board of directors meeting that was held in the late night. Now many students look upset but I really felt refreshed to hear the news. As a person involved with the trouble, I'm really fed up with the former President's stupid strategies such as borrowing money from the shady funds. Why did they decide much earlier? I'm not familiar with the Company Resuscitation Law but I really hope they will recover the company again. Since we students can't take lessons anymore, one thing I have to do immediately is to stop the automatic deduction from the bank account. I called to Ginganet which is the subsidiary of NOVA but it had been always busy. I sent a fax where I wrote that I want to cancel the contract. I don't know if it's effective or not. I'm going to ask the bank not to charge the fee of the company next Monday.

✚ The disorder

2007,10,25



I was supposed to go to Osaka and take care of my mom instead of my sister during this weekend. But I'm still unwell now. I called my sister and canceled my plan. If I pass my cold on to my mom, it causes a big problem. I really want to recover from an obstinate cold completely. When I was younger, I could get rid of a cold within one week but now it's impossible. It takes about 2 weeks to be fine. What's worse, I'm dispirited when I have a cold.

✚ The situation of MM center 2

2007,10,24



I couldn't take a lesson through Ginganet tonight. I was really disappointed even though I didn't

expect so much. Now I read some information about the MM center in Osaka where they provide TV lessons. There were only 12 teachers there and they lost their morale. Someone could take lessons luckily but the foreign teacher complained about NOVA in Japanese so it was not a proper lesson at all. Another student wrote the comment like the following. I heard that the headquarters of NOVA told them that they had paid the rent of the building and the lighting and heating expenses the other day but they still couldn't use even tap water there. It is said the MM center is located in the tall building near Nanba station that is one of the busiest stations in Osaka. The rent must be very expensive. Is it a ruined space in the high class and modern building now?

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The situation of the MM center

2007,10,23



I'd already given up taking lessons through TV. But I had the reservation so I turned on the TV at 9:10 pm. I was very surprised and glad that the sign of NOVA appeared and then a teacher named Robert from Canada appeared. At first we were talking about the present situation of NOVA and I asked him about the shape of the MM center where he was working. "It's not lively now compared to the previous days but some teachers are still working now and the Japanese staff is very busy because the phones are always ringing." In the end of the lesson he asked me when I would have a reservation for the next lesson. Now I don't have any reservation. Even if I want to reserve, I can't make it. The phone has been busy every time I called to the MM center.

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My condition

2007,10,22



My condition is still not good. My voice is cracking and I sometimes have a fit of coughing. My eyes feel pain and I have stiff shoulders and a back. I realize how happy the healthy body is.

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KFC history

2007,10,21



A poorly educated man, Harland Sanders opened a restaurant in Corbin, Kentucky in 1930 at the age of 60. He devised his original fried chicken recipe and it became very popular among the local people soon. But in the middle of the 50's his restaurant was reduced due to new highway construction and he decided to begin franchising his fried chicken. Within 10 years more than 600 KFC restaurants appeared all over the U.S. In 1946, at the age of 74, Colonel Sanders decided to sell his company to another Kentucky businessman for 2 million dollars and 7 years later the owners sold it to another company for 275 million dollars. Within 7 years the value of the company became 100 times greater. From the foundation to now the original recipe of its special fried chicken is still a trade secret and they have been keeping it in the fireproof safe at the headquarters of the company in Kentucky.

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Ochyanoma Ryugaku

2007,10,20



This morning When I turned on the TV and connected to the sight of Ochyanoma Ryugaku of NOVA, the note appeared. It said, " We are sorry that we can't provide today's lesson to you. We will return the points to you. We apologize to you for your inconvenience."

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NOVA 3

2007,10,19



Today is an important day for the people involved with NOVA such as the teachers, the Japanese employees, the students, the stock holders and so on because the president announced that he would pay salary to the foreign teachers today instead of the regular payday. If he can't keep his promise, it means the company will go bankrupt immediately. If he can, it might mean I can take their lessons a little bit more. Now there are two ways for me how to deal with NOVA, to cancel and wait to receive money or to try to take lessons as many as possible. I think the latter way is better. Now NOVA has no money. Who can pay money to the canceled people even if the METI ordered the company to return money? If I continue to take lessons until the company goes

bankrupt, some other company might help the students. For English conversation companies, I must be one of the so good consumers and they must want me to continue to be their good customer. Anyway I don't know what will happen in the future.

Tonight I reserved a lesson through TV at 10pm. Just before the lesson a Japanese staff called me to say that they couldn't offer the lesson tonight due to the boycott of the teacher. He said, "I'm sorry. I apologize to you." again and again sadly. I said only, "I see." without getting angry. It's expected that the company couldn't pay salary for teachers. I only want to observe the end of NOVA quietly. I can't accuse employees who are working without salary. Probably the president, Saruhashi should be blamed but now where is he?

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Coughing hard

2007,10,17



Now I have a bad cough. Of course I took medicines for a cough but it's not so effective. I don't have a high fever but feel pain everywhere on my body. Its turn of seasons and suddenly became cool. I always take care not to catch a cold but I did. Anyway I'm drinking a hot ginger tea and going to bed.

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How to call the year in Japan

2007,10,15



This year is 2007 but we also call it the 19th year of Heisei in Japan. It's a kind of Japanese original calendar and Heisei means our present Emperor. The former Emperor's era was Showa and now we call him Showa Emperor. Be careful not to call the present Emperor Heisei Emperor because we call him in such a title after his death. It's the rule but I'm sure the current young Japanese don't know this rule. We should call him as Kinjyou Tennou, the present Emperor instead of Heisei Emperor. Anyway there are a lot of special terms and phrases concerning our Royal Family as well as their special customs. But we can call the present period Heisei period as well as Showa period. It might sound strange but we still use this Japanese peculiar way more than the western style way, especially on official documents and speeches. The Showa Emperor passed away in January in the sixty fourth year of Showa and from the next day the Heisei period

started. So 1989 was the same year of the 64th year of Syouwa and the first year of Heisei.

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NOVA 2

2007,10,14



There are so many articles concerning NOVA on the web sites. They can't pay salary to both the foreign and Japanese employees on the due date. Some teachers decided to walk out. An Australian Minister announced a plan to protect their jobless ex NOVA instructors who might be at a loss in foreign country, Japan. NOVA is planning to get 6.4 billion yen by issuing warrants to two investment companies in a tax haven country. And then a Japanese guy who was arrested in Osaka recently tried to earn a lot of money by treating NOVA stocks. Now I'm tired of reading terrible news about NOVA and being bothered by them. It's a kind of international problem because the victims are not only Japanese but also over 5000 foreign teachers. In my opinion Japanese government which hasn't been directing the company rightly partly assumes responsibility for this trouble.

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Kentucky Fried Chicken

2007,10,13



Which do you prefer KFC or Yakitori? I used to buy KFC a lot when I was young but now I don't because it seems to be too oily for me. I heard that they considered strategy very much to get success in the Japanese market when they decided to open the outlets in Japan at the end of the sixties. They established the joint company with one of the biggest Japanese companies, Mitsubishi, and opened the chicken farm which would supply the good materials. And also they changed the taste and menu a little bit. More over it was lucky for them that their symbol, the red and white stripe, happened to be the same pattern as the Japanese traditional lucky pattern. So it gave a good first impression to Japanese people. That's interesting. Today I noticed that the present menus are so different from that time. Now they offer several kinds of the Japanese flavored dishes like a soy sauce flavored chicken, a triangle shaped rice ball and so on. I would like to go to the KFC shop near my house next Sunday.



That's a shame.

2007,10,12



Our local government has four foreign offices in Maryland in the U.S., London in England, Singapore and Dalian in China. In each office only one staff is working to introduce our prefecture to the local companies and they try to ask them to open their branches in Kanagawa. Recently the opportunity to be the future staff who will be working in America was given to ordinary employees. I decided to apply for it and conformed the qualifications for the position. The skill of every day English is essential. Probably that's OK with me. The knowledge of economy or international politics and interest in our industry policy are musts. I studied in the international political class at the university long ago and also had been working for the department concerning the local commerce for two years. I thought I was the suitable person for the position. But I realized that I didn't fulfill the most important requirement for the candidate. Actually my present position is a little bit higher than the required position. Oh, my gosh!



2007 Japan Open Golf Championship

2007,10,11



Today I took a compensatory day off for a business on last Sunday and went to Sagami-hara Golf Club to see the 2007 Japan Open Golf Championship that is one of the major golf championships in Japan. I watched several famous players including the 16-year-old Ryo Ishikawa called the shy Prince in person. Actually he won one of the Japanese golf tournament championships last spring and the Japanese mass media nicknamed him Hanikami Ouji: it means the shy Prince because he was so shy at the press conference after winning the championship. I also supported the one-time big player Tuneyuki Nakajima at the age of 52. He can still drive a ball for long distance and he is in the top stream. He is encouraging many middle-aged people.



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Today my teacher at NOVA was a woman from Saint Lucia which is a small country in the Caribbean Sea. Honestly I've never heard about the name of St. Lucia. I've met a teacher from Colombia but it's a country in South America. I'm not familiar with countries in the Caribbean Sea and South America. She explained to me that there are a lot of small countries and areas where people speak English except the famous countries like America, U.K., Canada and Australia. Yes, exactly. I'm ashamed because of my shallow knowledge. By the way now the financial condition of NOVA is very bad. The salary of foreign teachers and Japanese staff is delayed and a lot of schools were closed. Actually, Tujido NOVA and Ofuna NOVA will be closed in the end of October. And surprisingly they will shut down Fujisawa NOVA soonn,too. They can't pay the rents. Many students canceled their contract and required to return their prepayment lesson fee. They are complaining that they haven't received the repayments yet. I still have many tickets of NOVA. If this situation continues, NOVA will go bankrupt sooner or later. Now I decided I would take as many lessons as possible until they stop their business. It must be good way. But I can't help getting angry with NOVA, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry who suddenly banned the part of business of NOVA, the mass media who are improving the confusion and students who couldn't continue studying and caused this trouble at first. Why should good students who are taking lessons constantly like me suffer from such a loss?

✚ How to repaper a Syoji door

2007,10,9



Yesterday my husband repapered two Syoji doors and repaired a screen door. A Syoji door is a Japanese traditional sliding door which is made of a wooden frame and a sheet of white paper. As it becomes yellowish with age, we usually change the paper every two or three years. It's not so difficult to repaper a Shoji paper. At first we go to a do-it-yourself store to purchase sheets of paper and starch. At home we remove a Syoji door, and bring it to a wide space like a living room and lean it against the wall. Then we remove the old paper and wash the wooden frame. (This time we missed the washing because we removed it so cleanly.) Spread a starch on the frame and immediately paste the paper evenly. After that we should wet the paper by a sprayer, it's a secret of success. Yesterday we used a steam iron instead of a sprayer. After it becomes dry, lay the Syoji on the floor and cut the extra paper along the frame with knife and scale. It's done. We have repapered Syoji many times so now we are kind of professional craft man and woman. My husband also tried to change a net of the screen door for the first time. Now we can buy very convenient goods to fix it and it seemed to be easy even though I didn't help him.

✚ Haruki Murakami

2007,10,8



It is said That Haruki Murakami is one of the strongest candidates of the Nobel Prize for literature. He is at present Japan's most famous author who wrote a lot of best sellers. Just because a lot of Japanese love his books, it doesn't mean he is a good author. But now his books are translated into many languages and there are lots of readers all over the world. I know some foreign young people who were reading his books and all of them prized his books. About me, I read only two of his books over 20 years ago when he just became popular. They say the theme of his books was changed after the Great Hanshin Earthquake. I am concerned I should read his current books.

✚ **My paternal grandmother**

2007,10,7



My paternal grand mother passed away approximately 30 years ago. If she were still alive, she would be over 115 years old. She brought up me at home because my mom was working outside as a teacher. I still vaguely remember my infant days with her. Sometimes I was afraid of her death when I was an elementary school kid. I realized she was quite old and I was worried about the ominous premonition when I came home from school by myself. “ What should I do if I find my grandma’ s body at home?” At that time I couldn’ t enter the tradesman’ s entrance which she always opened and I rang at the main gate. When she opened the door and I found her fine, I was really relieved. She was born in the middle of the Meiji era and didn’ t receive the higher education as was common for Japanese women her age. She was always wearing Kimono and didn’ t have a lot of opportunities go outside. Of course she didn’ t study childcare theory at all but she good took care of my sisters and me.

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✚ **Dear Willy and Vika,**

2007,10,6



How have you been? I have been busy since I came back to Japan because I suddenly went to Singapore with my family. My husband and sons planned our family trip to Singapore while I was staying with you in Fiji. Anyway I came back to Japan from Singapore safely and just now I’ ve ordered a lot of pictures I took in Fiji. As I told you in Fiji, I’ m going to send some pictures. Now I miss you. In Japan now it’ s autumn and I’ m wearing long- sleeved clothes. Soon the leaves will turn yellow, brown and red. It’ s so beautiful and after that they will fall from the trees. I recommend that you visit Japan someday. I’ m using the peeler that you gave me. It’ s very convenient. Thank you very much. I also displayed your good picture in my living room. Have a good day and keep in touch.

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✚ **Fortune telling**

2007,10,5



In Japan horoscope fortune telling and blood type fortune telling are very popular. We can find such kind of fortune telling articles in almost every magazine, especially magazines for women. I can't believe such kind of fortune telling. I mean why would people who were born in the same period or have the same blood type share the same future or destiny? It doesn't make sense. However I believe the classification of personalities. Because the same climate surroundings and blood type might give some influences to people. If a baby is born in winter, he or she has to stand cold weather and can't move the arms freely compared to the summer born baby. I think they will be kind of patient. And I also believe the compatibility between zodiacs and blood types. My zodiac is the Gemini and it gets along with the Libra. My blood type is A positive. They say blood type A people are punctual. By the way in Japan the blood type negative people are very rare. I think over 95 percent Japanese are RH positive. Many celebrities believe fortune telling now. I don't know why but they might be afraid of losing their popularity and can't help depending on fortune telling.

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The Oregon donation: part 2

2007,10,4



It is said that there is a shortage of donated organs and in poor countries many people want to sell their own organs to supply the demand. As I told before I think we should improve the organ donating system. If I donate my body parts after my death, I would like to offer my liver, kidney, heart and eyes. But I don't want to let them transplant my skin. I mean I want to say good-bye with my perfect appearance in the coffin. So I also ask them to put false eyes in my eye sockets.

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Delicious cookies

2007,10,3



Today we received a box of very delicious cookies from a very rich person. Actually he was listed as one of the Japanese top 100 taxpayers. Why did he send us such a thing? The other day my son found a card case in Roppongi where he made a speech to some students who were studying web design. There were several bankcards and business cards in a case and he called to the office where the owner seemed to be working. Actually he was a CEO of a foreign affiliated

securities firm, one of the so-called Roppongi Hills Zoku. After talking with the secretary, he sent the case to the office by registered mail. Yesterday we heard the owner's comments of appreciation through the answering machine. It sounded like a very smart and rich man. Thanks to my son, I can taste such expensive sweets that I can't buy by myself.

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✚ The oregon donation

2007,10,2



Thanks to the development of medical science we are overcoming several life-threatening illnesses. Now organ transplants are common and they help many ill patients. But in Japan even though the technique and facilities are sufficient, the donated organs are really lacking, so many patients go abroad to have operations. We have an organ donation registration system. But many people don't know how to register. In my opinion they should publicize such systems more. If Oregon donation becomes very common, more lives must be saved.

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✚ Why??

2007,10,1



This morning I received your e-mail. Thank you very much for the quick answer. When I get an e-mail from you, I always read it on the train to my office. I noticed the following sentences are deleted from my original e-mail. I don't know why but probably they were deleted by accident. A computer is very convenient but sometimes the unexpected is bound to happen when we use it. Would you mind reading the following phrases again and correcting them? Sorry, I'm a kind of punctual woman.

10

2007,11,30



Her attitude toward disabled person was highly commended.
This breakthrough was done by Mr. Ito.
We gathered the father of the victims must be the criminal.

He tore the math examination paper.
The family observed the birth of the baby.
The minister addressed the audience at the meeting.
She barred her son from playing with video games.
The jury delivered the verdict that the murderer should be liable to the death penalty.

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✚ 9

2007,11,29



They took a poll about politics just before the election.
He sued her for a satisfaction of the debt.
I was really relieved to hear the news about her.
When you are busy, you have to use your time efficiently.
I had been devoting time to study English for three years but I'm not still good at English.
We always contribute some money to welfare agencies in the end of year.
She hosted her son's birthday party at home last night.
Let's clean our room initially before starting work.

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✚ 8

2007,11,28



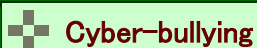
I can't help objecting to your opinion if you still stick to such a silly plan.
Do you need any supplies for the office?
Now labor and management are holding the meeting.
Our society is encountering several serious problems.
I'm reading some reports on the assignment.
Their argument went to trial.
The small helicopter crashed into the railway.
The police found the evidence of the murder case.
She was cautious not to be found by her husband when she decided to meet her previous boy friend.



2007,11,27



I was waiting for the train at the track for one hour when the accident happened.
A conductor asked each passenger who doesn't have special tickets to move to the ordinary car.
One of the advantages to living in the center of a city is to use a lot of transportation.
You should refrain from chatting when your colleague is busy at her work.
You should refrain from talking loudly in public.
Due to the construction we have to detour around to the station.
The airplane took off from the runway.
My son might be lost. Could you page him?
Don't enter the building without permission.
Every student of NOVA can't have their advance lesson fee refunded.
The usher guided us to the seats in the theater.
I withdrew money from the bank during lunch break.
She soloed in front of a lot of auditorium.
We can drink wine during the intermission in a famous opera house.
Please take a rest in the designated area.



2007,11,26



It's said that recently teenagers tend to bully each other by using computers such as writing nasty comments on BBS, sending threatening messages, spreading rumors online and forwarding e-mails without consent. That reminds me of the terrible murder case which happened in Sasebo in Nagasaki about 3 years ago. The six-grade elementary school girl killed her friend with a knife. When the victim was found in the empty classroom, she was falling down in the pool of blood. One of the inducements of the murder was actually the trouble concerning their blogs. Both of them were having their own blogs where the girls were commenting with each other. The murderer girl felt she was bullied when she read the note written by the toll. She had the grudge against her friend and killed her. That's unbelievable. But I don't think we should prohibit kids from using

websites. Because the Internet gives kids a lot of information and profits. It's more important to be used to using the Internet from the age of little kids rather than being afraid of rare crimes.

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6

2007,11,25



Don't send your staff on an errand for your private chore.
I bet you will succeed someday if you study hard.
To do it immediately is preferable.
He insisted that she go to the office with him.
Please say the number precisely.
It's crucial to memorize the other person's name when you want to succeed in business.
Working outside on a cold day is quite demanding.
I have a vague memory of my infant days.
I fear I didn't meet her in the meeting.
Please show me a little mercy because I'm poor.
I mourn the dead teacher.
Everyday we read tragic incidents in the newspaper.
She grieved that her cute cat passed away a week ago.
She felt distress over her son's disappearance.
I think you are being rather harsh.
We heard a very pathetic story concerning Tom from her.
We should have compassion for victims.
She deserves a promotion.
Toilet paper was scarce during the depression.
He is confident of winning the first prize.
She is modest, generous and kind.
We have ample money to purchase that house.

-△-



5

2007,11,23



I saw a helicopter falling downward.
We need change to buy can beverages from vending machines.
It takes about one month to repair this digital camera.
I'm hungry now. Let's have a bite at the coffee shop over there.
If you violate the traffic law and cause an accident, you have to be fired.
I'm really glad to accept your offer.
I will feel relaxed after I accomplish the difficult work.
Do you assure the safety of this machine?
You are my good account so would you mind accepting this invitation?
I intend to live in America for at least 3 months after retirement.
I owe 10 thousand yen to you for my dinner.
Chunichi defeated Hanshin 2 to 10.
The mother barked at her boy because he broke the pane.
She will abandon her family someday.
I'm always tempted to purchase fashionable clothing when I go to a department store.
Please sleep alone if you snore loudly.
He finally revealed the top-secret information.
Only time will heal the pain in your arm.
I pretended not to notice their mistakes.
We have to shift the policy when the situation is changed.

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4

2007,11,21



Now many public toilets have beds where we can lay babies.
It requires a lot of power to bend thick cardboard.
He suddenly seized my arm in the crowd.
People might have towed heavy stones to build pyramids in ancient Egypt.
I was so surprised to find the vast cornfield in IL.
I found her wearing the identical sweater of mine.
If you want to look slim, you should wear vertical plaid clothes.
The expert showed the boy the symmetrical pattern picture to check his mentality.
The infants were walking to the park in rows with three kindergarten teachers.

Don't spill fluid on a computer.

I found the important letter beneath a pile of leaflets in the mailbox.

There are many stacks of books on the desk.

I found the huge dent in the passenger door of my car. Who crashed into it?

He ordered his belongings neatly in the hotel room.

I parked my car alongside the curb.

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3

2007,11,20



The neighbors of our office swept the fallen leaves on the pavement this morning.

She mounted the stage to make a speech to the audience.

A driver was loading heavy cardboard boxes into a truck.

I always dine at the cafeteria for lunch.

He dug a huge hole to bury the body.

The long river descends from the top of the mountain to the bay below.

This lane leads to the main street.

A rascal scattered a lot of toys in the room.

The land slants westward.

Water gushed from the forest.

I was so tired that I couldn't help lying on the bed.

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2

2007,11,19



When you clean a pane, please wipe it with a wet newspaper.

We have to bind cardboards, when we through them away.

I covered a shelf with a drape to protect books from dust.

There were so many devices in the factory.

Her garment cost a lot.

I don't know how to use the new equipment.

I received the parcel from America.
She made a speech in front of a podium.
All students were seated opposite the teachers.

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✚ **Some practices**

2007,11,18



A long time ago there were streets covered with gravel even in big cities in Japan but these days almost all roads are paved.
I tumbled over a street curb on my way to the office.
You should leash your dog while you are taking a walk with him.
Don't park a car near a hydrant because fire fighter can't use it in emergency.
A barn is used for storage of agricultural machines and a silo is a suitable place to store grains.
The trunk is thicker than her waist of hers.
She made a string from several threads.

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✚ **Dear Monte,**

2007,11,17



Thank you for your e-mail. I'm glad that my present arrived at your house safely after a long trip across the Pacific Ocean and you were satisfied with them. Please give them to your uncle and friends. If you need more, let me know. I can get them easily and send you soon. I was really relieved that I found them made in Japan instead of China. I heard American people were hesitating to buy manufactured goods made in China after many incidents happened, for example little kids got sick by using lead painted toys made in China. We, Japanese are also afraid to eat foods that were imported from China. Some of them included bad agrichemicals. I'm looking forward to speaking with you again. Have a good day.

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✚ If I can use my lifesavings freely,.....

2007,11,16



If I had a lot of money, I could donate it to the International Red Cross. They have a long history and there are a lot of hospitals involved with it all over the world. I can trust the organization and it's the reason why I want to contribute to it.

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✚ Moriya

2007,11,15



Another current big news in Japan is the suspicions concerning Moriya, the ex subordinate officer of the Defense Agency. At first the information was about his playing golf with the president of the weapons supplier. Not only he but also his wife had been playing golf at least once a week for several years without paying money. We were so surprised to hear the news at that time and then much more facts such as the companies taking care of Moriyas daughter when she wanted to study in America were unveiled. Now we are shocked that his man, who is also a high-ranking officer of the Defense Agency gave him over 10 thousand yen. Now I'm fed up with such disgusting behavior of them. I don't want to read the news anymore. I only hope he will be arrested soon.

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✚ Akafuku Mochi

2007,11,14



Have you ever heard about Ise Shrine in Mie prefecture? It's one of the very old and famous Shrines in Japan. And Akafuku Mochi is sold there as the most popular souvenir of Ise. It's a Japanese traditional style sweet made from rice cake and bean paste: a rice cake covered with red bean paste. A shop of long standing had been selling it for a long time. Recently we found that they had been breaking the law concerning food sanitation. They ignored the deadline for eating. When they had leftovers, they separated a rice cake and paste and then they mixed them into the new ingredients to make new products. But nobody got sick after eating Akafuku. In my opinion the Japanese law might be too strict but anyway they didn't mind the law. They cheated consumers and that's bad.



The conversation about Chicago 2

2007,11,13



Maybe so……. Speaking of museums, there is a great one called the Art Institute of Chicago. By the way if you like sports, there are lots of sports teams based in Chicago. You must have heard about the Chicago Bulls?

I'm afraid; I'm not familiar with sports. But I'm interested in music. I would like to hear Jazz somewhere besides going to a museum during this weekend. If I have extra time, I also want to go shopping.

I would recommend you go to Michigan Avenue and the Sears Tower.

I wish I could have much more time. First I should finish my job before going sightseeing. Thank you very much for your good information.



The conversation about Chicago

2007,11,12



Is this your first trip to Chicago?

Yes, this is my first visit to Chicago. But I've been to the other big cities in the U.S. like LA and NYC.

Have you read or heard much about Chicago?

To tell the truth, I don't know much about it but it's the center of the economy in the Midwest. I heard that it's very cold and windy in winter. There is a famous museum, isn't there? I also heard you have a lot of public transportation.

It's freezing cold in winter. It's always warm indoors. I sometimes wear a T-shirt at home even in winter.

Is that so? It might be colder in Tokyo than Chicago because the ordinary houses in Tokyo don't have central heating systems.

Elections

2007,11,11



The biggest issues in election in Japan depend on the social situation of the time during which the election takes place. The biggest issue of the former election of House of Councilors was actually pension planes because at that time we were afraid of the lost records about pension payment. During a depression the economy and jobs might become the biggest issues of the election. In Japan terrorism is hard to be discussed with the whole nation because terrorists have never attacked people directly in Japan. In my opinion education can't be the biggest issue because the people who don't have kids are not so interested in the education system. Recently we are worried about light polls, especially among young people in Japan. Rights of elections are very important results of democracy and elections are also a necessary part of a free society. How can we express our opinion of politics without them?

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Farting

2007,11,10



As farting is a kind of physiologic phenomenon, I don't think it's so rude. But doing in public is a little bit embarrassing. Even little kids seem to feel the same. My grandson looked embarrassed while saying it smells bad, when he farted among his family members.

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Yunessan in Hakone

2007,11,9



This is a picture of one of the bathtubs in Yuneesan in Hakone. Yunessan is a one-day trip Onsen resort which was built about 5 years ago. There are approximately 20 or 30 bathtubs which are filled with many kinds of hot waters like natural hot spring, Sake, milk, coffee and so on. It costs 4 thousand yen to enter the area but you can spend all day long there from morning until closing time in the evening while enjoying a lot of bathes. Now it's a season of Beaujolais nouveau, fresh wine made in France so they are providing the bathtub filled with hot water and wine, Beaujais nouveau. Many people are soaking in the bath of fresh wine. It's very crowded. I don't want to soak in such a crowded bath even it smells wonderful.



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✚ How to educate Chinese people

2007,11,8



Now I would like to explain the treatment in each of these bad manners. Please encourage people to always carry handkerchiefs or tissue paper to spit into them instead of streets. Then you should build a lot of toilets in public places and teach kids to urinate there. If kids want to do it at the public toilets, their parents might be ashamed to do it in public. Let's have a big campaign not to use foul language and teach kids correct language at school. The reason why you discipline little children at first is the same as urinating at toilets. About farting and belching, can you force many people to realize that it's bad manners in western countries to do them in public? For the last, it is said that Chinese people are very greedy. I think it's really difficult to make them recognize that being greedy is a matter of shame. Because the ordinary people in China had been poor but these days they suddenly became rich. They can't help being greedy in such situations. They are not used to being satisfied with moderate lives. Anyway the Olympic Games will be held next year. I hope everybody will be able to feel comfortable in Beijing during the period.

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Ranking bad behaviors

2007,11,7



They say the officials in China are educating the citizens to behave in good manners to have a success with the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing. They mention 8 bad actions on a street such as spitting, queue jumping and so on. I would like to rank these behaviors from the very worst to the moderately bad. The worst is dropping litter and the second worst is spitting, then queue jumping, staring at people, listening to a loud Walkman, drinking alcohol and eating as you walk. I think walking slowly is not so bad. Little kids and elderly people can't walk so fast. We have to allow such people to walk slowly and I think we want to enjoy walking while looking around a street sometimes. I ranked them by the situation how it bothers the other people directly and also how many people it annoys.

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The new company

2007,11,6



The news that the new company that will acquire NOVA was decided was suddenly announced. It's a company in Nagoya and it runs some English schools in Hokkaido and restaurants all over the Japan. They have grown the company sharply recently by mergers and acquisition. They say they don't undertake the tickets which the students of NOVA paid in advance. Now I can't understand correctly what they are saying. There is no detailed information. Anyway I don't think it's good news for me. I should think carefully if I will continue the lessons or not. I don't want to lose my money anymore.

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How to prevent a cold

2007,11,5



I finally got rid of my obstinate cold. Now I don't cough nor sneeze but I feel the air is dry recently. I don't want to have a cold anymore. I decided to wash my hands and gargle my throat after coming back home everyday. And I use a humidifier while I'm sleeping. I also try to wear a wet mask while sleeping. Someone wrote in the newspaper this way was very effective to prevent a cold.

✚ Is it a show room?

2007,11,4



The ex President of NOVA, Sahashi said that the gorgeous president room which he used was a show room to make sure how to work at home. No kidding! They say only a few people who were really close to him could enter the room. Almost all of the ordinary employees didn't know the existence of that room. How did he open it to the public? Ginganet was also a shady company like his private property. The instrument which we use when we take lessons through TV cost over two hundred thousand yen. It was really expensive compared to ordinary computers. When I entered NOVA in 2004, the Japanese staff handed it to me even though I wanted to take lessons at school in front of the station. Of course I refused to buy it. But she persuaded me to receive it. "Now you made the contact including all our service. We can't sell you these cheapest tickets without the instrument. You can buy your tickets cheaper than ordinary tickets even though you get this small machine. In three years you might change your mind to use Ocyanoma Ryugaku. It's very convenient. Now we recommend you that you take lessons sometimes at home. You can improve your English fastest if you take lessons through both ways, at school and at your living room." He must have ordered the employees to sell the machine to make Ginganet to earn a lot of profit. Anyway there were too many tricks that made him rich. He needs to explain every suspicion against him in public. Don't hide.

✚ A nylon towel

2007,11,3



A nylon towel

This morning I talked with Monte after a long separation. He had his computer fixed at an electronic store and after that his Skype had not been working automatically. Anyway we were talking for a little while and at the end of our conversation he asked me to send some convenient washcloths that he bought only one at the grocery store in Akagi in Shimane. He explained that it was made from nylon, the color was light blue or pink and the material was very rough. "It's 27 centimeters wide and 94 centimeters long. It's very convenient to wash my back but I can't get the same thing in the U.S. Can you do me a favor? Would you mind sending six or seven to me?"

“ I see. It must be a nylon towel and I can buy it at a super market or a 100 yen shop easily.” But I didn’ t have confidence that I could catch it correctly. After that I took three pictures of my nylon towel and sent him them by e-mail to check whether my guess was correct or not. I promised him I would send him them soon. But I noticed that I didn’ t know his address so I wrote e-mail again. “Thank you very much for chatting with me. I’ m sure I will send you seven nylon washcloths in a week. By the way is this your address? Have a good day and take care not to catch a cold again.”

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✚ A picture

2007,11,2



This is a picture which Monte sent me today. There are his lawn mower and trailer with his neighbor’ s grandson wearing a red T-shirt. His name is Dylan. I’ m not sure how old he is but he looks about 7 years old. By the way, how large the field is! Is it typical scenery in the countryside in America?



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✚ the supecial place

2007,11,1



In Australia a pub got the right to exclude heterosexual people and lesbians to make homosexual men socialize there. I think sometimes having exclusive places are necessary for particular groups such as people from one religion and pensioners. People have the right of freedom of religion but it must be very difficult for some believers in special religions to discuss their God and customs freely among a lot of people. I also want to enjoy my time at a club for only pensioners after retirement. We cant use a lot of money because the pension plan will be getting worse and worse. We want to drink cheap alcohol and socialize with each other without being

annoyed by young people.

The difference between Christmas and New Years Day in Japan

2007,12,31



In Japan the New Year festival is much more important than Christmas. Christmas is a festival for Christian people and in general Japanese are not Christians. In Japan Christmas is a day when we enjoy eating Christmas cakes and looking at beautiful decorations. On the other hand New Year's Day is a national holiday and we have several official ceremonies. We can usually have holidays from the 29th of December to the third of January. A lot of Japanese go to shrines or temples to pray for happiness in the New Year. We also visit relative's houses and celebrate the New Year while eating a traditional dinner.

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✦ My five biggest news stories of 2007

2007,12,30



The first one is the bankruptcy of NOVA. NOVA was the biggest language school company in Japan and I was a student there. As the company's system was to sell lots of points to students before they took lessons, innocent students, including me lost money. I was so disappointed when I heard the news but fortunately a new company acquired NOVA and now I can take lessons from the new NOVA even though I had to pay extra money. The second is my 88 year-old mother broke her leg in July but luckily the surgery succeeded and she was able to walk by herself again. The third is my visit to Fiji in September. I also did some scuba diving for the first time in my life. For the fourth my family, including my two grandchildren, traveled to Singapore. We had a good time although it was boiling hot there. For the last I injured my right index finger in April because I had put my seal on a lot of documents. It is still swollen and I can't grip a golf club very well. Some good things and also some bad things happened this year as usual but I really appreciate our peaceful lives this year.

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✦ self-introduction

2007,12,29



This is my first writing to you. At first I'm going to introduce myself simply. My name is Masaho and I've been working as a civil servant for a long time in Kanagawa, which is close to Tokyo. English is not necessary for my job at all but now studying English is one of my hobbies. About three years ago I suddenly started to study English after my second son moved to LA in the U.S. to study at UCLA. When I visited him there with my husband for the first time, I was surprised to find him communicating with American people fluently. On the other hand I couldn't understand them at all, even though I studied English so-so to pass the entrance examinations when I was a girl. I was ashamed of myself and decided to master English, although I realized that it was difficult for a middle-aged woman. I entered a language school near my house and began to write my diary in English as soon as I came back to Japan from LA in October 2004. Since that time I have been writing my blog in English almost every day. I usually use my blog to review my English lessons. I mean that after taking conversation lessons I write some comments concerning the topic of the lesson. However sometimes I write my diary or my opinion about current events or e-mails to my foreign friends. Moreover I have a plan to take an English qualification test called Eiken in 2008. There is a writing part in the test. The examinees have to write a reply to the e-mail form question in about 100 words on this test. I'm going to practice writing such kind of sentences from now. They say there are three big points. At first we have to answer the question of the e-mail clearly and briefly. Then we should write our opinion and the reasons for our viewpoints. To form an e-mail pattern is also important. Taking this advice, I will try to practice in my blog. So the theme of my writings depends on my mood. I asked a young American guy to correct my English and he had been doing it for three years but recently he had to stop this work for various reasons. I searched for a good teacher to check my English instead of him through the Internet and found this system by luck. I know that I still make a lot of mistakes in my English, especially articles, prepositions, tense and so on. Could you correct my English strictly? After studying for three years my son received his Masters Degree of Fine Arts from UCLA. Now he is working for an American advertising agency in SF. One of my aims after retirement from my job is to work as a volunteer interpreter in Japan. Therefore I still have a big need to improve my English. I am really asking you to teach me how to use good and appropriate English.

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The last Tokugawa Shogun decided to return the power to the Emperor to make the country peaceful. We call this incident the Meiji Restoration. After that the Emperor Administration tried to modernize the social system and improve the industry not to fall behind the western countries. The Emperor had great power and was treated as a god. During World War Two all Japanese nations were fighting for the Emperor but Japan was beaten by America. After World War Two, we democratized our Constitution and the Emperor became the symbol of Japan, not a god. We have also rehabilitated our economy rapidly and now Japan is one of the developed countries in the world.

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2007,12,27



One of the Samurai, Minamoto, opened his government, Bakufu, in Kamakura which is near to Tokyo in 1192. This is the beginning of the Samurai period. He named himself Shogun which meant the leader of Samurai. We call this period the Kamakura era. Then Ashikaga opened his Bakufu in Muromachi in Kyoto in 1336. This period is called the Muromachi era. But the big coup d' état happened in 1467 and Samurai began to fight with each other after that. There were several powerful Samurai groups in each region all over Japan. They were diamonds cutting diamonds. Finally Tokugawa subdued a lot of enemies and moved the capital to Edo, the present Tokyo, in 1603. They decided not to trade with foreign countries except Holland and Portugal. The Edo era continued peacefully until 1853 when the American governor, Perry, forced the Edo Bakufu to trade with many countries. We suddenly began to discuss what Japan should have done and fight with each other again after that. During the Samurai era, the Imperial family still had been living in Kyoto without power. It is said that their genealogy did not die out and it's the reason why we say our Imperial family has the longest history in the world.

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The history of Japan

2007,12,26



At first I'm not an expert of Japanese history so this explanation is an outline of our history which ordinary Japanese studied at junior high school. A long long time ago Japan was not an

island country. It was connected to the Eurasia Continent and a lot of primal people moved to the area of present Japan from the continent and they settled in many places. They improved their original cultures and in the fifth century some powerful family governed the west area of Japan. It is said they were the origin of our Imperial family. They moved their capital sometimes in the Kansai area which is the present Osaka, Nara and Kyoto. They built a wonderful capital called Heiankyo in Kyoto in 794 and we call this period Heian era. It continued for approximately four hundred years. It was the period in which the nobles around the Emperors developed their elegant culture like poems. According to their old poems, they seemed to be interested in only the beauty of nature and love. While they were indulging themselves in such peaceful days, Samurai, who were primarily guards of aristocrats, strengthened their power.

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The etymology of soccer

2007,12,25



The origin of the word "soccer" is actually "association football". Originally they played football under several kinds of rules in England. In 1863 they established the Football Association and made the unity rule. They began to call it association football. Soccer is the omission form from association football.

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The difference between English grammar and Japanese grammar

2007,12,24



Since I have been writing my blog in English for over three years, I got used to writing English. To compose rough English sentences doesn't seem to me to be so difficult. It's easy if we understand basic grammar but to master how to use articles and prepositions correctly is really difficult for us, Japanese, because there is no article and preposition in Japanese. About countable nouns and uncountable nouns, they are sometimes troublesome. I can understand that we can't count water but why do you say, "take a shower"? Can you count them? On the other hand many foreign people say to master how to use particles like wa, ga, mo etc. in Japanese is complicated for them. And we have a lot of polite expressions in Japanese compared to English. Some phrases are for only women. It must be very hard for non-native Japanese speakers to

study them. Regarding how to use the plural forms and singular forms, we don't have such strict rules. Of course we have plural forms but sometimes it sounds natural to use singular form even if we describe several things.

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Canon value

2007,12,23



Canon value means to evaluate which novels deserve to be read and which poems are quite insignificant and so on. If I introduce to you two valuable literary works in Japan, I would say one of them is Genji Monogatari (the story of the nobleman Genji) and another one is Wagahaiwa Nekode aru (I'm a cat.). Genji Monogatari was written by the female author, Murasaki Shikibu about one thousand years ago and it was definitely the first literature in Japan. It describes the emotions of the characters deeply and vividly and we are still reading the story now in the 21st Century. Of course it was written in the old difficult Japanese originally so many famous authors have been trying to translate the original story to the modern Japanese. Souseki Natsume created the novel, "I'm a cat" about one hundred years ago, in the Meiji era. He wrote criticism of the society through the viewpoint of the cat who was the pet of the middle aged Japanese English teacher. It is said that this fiction is the masterpiece of the modern Japanese literary works in Japan.

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A big box of treats

2007,12,22



It's my Christmas present to my grandson. During the Christmas season a lot of confectioneries sell such kind of goods. The shape is like a boot made of cardboard and there are several kinds of sweets such as candies, a chocolate and pack of biscuits inside. They cover the boot shape box with transparent cellophane wrapping and bind it on the top of the box with blue ribbon. I think giving a lot of sweets to a little kid is not so good. Especially my daughter in law is trying not to give her son cavities. But we have Christmas only once a year and I want to see his happy face.

✚ My big dilemma

2007,12,21



My present big dilemma is actually my retirement age. In Japan at almost every government office our compulsory retirement age is 60 years old. I'm younger than it but I'm thinking about retiring a little bit earlier than that age. I really want to trouble abroad freely not being worried about my job and the period of my holiday. I have been working for one local government office for a long time just after graduating from the university and now I'm fed up with tm job. These are the reasons why I want to retire earlier. However At my office our wage system is based on seniority. If I retire now, I will lose a lot of income compared to it that I used to get. And I have to use my little savings to spend every day. I can't receive the full pension until I am 65 years old. This is quite a big negative. If I continue to work until the compulsory retirement age, I might not be able to enjoy traveling abroad. But if I quit my job now, I might kick myself someday. "If I hadn't quit my job at that time, I could purchase houses for my sons." I don't know which outweigh the other for me.

✚ Proverbs

2007,12,20



I heard the following proverb for the first time. "Those who live in glass houses should never throw stones." What does it want to say? Literally thinking, it means that glass houses are easily broken so if a person who is living there throws a stone somewhere, it might hit his own house and break it. Then after I was using my brain, I guessed it meant a person in a hard situation had better act cautiously. Actually it tells us not to criticize others too hard. It's true. It makes sense. I will explain one Japanese proverb. Translating literally, walking across a stone bridge while hitting it by stick. Can you imagine what it means? It means to behave too carefully. Stone bridges are usually very strong but a very careful person still checks if it's safe or not to cross. Anyway proverbs contain the wisdom of the ancients. We shouldn't ignore them.



Recently in Japan we are discussing about the sentences for young people. Teenagers don't receive heavy punishment even if they committed serious crimes. They can't understand deeply what guilt is and how they hurt victims. Moreover they have possibilities to be rehabilitated and become good adults. They are the reasons why we have special laws concerning crimes which teenagers committed. However nowadays teenagers tend to commit very cruel crimes such as killing little infants. We can't allow such boys and girls to spend free days like ordinary people after they have stayed in reform schools for several years. I don't want to say such an opinion but their personalities might be a little bit different from normal people, naturally cruel. It might be difficult to reform such young people to moderate adults. So many experts are arguing which is the better way to reduce juvenile delinquencies.

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These days women soccer teams are getting more and more popular but there might be not a professional women's team. They should organize professional teams to make excellent women players earn good wages as men players. Women can play soccer more elegantly than men. They must fascinate spectators more than men.

No kidding! Soccer is a sport for only men. Women players are cheats.

I love watching and playing soccer. It's the best sport in the world. It's exciting and absolutely cool.

Oh,no! It's boring. Only players are running in a park. I prefer baseball to soccer. Baseball rules are easy to understand and it is a kind of sport that is a combination of team play and individual play.

Soccer players should get paid more than actors because their physical abilities and beauties are wonderful. We can't compare soccer players with tender actors.

Don't you know Arnold? He is much stronger than Nakata.

Some silly debates

2007,12,17



Some famous sports players earn millions. I think they can deserve it because they can gather a lot of fans in the stadium and get a lot of money from them. They pay out several times the money of their salaries.

I can't understand why they pay a huge wages to some sports players. They can't attract many fans by themselves. Without the members of the team and staff, many fans don't go to the stadium. They should share salaries with their team mates.

Football is the most popular sport in England. We should call this ball game football.

In America football means American football. So we named this ball game soccer.

In my opinion a doctor is the most important and difficult occupation. Doctors can cure the pain of sports players. If there is no doctor, players can't play sports in peace. I mean sports players shouldn't earn more than doctors.

You are kidding. Everybody can become a doctor if he studies hard but only a few people can become sports players. They deserve to earn more money than doctors.

My new PC

2007,12,16



Last night when I tried to recover my computer, it froze and it became difficult for us to fix it by ourselves. I decided to purchase a new tower as soon as possible because a PC is necessary everyday for me and I didn't want to be bothered by the computer anymore. My husband and I went to Yodobashi Camera to buy a tower but while we were checking several PCs, my husband recommended that I buy a new PC set. He told me that if I bought a new big capacity PC, I would be able to use it for 5 years. Finally he decided to buy a quite expensive NEC PC for me. I was a little bit worried if I could install some old application software like home page builder by IBM. Just now I have downloaded some software including Skype. They work very well. Thanks to my husband I'm really glad to have the new good PC.



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✚ **Ocyanoma Ryugaku**

2007,12,15



Today I took Ocyanoma Ryugaku lesson for the first time after the old NOVA went bankrupt. I had a great time with two middle aged women students and surprisingly the teacher was the American girl who was actually the teacher from whom I took a lesson of the old NOVA for the last time. She explained us that she had been staying at the coffee shop while she was losing her job of the old NOVA. Before the lesson we were talking how we got information of the new NOVA and studied by ourselves without taking NOVA's lesson. All of us seemed to love NOVA lesson a lot and said good bye with each other with gratitude.

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I sent the application form of Ocyanoma Ryugaku to the new NOVA company and paid the lesson fee to their bank account on Monday. They say that they will reply to the applicants as soon as they receive the forms but I hadn't accepted the envelope from them today. Probably they had been busy. I checked the BBS of NOVA students and found the one comment. Somebody said, "I paid the money and I could check in the Ocyanoma site through TV on the next day." I tried by myself and I was so surprised that a Japanese staff appeared on the screen and I could speak with her as I used to do. She explained their new rules and asked me to take a level check test. Twenty minutes later I took the test with the Indian teacher. 30 minutes later from the test I called to the MM center again and asked my result. Fortunately or unfortunately she told me that my level was 3, the same level I used to be in last October. I was really relieved and a little bit disappointed. Anyway it's OK that I can start to take lessons through TV again.

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This morning I found a very interesting article and an e-mail written in English in the Yomiuri newspaper. San Diego and Yokohama have been sister cities with each other since 1957, 50 years ago. Mayor Nakata was supposed to attend the 50 Anniversary on 26th of October in San Diego but he decided not to go there suddenly after he received the e-mail from the Director of Protocol in San Diego. Instead of attending the ceremony he enjoyed watching a baseball game in Sapporo. Why did he suddenly stop from going to San Diego? The e-mail said that the city had suffered a catastrophe in the past two days due to various fires that had not been contained yet. And the Yokohama city office announced that they wouldn't visit San Diego not to bother the Mayor Jerry Sanders. In fact American people had prepared the anniversary and were looking forward to welcoming the Japanese guests. There is a big misunderstanding between Yokohama and San Diego over this e-mail. The San Diego officer says, "I wrote that the signing ceremony on Sunday was still on. There was no intention to cancel the ceremony in my e-mail." I read the copy of the e-mail. Actually he writes it in English politely but did say nothing about the refusing. The Yokohama officer might have thought the American might have refused euphemistically like Japanese.

✚ My PC

2007,12,12



The condition of my PC has been quite bad especially when I use the Internet. It freezes easily. But I can use Skype and the other applications like Word and Excel quite well. I can use computer better than cordially middle-aged women but I don't know exactly about the computer system. My husband advised me to recover the hard disk. I want to try it immediately but it will take quite long time. Now I don't have enough time to recover my PC's hard disk. Probably the next Saturday I will try it. I don't want to change my PC. I bought my present PC about 3 years ago. I love my Windows XP PC better than a new Vista PC. I'm satisfied with the XP functions.

✚ Sour grapes

2007,12,11



I was supposed to take a TOEIC test this year but I haven't. The reason why I didn't is I had been busy and I couldn't prepare for the test. And I also want to get the qualification of Eiken the Grade Pre-1 and Volunteer interpreter. I tried to solve the practice examinations for them. All of them contain the listening parts and reading parts. For me the listening parts seem to be easier than reading parts. Especially the articles of Eiken test are very difficult to read and answer. The writings of TOEIC don't look as difficult as Eiken but we don't have enough time to solve a lot of questions. Concerning the Volunteer interpreter test, the form of the examination is strange. There are so many reasons why I'm afraid to fail in the tests. But one thing I really realize is my knowledge and skill of English is quite low. Don't say sour grapes, Masaho. You should recognize your ability correctly and study hard and effectively. There is no royal road to learning.

✚ Ocyanoma Ryugaku again

2007,12,10



The new NOVA reopened Ocyanoma Ryugaku and they send me an application form. The students who were having the points of the old NOVA can take lessons of the new system if we

pay 25 % of the new ordinary lesson fee. They also let me know my new lesson fee. I still hesitate to spend my money at the new school. At first I thought they were also shady but now I decided to take lessons from them. Today I deposited some money to their bank account and sent an application form to them. I'm looking forward to taking lessons through TV again.

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✚ Dear Chris,

2007,12,9



Are you busy these days? I would like to continue to be a member of Fine in 2008, too. Writing English every day is now my custom and being corrected by you seems to be very effective. If you can be a teacher of me in the Next year, could you let me know the lesson fee of one year and your bank account? Anyway please correct my English.

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✚ 15

2007,12,6



Put three eggs into a bowl and sprinkle a touch of salt. Then stir them.
Children must avoid going downtown by themselves.
The boy is good at assembling plastic models.
My mom is taking three doses after breakfast a day.
Input a five- digit number as a password.
Now in Japan the interest rate is really low.
The new movie, which featured several famous stars, was released.
The Emperor is the person who represents Japan.
As the executives couldn't agree with the president, the meeting was prolonged.
The statistics showed the fact of my opinion.
My driver's license will expire next year.
Many people are looking forward the sequel of the popular wizard's story.

-△-



The file entitled her to be a candidate.
They prohibit playing baseball in the park.
The number of the audience was restricted.
You can use some handouts on the shelf.
She has already settled the big problem.
The president appointed Ms. Brown to be a secretary.
He could get strong approval.
Now she is staying at the hospital due to the fatal disease.
He finally became a member of the city council after a long period of activity.
They will enforce the new tax law in the end of this year.

-△-



I was transmitted a terrible cold from my son.
Applicants for the job gather in front of the office.
We check all references of applicants when we hire the employee.
We realized that she had an outstanding ability among applicants.
Foods are vital for human beings.
I recommend that you purchase durable shoes.
Her house is not huge but very cozy.
We determined if we would fire him.
Would you mind receiving the reward for your effort?
Many companies submitted the tax bills.
He filed the suite for the rent claim against her.

-△-



If you continue studying English every day, you can get a minute improvement every day.
She doesn't show regard for others and every one hates her as a result.
I inquired about my English lesson from the school.
Having refreshments gives us energy to finish the work.
The police officer notified him to come to the police office on next Monday.

-△-

✦ 11

2007,12,2



I was so surprised that I swallowed the drop I was sucking.
He launched the new business in the end of last year.
I'm longing to see you again.
The new company will visit us at the beginning of next year.
Would you explain the nature of this material?
During the long rainy spell some landslides happened.
I injured the muscle tissue of my right arm.
The scenery of the Tsugaru channel in the winter looks very sad.
Make a sound spirit and strong body.

-△-

✦ The Japanese pension plan

2007,12,1



The Japanese pension plan is really difficult to understand. The system is very complicated but many people know the divorced wives' right to receive half of their ex-husbands' pension benefit was established in this year. Now many wives want to get divorced because they have a chance to receive the much better benefit than before. We Japanese women seemed to be very obedient to men compared to western women and the rate of divorce was not so high. People had been thinking much of dignity and peace of family but now the society is changing and changing. They say the Japanese wives are loyal to husbands and children, earnest and hard working. I don't know if we still have such kind of virtue. I believe it's better for women to be free from their disliked husbands but I'm not sure they can live wealthy only to receive half of the benefit.

I have been working by myself for over 30 years but I'm afraid that I will be able to get satisfactory benefit after retirement.