



Sakura Times

Career Focus: From JET to the Foreign Service



Tribble poses with Ben Franklin statue, a fixture on the State Department's NFATC campus.

Imagine this: You're the Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The country is falling apart. Instability and violence are a daily reality. The president of Haiti is being forced to leave the country. People are rioting. Rebels are threatening to take over the capital. All the while, you are working with the leaders of non-governmental organizations, conflict resolution representatives, students, artists and the best and brightest in the country to help address the situation.

Does that sound like the challenge you've been waiting for? Well, Christina Tribble did all that and more during her last

tour in Haiti as a Foreign Service Officer. She says of her time there, "No matter how bad things got in the streets, I still had these great contacts to people who were working diligently for a better day."

Before joining the Foreign Service, Tribble graduated from American University and took off for Japan to be a JET in Yokohama for a year. During her year in Japan, she wrote for an English language newsletter, worked with Special Needs kids and stayed with a Japanese family.

Living abroad seemed to be in Tribble's blood as she left for West Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer a year later. After her stint there, she came back ready for graduate school at Columbia University. Her masters in Social and Organizational Psychology and a graduate certificate in Conflict Resolution came in handy in Haiti.

She encourages JETs to join the Foreign Service as the cross-cultural experiences help you get adjusted to the lifestyle of

living abroad in a variety of cultures.

Tribble does caution that the process of becoming a Foreign Service Officer is long. There is the online registration, online (formerly written) test, security clearance and other paperwork. She also says that it's good to take the test even if you're curious while you're doing other things. She suggests you take the test as an option, especially if you are already applying for grad school.

Please feel free to contact Christina at TribbleCD@state.gov or call her at 703-302-7511. She is currently doing a domestic tour as the deputy coordinator of Cultural Affairs Tradecraft at the National Training Center for Foreign Affairs in Arlington, VA. What's her next tour? Who knows? That's the beauty of being in the Foreign Service, every two to four years you're expected to work in another country. Take the Foreign Service Exam! Register now for the test at <http://careers.state.gov/officer/index.html> .
- by Gina Anderson

Silk Road Travels: From Cambodia to Capitol Hill

This year, Tom Kodiak packed up his bonsai trees and moved out to the Washington, DC area. With over 30 bonsai trees spread out across Chicago, Wisconsin and northern Virginia, Kodiak is tied to his trees and his commitment to a lifestyle centered around patience and diligence. Something he learned through his apprenticeship with his bonsai master in Japan.

When you peel back the layers, you'll find that Kodiak is a third cowboy, a third business entrepreneur and a third bonsai master, Kodiak has learned to compartmentalize all of these

states of mind. "I did learn how to build walls within my mind as a bonsai apprentice. It is something that is very much needed in that you must hide your true thoughts and display to others the obedient cooperative face while inside you may disagree with them," said Kodiak.

Since being a JET in Saitama, Japan, Kodiak has taken on a number of adventures. He went to Cambodia twice in the hopes of helping the princess organize her silk industry, but due to lack of funding a full internship wasn't possible. After graduate school, he traveled around the

country searching for a place to start up an Asian teahouse business. He settled on Chicago, but quickly came to realize that the new business might not be as profitable as he thought it might be.

Shortly after that, he became the director of the Illinois International Trade Center Director at the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing. He only did this job for half a year before Washington came calling. He was offered to join the Department of Labor's MBA Fellows Program for a two year rotational leadership training program.

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Silk Road Travels: From Cambodia to Capitol Hill continued

He is currently working within this program on Capitol Hill working on contracting and procurement for the Veteran Employment Training Services (VETS) office.

Although he is now in the Washington area and far away from Colorado, his family has hoped that he'd follow in his grandfather's footsteps and run the family ranch. The massive cattle ranch out in Colorado, Rollin' High

Sipal Ranch, is named after his grandfather, Oldrich Sipal (born Japanese, but changed his name when he emigrated to America) and it's where his "cowboy" roots come from.

What's his legacy? Kodiak says, "I want to teach people about living arts. I have a deep love for the natural and the living and my long term goal is to teach others how to enjoy and create beautiful and living arts. One reason I chose to move out here and stop my teahouse is that I will slowly build a business around bonsai and living arts. I just have to start slow and grow steadily."

When asked about his next adventure (Kodiak has traveled to over 35 countries), he might tell you that it will be stateside as unfortunately, his love of travel and bonsai

"I will slowly make myself known as a bonsai and Asian arts expert in this area."

conflict with each other. "My trees need care when I travel, so I must choose between the two! So I have chosen trees and my next adventure will be to buy some land outside of DC and to start growing thousands and thousands of trees. I will slowly make myself known as a bonsai and Asian arts expert in this area."

Sounds like Kodiak might have a bit of his grandfather in him after all.

More about Tom...

Languages: English and Japanese

Favorite Book: Shogun by James Clavell. He says that it's the best book on understanding Japanese psychology and old-style thinking. He often used it as a reference during his apprenticeship.

Hobbies and Interests:

In his free time, he works on his bonsai trees, attends bonsai clubs in the area, or looks for river stones (suiseki) which are Japanese artistic stones displayed with bonsai.

- by Gina Anderson

Join Us for the JET Career Night!

When: Tuesday, Oct. 30

6:00—8:00 PM

**Where: Embassy of Japan
Ambassador's Old Residence**

For more information,
email Mark Flanigan at
genkimark@hotmail.com

Welcome Back Reception

**Where:
Embassy of Japan
Old Residence**

**When:
TBD**

**Look out for details
on the listserv and
our Facebook page!**

**Please contact the
JET Program Office
with questions:
jet@embjapan.org**

Keeping Japan Close To Your Heart

Some of us have been back from Japan for longer than two years and don't want to lose our connection to Japan. Here are just a few ways to stay connected right here in the Washington Metro Area:

Japan-America Society of Washington, DC hosts a number of Japan-related events throughout the area. Check out upcoming events at <http://www.us-japan.org/dc/>. You can also take Japanese language classes through the center.

Japan Information and Cultural Center (JICC) is located in DC at Lafayette Center III, 1155 21st NW, Washington, DC. The center is an annex of the Embassy of Japan and has travel, job and other helpful Japan-related info. Visit <http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/index.htm>.

Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA and Library is located at 1819 L Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036. Check out Japanese movies, books and other reference materials here. Call 202-296-6692 or visit <http://www.spfusa.org/>.

Other ways to stay close to Japan:

- Take Japanese cooking classes
- Dine at Japanese restaurants in D.C.
- Join a cultural society
- Take Japanese classes
- Stay active in the JET Alumni Association of Washington, DC
- Check events on our JETAADC Facebook page at www.facebook.com !

Tales from Japan: Driving “Vivian”

by Jimmy Jackson

I put my car’s manual shifter in first gear and began releasing the clutch. The transmission began engaging and the car edged forward, then suddenly lurched and died. The driver behind me angrily honked his horn as I quickly restarted the car and again attempted to make a desperate right turn before the oncoming traffic brought a swift and sad end to my brief Japanese driving career. I suppose it would be helpful to mention that my driving career was particularly brief because it had existed for exactly one day...ever since I’d managed to get my car properly registered and insured.

So now, here I was, driving on the “wrong” side of the road, sitting on the “wrong” side of the car, and basically feeling like the “wrong” sort of driver. The right-turn-gone-wrong incident was only the latest in a list of vehicular fiascos. These errors had begun with simple things like almost getting into the passenger side of the car, or when I turned on the windshield wipers instead of the turn signals.



Jimmy, first year Tottori-ken JET, in his car that he nicknamed, Vivian.

Now, it seemed, my problems were progressing into something far more complex.

The story of my acquisition of this car, a Subaru Vivio, was simple enough. Any JET whose job assignment requires that they drive has two options: buy or lease. My predecessor had leased her car, but her boyfriend (also a JET) had bought the car formerly owned by his predecessor. He agreed to sell the car to me at the bargain price of only \$250! This amount was just a little less than what I would expect to pay for a single month’s lease payment, and even when calculating additional costs like insurance, inspection fees, and taxes, would cost less than any leasing option. The car did have a manual transmission, but I wasn’t too worried about that since I’d been driving manuals since my early days in Kentucky

farm country.

As I soon discovered, shifting gears in the farm trucks and in this little car were two very different situations. The car, which I had decided to call Vivian - a play on Vivio, was decidedly stubborn. Her engine ran very well, her tires were great, and she even looked fairly new, but her attitude left something to be desired. While the issues like mistaking the windshield wiper switch for the turn signal switch were merely glitches on my part, the issue of trying to learn the shifting idiosyncrasies of this little car was a mystery of quite another nature.

Finally, after a period of two weeks and more than a few false starts, Vivian and I began to get along much better. Now, I no longer feel an anxiety attack coming on every time I am required to cross in front of oncoming traffic. It is decidedly nice to have the ability to drive myself anywhere I want to go and to not rely solely on the infrequent trains and buses.

While the saga of Vivian has been one of ups and downs, it has also been another very “interesting” facet of my new life in Japan. I look forward to logging many miles...oops...kilometers in that little car.

Culinary Taste Test: Makoto Restaurant

By Trinh Dang

Makoto isn’t the restaurant that springs to mind when I think of affordable Japanese cuisine. Long-known for its kaiseki and sushi offerings, dinner for two at Makoto will easily go over the triple digit mark. That is why two of my Japanese friends were delighted to share with me that Makoto can be savored at lunch time for little more than a twenty dollar note. Proud cheapskate gourmand that I am, I jumped at the offer for a lunch date. Reservations were made for a Saturday afternoon and I was cautioned that the restaurant has a dress code. Though the thought of being refused service did cross my mind, my summer dress passed inspection. I have read that business casual is preferred though I thought the diners I saw were a little bit more underdressed.

Ambience greatly factors into the Makoto experience. Rather than descending a number of steps with a metal railing into a basement, at Makoto, the stairwell is enclosed with an elegant wooden covering. Take off your shoes, don a pair of slippers (or go barefoot) and step right into Japan. A small restaurant without any windows, the isolation from Macarthur Blvd. was enough to convince me that I had just flown in to see friends for lunch in Tokyo.

The lunch menu is small, which mattered naught as my friends insisted that on my first visit I should order the bento. Ignore Japanese advice at a Japanese restaurant at your own peril is my motto. Most, if not all, of the entrees are under \$20. The bento that day included a couple dishes of fish, a small offering of sashimi and the usual picked and lightly cooked vegetable dishes. The food was subtle and delicately delicious. The portions, in keeping with Japanese traditional, are not large; I was satiated at the end of the meal but not stuffed. Attentive service does ensure the rice bowl gets replenished so if you’re still hungry, you can top off with additional carbs.

Lunch at Makoto isn’t quite the famed kaiseki culinary experience, but it’s an economical way to eat well for less. It should be enough to tide you over as you save up for dinner at Makoto.

Makoto, 4822 Macarthur Blvd NW, Washington, DC 20007, (202) 298-6866. Reservations needed.

Winter Issue (Published January/February 2008)

We're looking for new writers and photographers for the Sakura Times. Here are some topics that you may want to contribute to:

- **Higher Education:** What grad schools, fellowships, etc., would you recommend?
- **Job Market**
- **Undiscovered talent, you are!** Send us your work (drawings, photography, haiku) and we'll publish it right here!
- **Society Page:** What circles are you in? Send us your photos with captions!

Send your entries to the Newsletter Editor at Jetaadc_news@yahoo.com

Have you signed up to the **JETAADC Facebook** page? Facebook is a networking site that allows you to stay in contact with your old colleagues and meet new ones. We will continue to post events on the page and if you become a member and would like to pub your event for free, feel free to post it on our page. Go to www.facebook.com.



JETAADC

JET ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF DC
WASHINGTON, DC USA



JET Alumni: Remember This? If you don't know, ask somebody!

Gokiburi Hoi! Hoi! Waking up at night in the dead of winter to use the bathroom and you see your breath. Toilet seat covers in the winter. Hand washing your clothes. Hanging your clothes on the balcony to dry. Buying too many groceries that won't fit into your tiny fridge. Keitai accessories. ATMs that aren't open 24 hours a day.

JETAADC Officers

2007-2008

President: Stephanie Chang

Vice President: Heather McDonald

Treasurer: Susan Gundersen

Secretary: Michelle Spezzacatena

Ad Hoc Chair: Trinh Dang

Career Night Chair: Mark Flanigan

Newsletter Chair: Gina Anderson

Online Chair: Amanda Cornaglia

Returnee Handbook Chair:

Jeff Herman

Social Chair: Michael-Scott Saffle

Volunteer Co-Chairs: Bina Sheladia
and Zainabu Williams

We're on the web! <http://dc.jetalumni.org/> and join our new Facebook Page at www.facebook.com

2007 JETAADC Rally

is coming to a (metro-accessible) neighborhood near you...

Please hold Saturday, October 20th for the annual scavenger hunt. JET alumni and friends (FOJ) are welcome to form small teams to answer trivia and perform acts of desperation, um...tasks all for the right to proclaim yourselves "2007 JETAADC Rally Champions" and bask in the accompanying glory. If glory isn't enough, there will also be prizes and treasures beyond comprehension.

Stay tuned for more details...

Trinh and Michelle
Rally RabbleRousers

Classifieds for Returning JETAADCs

Welcome Back... Now what do you do?

Coming to the DC area after returning from Japan is a very exciting endeavor, but it can be a bit daunting when you realize that you have to get settled. While still in Japan, I was writing back home to some of my old contacts for temporary work when I first got back. Luckily, the NGO that I worked for had a project that I could work on for a month, so that I could have some income coming in without using my savings. I was also fortunate enough to have a family member in the area that I could stay with, but I can't imagine moving to the area without ANY knowledge about the city before moving here.

Many of you used the JETAADC listserv to find housing and jobs in preparation for your return and immediately upon arriving into

the DC area, but there are other ways to find information.

You'll see two web sites that you will find useful for your job and housing search: Craig's List and the online version of the Washington Post newspaper. You will find that Washington Metro area residents use these sites most frequently. You'll hear about people posting items to sell on Craig's List or people looking for the latest in entertainment on Washington Post.

Idealist.org is also a highly popular site with thousands of jobs and volunteer experiences. Below there are more job searching sites and housing sites as well. If you have some information to share, please let us know!

Looking for a Job?

Interesse International

You come back from Japan and the real world smacks you in the face. We never realized how good we had it until we came back. Keep that Japanese connection alive. Interesse International can help.

Interesse International is the only Human Resource firm in the DC area that specializes in working with Japanese companies. Whether you are looking for a job to hold you over, or if you want to continue a career that you left behind, we have positions from temporary to full time, entry level to executive. Interesse has 14 offices in major US cities and in Tokyo and we plan to expand to Europe later this year. The offices are linked through our Network Navigator System which allows us to find you a job anywhere in the US or Japan.

Avoid that hassle of traveling long distances for interviews. With our Video Interview system you can interview locally for a position as far away as Japan. Interesse has worked with over 150 JET's and many companies are looking specifically for JET alumni. So, check out our website www.iiccareer.com and register online. We'll start looking for a job for you.

Job Searching

Post Your Resume on job search engines and sites using key words. Recruiters and headhunters browse these sites and look for talent. It makes your job search easier without doing much other than uploading your resume onto the site and answering the phone! Check out these sites too:

Career Builder (CareerBuilder.com)

This site will allow you to post your resume and apply to jobs from the site. The coolest thing about this site is that you can use its *salary calculator* to research the position you are interested and find out how much the job pays in this area.

Monster.com (Monster.com) - This site was the most helpful in my job search and I got the most phone calls from headhunters from this site. It seems to be particularly popular with contracting companies which are everywhere in the Washington Metro area.

Government Jobs (usajobs.gov) - Since Washington, DC is the capital of the U.S., it would only make sense that this city would have the largest concentration of government agencies and that they would be the largest employer in the Metro area. The downside? These jobs usually take 3—6 months to get hired.

Housing

There are a number of ways to find housing in the crowded Washington Metro area online. Check out these popular sites:

Craig's List (Craigslis.com) - Craig's List is a wildly popular for urban dwellers whether you're going there to find a job, to buy or sell an item or to find housing. There are a number of ways that you can search for housing depending on what you're looking for: rooms to share, temporary housing, and even if you're looking for something specific like sublets. It's better than searching through thousands of listings in the print newspapers.

Washington Post (washingtonpost.com) - the most widely read newspaper around is online too. You're bound to find something under the classified section. Good luck on the search.

Washington City Paper (<http://classifieds.washingtoncitypaper.com/washington/>) - You can get specific on the search.

JETAADC Listserv—When all else fails, use the old listserv. This way of finding housing is more static than the others and you'll stay within the JET community, but you might get fewer random crazy people contacting you.