

In 1989, my father (who was serving in the United States Air Force) received orders to go overseas. I was six years old at the time, and my entire world was Brooks AFB. We were moving to an island called Okinawa, which I had never heard of. However, I was lucky because while we were a military family (who lived on an American base), my parents thought it was important that I learn as much as possible about the culture. We got to see habu/mongoose fights, live Kabuki theatre, martial arts demonstrations, lush parks that were immaculately tended to... I was introduced to the tea ceremony, ikebana, origami and of course sushi. One of my favorite things though, was our Sunday afternoon drives. Every Sunday, my whole family would clamber into our old Toyota van and Dad would pick a random direction and drive. We got to see ancient temples, monuments, and most fascinating to me were the cemeteries, small and often humble tombstones adorned with gifts from the living to the dead. On the small island of Okinawa, every direction you go you hit ocean. It's impossible to get lost! Each weekend was like a short adventure into this wonderful and enthralling land.

These are some of my fondest memories, and one thing that I have always regretted was that I never got to see mainland Japan. Okinawa, I can imagine, is only a glimpse of a lush and illustrious culture, history, and tradition. I come by my fascination with Japan honestly, and I desire to return and see it anew through the eyes of an adult. That is why once I have received my bachelor's degree, I intend to apply to the JET program so that I might be able to return to Japan and teach English there. Our sister city, Kumamoto, would even be a great starting point for my journey.

To that end, I have spent the last two years at San Antonio College under the tutelage of Kawabe-Sensei, who is our dedicated, hard-working and *patient* Japanese professor. I have never seen someone be so kind as their native tongue was absolutely butchered by first-year language students. I would like to first give my thanks to you, Kawabe Sensei, for the hours of your own time that you spent giving me additional instruction when I was struggling with Japanese language concepts. I would like to thank you also for your involvement, because not only do you teach Japanese, but you are an active member in the community, in all of the Japanese culture events and of course, a vice president of the Japan America Society of San Antonio. When my dedication wavered, or when I felt that I might not be able to comprehend a difficult concept, your patience and positive attitude was always helpful in getting me back in gear.

As the first recipient of this scholarship, I would like to extend my thanks to Max Navarro and Hiroko Fay for their work in the development of the scholarship, as well as Suzanne Peterson who is the scholarship committee chair. I would also like to thank Tag Nishimoto, who is of course the president of JASSA, and I wish to extend my gratitude to those of you whose names I don't yet know but who have been a part of this program. Thank you all for your generosity and contribution to the education of others. Without people who are willing to support education and those who desire to learn, we would not have the knowledge, art and technology that we have today. In the development of culture through history across the globe, it is benefactors, philanthropists and patrons who have supported the spirit of inquiry and brought about much of our intellectual cultivation. Thank you, again.

And last but certainly not least, I would like to thank the Japan America Society of San Antonio. It is wonderful that we have a group of such dedicated people here in San Antonio who desire to extend culture and histories beyond borders. In my mind, this is of utmost importance for our world to find peace. When we can understand each other, when we are familiar with each others' tradition and backgrounds, then we can look beyond our differences and see that nothing can separate our humanity. Thank you also for your kindness and generosity. I know that the award of this scholarship is an investment, and I intend to make it a good one.

Jennifer Moyes, September 13, 2009

