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# JAPAN

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY WINIFRED BROWN,  
US ARMY GARRISON

CAMP ZAMA – Saori Komura began her class on the Japanese art of flower arranging, known as “ikebana,” with advice she wanted her students to retain long after the class ended.

“You can arrange the flowers as you feel [them to be] beautiful,” Komura told her six students at the Camp Zama Arts and Crafts Center Jan. 25. “Whatever you try, it will not be a failure, so please don’t be nervous. There is no need to rush. So please enjoy ikebana.”

Because it was a beginner’s class, Komura taught her students how to make arrangements out of three types of flowers: calla lilies, Japanese pussy willows and leatherleaf ferns. Participants could also add baby’s breath flowers at the end, but it was optional.

Komura showed her students how to properly cut flowers and arrange them on a “kenzan,” a heavy plate covered with sturdy needles that holds the flowers upright in a vase.

Komura started with the pussy willows, showing the class how to cut them to the correct length and arrange them in a triangle shape on the kenzan. Next came the three lilies, and Komura explained how to choose the best lily for each length depending on how much the flower had bloomed. Participants had a bowl of water to cut the flowers in so that they would begin sucking up water right away.

The class size was limited to six, and Komura gave each student individualized

attention as necessary.

Amanda Rios, who took the class with her daughter Sophia, said she signed up because she wanted to learn more about the Japanese art with her daughter.

“I thought it was wonderful,” Rios said. “They provided all the materials and we get to take [everything] home ... I love to keep flowers in the home, but I didn’t know how to arrange them.”

The center allowed participants to take the vases, kenzan and flower cutters home so they could practice with a guide that Komura provided. The flowers should last about two weeks, she said, and participants should return the materials when the flowers have died.

Rhianna Santos, branch manager of the Navy Federal Credit Union on Camp Zama, took the class with her colleagues Brittany Priddy and Aki Schucker as a team-building exercise.

“It looked fun and we haven’t done this before,” Santos said. “It was a good opportunity and we wanted to jump on it, and [we] had so much fun. I got to be around people I absolutely love being around. It was a great way to spend a Saturday morning.”

Santos said she was grateful that the installation’s Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation offered the class.

“We love the opportunities that are afforded to us here, especially in this overseas

environment, so we can just work together and have fun at the same time,” Santos said.

Komura emphasized that she wanted her students to enjoy ikebana, and by the end, students were having fun while staying on task and creating professional-looking flower arrangements.

Komura, who also teaches painting and drawing at the center and holds a bachelor’s degree in Japanese art history from Seijo

University in Seijo, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, has been studying the “Hanako” style of ikebana in Ebina for two years.

There are many ikebana schools in Japan, Komura said, and there are also different styles.

The Hanako style originated from the classical ikebana style of “Seika” in the mid-Edo era, or 1760s, Komura said, and Seika is based on the three core elements of the universe: “ten,” or heaven; “chi,” or earth; and “jin,” or human beings.

The Hanako style incorporates the “jiyuka” concept that artists should arrange the flowers so they reflect how plants exist in nature, with just a few artistic touches, Komura said. Today, the style incorporates new trends influenced by foreign flowers and vases.



Brittany Priddy



Saori Komura (right) helps Rhianna Santos.

The Arts and Crafts Center plans to hold another class in April. For more information, visit the Arts and Crafts Center in Building 360B or call DSN (315) 263-4412 or COMM 046-407-4412.



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## A2D2

# Misawa designated driving program about airmen helping each other

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
AIRMAN 1ST CLASS CHINA M. SHOCK,  
35TH FIGHTER WING

MISAWA AIR BASE – A group of airmen sit in T's Burritos, watching television shows, playing video games, studying and talking amongst each other, waiting for the phone to ring.

This is what an average Friday and Saturday night looks like for an Airmen Against Drunk Driving volunteer.

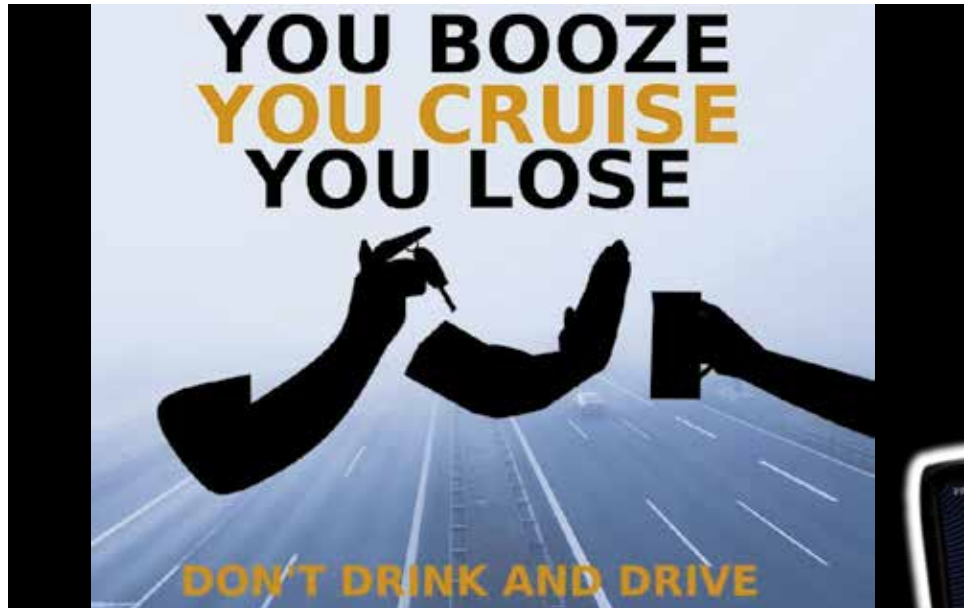
"It is best to plan ahead before drinking, and having A2D2 volunteers really helps," expressed Airman 1st Class Logan Dickson, a 35th Comptroller Squadron financial services technician and A2D2 volunteer. "A2D2 volunteers stand ready to take military members home."

A2D2 transportation services ensure base members get home safely, mitigating any potential risks of impeding the 35th Fighter Wing mission.

"I want to really encourage airmen to make responsible choices up front," said Jim Bibbee, the unit community support coordinator. "We are not here to enable people to drink to no end just because A2D2 is available to them, but we are a safety net for those whose plans fell through."

A2D2 volunteers have different reasons for volunteering personal time to help their fellow airmen.

"I take time out of my personal life to volunteer because I see the effect drunk driving has on the community," said Dickson. "It gives me satisfaction knowing I help keep the base and local community



safe."

The effects of a DUI can be damaging to an airman's career; a reduction in rank, forfeiture of pay and allowances, dishonorable discharges and imprisonment are all possible repercussions.

This program can save airmen from the consequences that come along with drinking and driving. A2D2 recorded 3,407 saves for 2019.

"A2D2 ensures the safety of the mission's most important asset: people," stressed Staff Sgt. Kiernan Judd, a 35th Mental Operations Squadron mental health technician and lead coordinator for A2D2. "We are committed to the safety of

our fellow airmen and the preservation of our relationship with the city of Misawa."

These members look to expand operations by having the capabilities of taking airmen who live off base home.

"We just need more volunteers, explained Judd. "We have a new incentive program to recognize our volunteers as they accrue hours."

This program consists of squadron leadership coining A2D2 members who volunteered 20 hours or more of service during their time in Misawa.

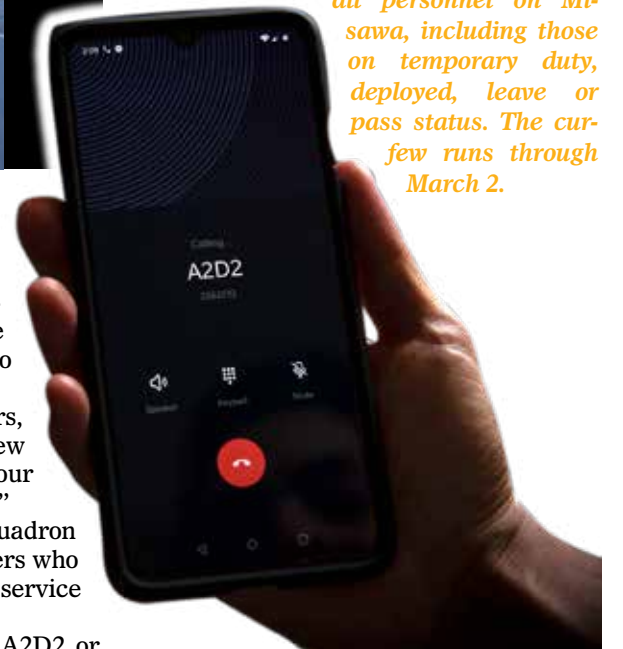
For more information about A2D2 or

to use their services, call 0176-77-2232 or DSN 226-2232 Friday to Saturday from 11:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.

These volunteers keep the Misawa community safe by providing a means of transportation for free.

"A2D2 aims to mitigate people driving under the influence by providing rides to airmen whose plans to get home safely have fallen through," said Judd. "We seek to enhance wingmanship through voluntary peer-to-peer support."

*Note: An 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew was imposed on all ranks and all personnel on Misawa, including those on temporary duty, deployed, leave or pass status. The curfew runs through March 2.*



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## Mental Notes with Hilary Valdez

### Achieving Resilience

BY HILARY VALDEZ,  
STRIPE JAPAN

**L**ife consists of what a person is thinking about all day. We produce about 48 thoughts per minute or up to 50-70 thousand thoughts a day. Anywhere between 70 to 80 percent of those thoughts are negative adding up to about 40,000 negative thoughts per day. On average, 90% of the thoughts are the same as we had yesterday.

So, look, when you wake up in the morning do you gingerly pop-out of bed like warm toast, with an attitude of gratitude? Do you throw your arms up over your head shouting, “Alas, I’m born again!”

Do you ask yourself, “What am I willing to do today?” or “What do I want to see happen?”

Are you an optimistic thinker or a pessimistic thinker? Positive people are happier, have less depression, have fewer illnesses, live longer, are better leaders, have stronger relationships, perform better in sports and under pressure. So, what’s it gonna be? Positive or negative thinking?

Life has no end of difficulties; enter resiliency.

Bounce not break: Resilient people bounce, not break when faced with an adversity or challenge. Resiliency can be developed, and everyone can enhance his or her resiliency by developing resiliency competencies. The inherent law of nature is that people carve out their own destiny — you make yourself what you are.

A resilient individual is one who is willing to take calculated, necessary risks, and to capitalize on opportunity. Resilience is the ability to grow and thrive in the face of challenges. It is built through a set of core competencies that enable mental toughness, optimal performance, strong leadership, and goal achievement. As we accept who we are, with our pimples and dimples, we have the possibility of becoming someone else. Life is like a blind date, sometimes you have to have a little faith. Hold your own hand and go for it.

To begin achieving resilience use the IDEAL model to communicate assertively:

- **I** = Identify and understand the problem
- **D** = Describe the problem objectively
- **E** = Express your concerns and how you feel
- **A** = Ask the other person for his/her perspective and ask for a reasonable change
- **L** = List the positive outcomes that will occur if change occurs.



These ideas are like wearing new shoes, stiff and uncomfortable. But after a while, natural and comfortable. It works when you work it, just have to work it. Practice, practice, practice.

Beliefs are like tires, they wear out. What are some core beliefs your parents taught you? Identify your deep beliefs and core values that fuel out-of-proportion emotions and evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of your beliefs.

Rigid beliefs can cause you to fall into repeated emotional patterns and thinking errors aka circular thinking, or thinking traps. I learned this the hard way; it took a long time for me to realize what I inherited from my parents. We inherit their gold and their garbage...sorry mom.

Learn from failure and find meaning in setbacks. I have difficulty with this one. But I muddle through it for answers. Stay positive. We must accept life for what it is — a challenge to our beings. You have the power to change anything about yourself. Every day is a gift exchange. I give and I will receive. The more fully we give our energy, the more it returns to us.

**Life Hint:** Recognize your strengths and what needs to be strengthened.

Hilary Valdez is a retiree living in Japan. He is an experienced Mental Health professional and Resiliency Trainer. Valdez is a former Marine and has worked with the military most of his career and most recently worked at Camp Zama as a Master Resiliency Trainer. Valdez now has a private practice and publishes books on social and psychological issues. His books are available on Amazon and for Kindle. Learn more about Valdez and contact him at [www.hilaryvaldez.com](http://www.hilaryvaldez.com) or at [InstantInsights@hotmail.com](mailto:InstantInsights@hotmail.com)

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\*1: Source: Cable and Satellite Fact Book 2019.  
\*2: Service for J:COM TV standard Plus, which includes digital terrestrial television broadcasting and BS digital broadcasting. Notes: Numbers are current as of the end of April 2019 (Portions excluded). May not be useable due to circumstances related to the house or building. Company names, product names, or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of their respective holders. Includes some trademarks pending registration.  
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# Go back in time at Showa Living History Museum

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
DAVID KRIGBAUM,  
WWW.WAYFARERDAVES.COM

An old-fashioned wooden home hidden in an otherwise unassuming modern Tokyo suburb, *Showa no Kurashi*\* (Showa Living History Museum), normally depicts post-war Tokyo life but for a limited time its taking visitors back to World War II to show life on the Japanese home front.

Built by architectural engineer Koizumi Takahashi, his family lived here for 45 years before his eldest daughter made it into a living history museum in 2002. For the 2019 re-release of the Japanese film, *Kono Sekai no (Sara ni Iktsumono) Katasumi Ni*, or “In This (and Other) Corners of the World\*\*,” the former Koizumi residence of 1951 has been converted into the Hojo residence of 1944-45.

*Kono Sekai* is about Hojo Suzu, a Hiroshima-born housewife living in the naval port of Kure and showcases her everyday life and struggles during wartime. Both the original manga and film were painstakingly researched to recreate the period accurately down to the smallest detail. The producers went as far as nailing down the daily chores performed back then to the movement of military ships in Kure Bay.



As a fan of the movie, I was excited to visit Suzu's house. Movie aside, however, I still think this place is a must-see because it recreates a wartime home and highlights aspects of life unique to that time and place. Walking through a fully stocked house is a more engaging way to learn about history and creates greater context than if it were all just treated as artifacts under glass. Its focus on purely the home aspect also makes this a good venue to talk to smaller children about the effects of war on people in way they can see and understand.

Walking into the living room was like entering a home whose harried mistress had momentarily left for a mandatory neighborhood association meeting. The low table was set for two with bowls of miso soup and fluffed up *nankoumeshi*, brown rice that looks generous but is rather unappetizing. Beside the table is the ‘fireless’ stove, a metal pot stuffed in a wooden beer crate full of wadded up newspaper. A kimono in the next room is in the midst of being chopped into *monpe*, unfashionable but practical work clothes

during a time of air raids. To keep warm there's a brazier and basket of home-made substitute charcoal.

This austere living in an otherwise normal home was the result of Japan's ever-tightening rationing and national policies that demanded more of its people as they were reminded that “Luxury is the Enemy.” They



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THE NEW SANNO





are all also scenarios played out in the film in an almost tutorial way as the young protagonist learns how to take care of herself and her family.

What makes this the Hojo residence and not just a generic home is the support of *Kono Sekai* Director Katabuchi Sunao and Assistant Director Uratani Chie, who loaned the museum some of their furniture, furnishings and clothing which look to be the real life references used for the home items in the animated film. Even the hand-made substitute charcoal in the living room is their handiwork.

The film was a passion project for him and it's clear he isn't alone in his enthusiasm as the museum also has a large fan-donated collection of clothes 'worn' in the movie which replicate a broad range of apparel.

Upstairs is a treasure room for film fans as it is covered in hand-drawn pre-production art from Uratani, who was also the character designer. There are also recreated 'props' and a scale model of the movie Hojo residence with the roof opened up.

A traditional museum room covers rationing, neighborhood associations, women's

patriotic organizations and air raid defense. This is a step further information-wise than the Hojo residence for people who want a little more background.

Before leaving, I was invited to the courtyard to try my hand at one of Suzu's household chores by donning a yoke with (empty) water buckets on either side, near the outdoor hand-powered water pump, two things which make me appreciate the simple and work free joy of in-home tap water. Running with the *Kono Sekai* theme other movie props are available to try out, or maybe you'd just like to do the washing. The bucket and board are waiting.

The *Kono Sekai* Suzu's House exhibition will end Mar. 29, 2020 and admission is 500 yen.

Photography is not allowed inside the house itself and displays are in Japanese but English-speaking guides are available.

I highly recommend the guided tour to get the most of your visit. You can also use a translator app on your phone to read the signs though you should inform the staff ahead of time that you're using an app and not taking photos.

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**MOVIE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:**

<https://ikutsumono-katasumini.jp/>

(official website) (Japanese only)  
\*Alternately the museum's name is translated "Showa-era Lifestyle Museum," which is also the name on neighborhood signs leading to it.

\*\*The film was originally released as *Kono Sekai no Katasumi Ni* in 2016 but on Dec. 20, 2019 the current extended version began playing in theaters around Japan.



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A privilege to Uniformed Forces personnel, their dependents, retirees, and others who support the mission, the Space-Available travel program may be a great option for seeing the world on a budget ... if the timing is right. The program is nicknamed Space-A, and although that A is short for “available,” it could also mean “attitude.” Learning how to navigate the program with a positive attitude, plenty of leave and a back-up plan is key for a successful “hop.”

### What is Space-A?

The program allows authorized passengers to occupy surplus seats after all space-required duty passengers and cargo have been accommodated. Most Space-A flights are offered through the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command (AMC) or the Navy and are usually free of charge. On commercial, Patriot Express flights, a small tax (usually under \$30) is charged per seat and per leg. Common destinations include the Continental U.S. states, Hawaii, Alaska, Germany, England, Spain, Italy, Japan and South Korea. In spring of 2020, flights between Seattle and Guam were added on a bi-weekly, proof-of-concept basis. Flights may even go to South and Central America, Africa and Australia. The best time to obtain seats is when DO-DEA schools are in session.

### Have a back-up plan

Because this program is a privilege, it is imperative to understand the circumstances may change due to mission mobility. Flying exactly where you want to go at the time or day you want to fly is not always possible. The first obligation of the AMC is to fill seats for military missions, therefore available seating could change at any time. So, if you have a specific itinerary for your destination or your return, you may want to reconsider using Space-A for those travel plans. This program is designed for

those who have enough flexibility to wait or change plans.

For example, it may be difficult to get seats on the first flight to return, you could wait for available space. Or, you could wait in another country to wait for travelers attempt to catch flights at base terminals. Remaining flexible will help. Be ready for anything.

### Who can fly Space-A?

The program was created to improve the lives of personnel by providing respite; recognize the career have served; and extend categories of passengers served. Uniformed Services personnel, USO personnel who also serve as passengers may not use the program, in relationship to employment or for other prohibitions.

Qualified travelers need to have completed the proper process and the required documentation. For instance, active duty personnel must have a valid passport before they can register for Space-A. Active duty flying unaccompanied command personnel or their spouse’s command must have a valid passport for one round trip travel. The category of passenger travel is also mandatory for travel. Passports, social security numbers, and agency contact information are required.

### How do you register?

There are many ways to register for Space-A. For in-person registration, visit the helpdesk. You can also register via the website [www.takeahop.org](http://www.takeahop.org). You can register for up to five destinations or five countries of destination. The website offers a smartphone app. For more information, users can quickly

## Patriot Express Guam to Sea-Tac

New in 2020, the Defense Department will add charter flights between Guam’s Andersen Air Force Base and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport starting in March, officials announced in Dec. 2019. The flights, part of a service called the Patriot Express, will begin on a bi-weekly, proof-of-concept basis for six months.





# Space-A travel to see the world

available leave, time change their schedule. It's a breeze to sign up for a flight, but when you try several days for availability, you may even be dropped off in a hop at neighboring terminals. Stay calm, positive and When flying Space-A,

Space-A?

It's used as a way to enhance the lives of veterans who are a privilege to other such as dependents of personnel, Red Cross and support the mission. The flights for personal employment, to find a job and activities.

It's used to be sure they have procedures and also have on needed for travel. You must be on leave before Space-A. Dependents accompanied need an approval and Sponsorship from the command. The letter is required to travel via military aircraft for travel and the flight. The following are required: military ID cards, Social Security numbers and emergency contact information at the final destination.

How to register?

To register for Space-A, go to the terminal or self-help kiosks. You can register via email, fax, or online through the website. Passengers can also register at departure airports and terminals. The website also provides information on where, for a couple of days, to sign up for the flights

and destinations. Also, save time by monitoring terminal activity via the phone app.

Once registered, your information remains active for either 60 days, or for the duration of your leave orders or authorization of flight, whichever occurs first. Print a copy of your registration to keep on hand at the terminal. The time and date stamp of your registration determines your position and priority within your Space-A category.

Each passenger is assigned a passenger category for travel. These categories designate the order by which you may be boarded on Space-A flights. The following list is generalized.

**Category I** – Emergency travel on a round-trip basis in connection with serious illness, death, or impending death of a member of the immediate family.

**Category II** – Environmental Morale Leave (EML) and dependents.

**Category III** – Active duty ordinary Leave and dependents; convalescent leave; permissive TDYs; Unaccompanied dependent of deployed servicemember for more than a year.

**Category IV** – Unaccompanied dependent of deployed servicemember on EML status.

**Category V** – Unaccompanied military dependent of non-deployed servicemember.

**Category VI** – Retirees, Reservists.

## Baggage requirements

Passengers may check two pieces of checked baggage, 70 pounds each, up to 62 linear inches in size. You and your family can pool your baggage allowances as well. Carry-ons must fit in overhead bins if they're available or under your seat. Hand-carried baggage must fit under the seat or in the overhead compartment, if available. Do note: it is best to travel light as baggage weight could be restricted for your flight.

## Getting a Space-A flight

Decide which terminal you think would be the best chance for Space-A departure and head out. It helps to phone the terminals that you requested for departure and to monitor recent schedules. Check online and on Facebook for your favorite Space-A terminals' information.

Available seats are now identified between

two to five hours prior to departure, but being at the terminal early will help you vie for seats. At the terminal, verify you are indeed registered for departure on the correct date, time and the correct number of passengers in your party. Be "travel-ready" with the proper luggage, any dependents and paperwork, your car parked or rental returned, etc.

## It's show-time for the roll call

You now wait for the "show-time" of the particular flight you'd like to be selected (manifested) for, as well as the upcoming flight's "roll call" of names of those who are designated for the flight's Space-A seating. The priority of your assigned category, the day and time that you signed up to travel and number of available seats will determine if your name makes the roll call. Remember, be travel-ready! If your name is called and you are not physically present to hear the roll call, your name will be put at the bottom of your category list, and you may not make that flight.

## Parting tips

A hop flight could be either on a military plane or commercial airline. If you travel on a military plane, be aware that accommodations and services are different, from fold-down jump seats along the wall, cargo in front of you and a plane that is either pretty warm or cool, depending on the time of year of travel and location. Open-toed or open-heeled shoes should not be worn on military planes. So, wear appropriate footwear, bring jackets, blankets, snacks, bottled water and things to keep you busy, like books, games or electronic devices. Available plugs for charging are along the walls. Remember to stay flexible. Travel during off-peak seasons (stay away from summer break and major holidays) and keep a positive attitude about this great privilege. If you look at the program as an opportunity to a new adventure, plan accordingly and have a back-up plan, you are sure to have a great time, wherever you land.

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# Chocolate ramen??!!

## Canoodle with some sweet, sweet noodles



STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

**F**ebruary is synonymous with heart-shaped chocolate boxes, roses and love, so why not take your sweetheart for a romantic dinner of... chocolate ramen?

Yes, that is what I said— chocolate ramen!

So, this Valentine's Day, take a leap and check out Kourakuen's warm bowl of chocolate ramen or white chocolate ramen.

Since the restaurant has been serving up this unique offering since Jan. 30, my wife and I decided we couldn't wait for

Valentine's Day to have a romantic dinner and made our way to the food chain's shop near Yokosuka Naval Base.

Just a 5-minute drive from base, Kourakuen's Miharucho Shop is a large, casual-looking restaurant with plenty of parking, which, truth be told, doesn't really scream romance. Inside, the brightly lit interior, with standard seating and décor also did not scream romance. The clientele during our visit were not other couples on romantic dates, they were mostly families or old men enjoying solo ramen at the counters up front. However, we

didn't let this stop us from having our early Valentine's meal.

My wife and I decided we'd order one of each of the special ramen bowls, Chocolate Ramen and White Chocolate Ramen, both for 640 yen (about \$5.80) and share a plate of six gyoza (Chinese-style dumplings) for 240 yen like a couple of young love birds.

When our server delivered the dishes, they looked interesting enough for some Instagram-worthy shots. #love

My Chocolate Ramen had a dark brown soy sauce-based

broth and came topped with a chocolate bar. My wife's White Chocolate Ramen was a salt-based broth and was topped with— you guessed it— a white chocolate bar.

Thick, yellow noodles, thick slices of pork rib and all the fixings like bamboo shoots, green onions and mushrooms, swimming in the peculiar broths was confusing because everything in the bowl looked like it was going to taste like chocolate.

Despite our apprehension, our first spoonful proved that it was, in fact, ramen and it was tasty!



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**Chocolate Ramen & White Chocolate Ramen****PRICE:** 640 yen**HOURS:** Wed – Mon, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.**SALES PERIOD:** Until Mar. 11

\* Available at all the Kourakuen restaurants in Japan (475 shops) See [www.kourakuen.co.jp/](http://www.kourakuen.co.jp/) and find the nearest shop

**Kourakuen (Miharucho, Yokosuka)****LOCATION:** 1-21-2 Miharucho, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.**HOURS:** 10:45 a.m. - midnight**URL:** <https://stores.kourakuen.co.jp/en/20670>**TEL:** 046-838-5909

The chocolate ramen was rich and had a slightly spicy taste thanks to the ground ginger and cacao oil topping. The white chocolate ramen was smooth and creamy with a nice flavor thanks to the cream and cacao oil.

The chocolate bar topping only made our ramen broth richer and the flavor changed as my bowl emptied. At first, there was a slight sweetness on the tongue, but was overwhelmed by the flavors of soy sauce and salt. Later, the sweetness returned with a strong chocolate aroma. It was definitely a new food experience for us.

Much as my wife was great company on this ramen date, so was the gyoza at complementing the meal. We enjoyed their white cabbage, ginger, and onion filling

and finished them all.

Soon our bowls were empty and our stomachs full, but before we could throw in the towel, we enjoyed the complimentary chocolates that came on the side for us to enjoy a little dessert after our non-dessert chocolate ramen.

Kourakuen is known for its inexpensive ramen served quick. They don't take reservations, but they have 475 locations across mainland Japan (33 in Tokyo and 45 in Kanagawa Prefecture), so you may be able to find one near your installation.

If you're wise you won't choose this for a Valentine's Day date. But, don't worry, you have until March 11 to try these crazy chocolate bowls of ramen before they disappear!

[takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com](mailto:takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com)



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# COCA-COLA STRAWBERRY: DOES IT FIZZ OR FALL FLAT?

STORY AND PHOTO BY THERON GODBOLD,  
STARS AND STRIPES  
Published: January 28, 2020

Japan's food and beverage industry boasts many seasonal, novelty flavors, whether it's a cherry pie-flavored drink from Starbucks or chocolate fries from McDonalds, and some can be better than others.

The current fad is strawberry Coca-Cola. This seasonal flavor has an unclear end date, but likely won't be on shelves for long.

This "world's first," according to a Coca-Cola Co. press release, is targeted at teens and women in their 20s and 30s or anyone who can't drink normal Coke.

The company describes the drink as a "match between the deliciousness of Coca-Cola and the popular fruits and strawberries that reach the season in winter."

As a kid, I mixed sodas — Coke and Sprite, for example, for a citrusy flavor, or Fanta and Coke for a berry taste. When I saw this new Coke in my local convenience store, the aforementioned memories flooded back, so I bought a few



Strawberry Coca-Cola became the soft drink giant's newest seasonal flavor when it was released on Jan. 20. It's available only in Japan, and only for a limited time.

for the office. Read on to see what my Stars and Stripes coworkers thought.

**EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:**  
**STARS AND STRIPES**  
www.stripes.com

*As a former employee of the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Hamburg, Pa., I know my candy water. This beverage offered a nose of antiseptic*

*strawberry. The first sip, moreover,*

*evinced a hint of artificial flavoring with a Twizzler finish. I was most disappointed in the lack of carbonation. The bottle was re-frigerated two days prior to opening so I expected effervescence. But this sample was flabby, clearly past its prime. If you're desperate for a thirst-quencher after a five-mile, round-trip run to the South Overrun at Yokota Air Base in mid-July, this is your soda, or "pop," if you prefer. Otherwise, reach for the electrolyte*


*replenishers.*

*– Joseph Ditzler, Pacific editor*

*I like sugar and this is pretty sugary. The thing is, I am mainly thinking of what I could mix it with alcohol-wise. But also, if I were to mix it with the Vanilla Float Coke, would it taste like a strawberry Coke milkshake? Also, is this one of those strawberry items flavored with castoreum, aka beaver butt? Still tasty, I guess.*

*– Chrissy Yates, web editor*

After seeing the reactions from my coworkers, it was my turn to try this new concoction from Coke. With a twist of the cap and the sound of fizz escaping, I brought the bottle to my lips. The flavor is strong and reminds me of strawberry syrup poured directly into a Coke. Hints of artificial sweeteners coated my tongue. It's sweet, robust and generally pleasant tasting. With a cost of a little under \$1.25, it won't be my go-to soda, but with the limited run and the hype I will definitely buy one or two more in the near future.



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# Exam cram

'Tis the season in Japan to study like crazy to 'make the cut'



BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPE JAPAN

**O**n any given February morning, you might see hundreds of young students – some with parents, or even teachers, in tow – flocking to a nearby high school or university. Chances are they are on their way to take their entrance examinations.

Entrance exams – along with hours upon hours of cram-school study – are an annual rite of passage that takes place nationwide in Japan every year. Most people take these rigorous exams at least twice in a lifetime – for high school as well as college, but

those trying for private schools might try three or more times.

## Taking exams

Some take more than one exam a year just to hedge their bets.

Unlike the United States, free compulsory education in Japan extends only through junior high or middle school. Families typically pay the equivalent of around \$3,000 in tuition and fees per student

annually for public high school. Private schools cost twice or more. And students vie to get into the best high schools just as they do colleges.

High school and college exams typically cover three to five subjects, such as Japanese, English or another foreign language, math, science and social studies. They usually take the entire day with a break for lunch.

It is widely believed that graduation from a prestigious high school and university virtually guarantees preferential treatment from prospective universities or employers after graduation. And since major universities receive four to eight times as many applicants as available slots,

competition is stiff.

As a result, students study ... and study ... and study.

## Cram school craze

Many students don't make the cut and must decide whether to enter their second or third school of choice. The other option, primarily for university candidates, is to wait until the next year and try again.

Those who do opt to wait are called "ronin," literally masterless samurai.

To give their children an edge over the competition, many parents turn to "juku," or cram schools, which have been

doing brisk business in Japan for decades.

(Industry profits were at one time in the \$8.8 billion range according to Bloomberg Business Weekly.)

The Japan Juku Association estimates that there are 50,000 juku in Japan and that 50-70 percent of students who plan to take entrance exams use them.

These exams tend to focus on the quantity of knowledge rather than deeper comprehension or mastery. To put it simply, the more information from textbooks students can memorize, the better their test scores.

After regular school hours,

SEE EXAM ON PAGE 14

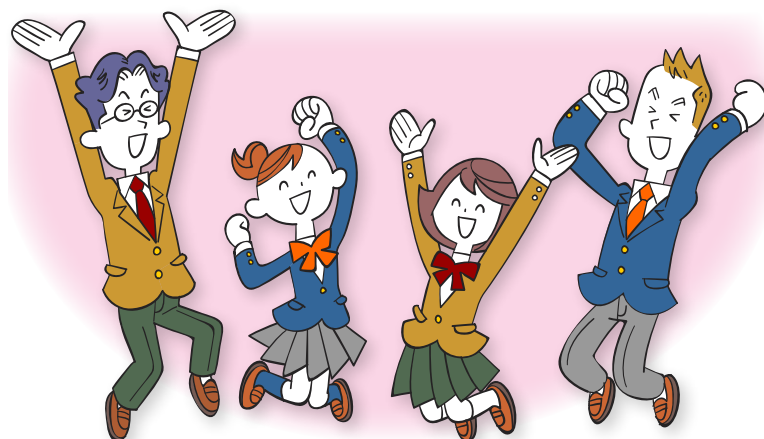






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Sandwich

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## EXAM: Times changing for old testing system

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

students go to these cram schools two to five times a week to study for a couple of hours.

Tuition ranges between 10,000 to 50,000 yen (\$90-\$450) a month or more. This is part of the nearly \$95K for public or nearly \$200K for private school the Ministry of Education estimates the average family pays to put one child through Japan's school system.

schools; instead they tend to be content with schools they can easily get accepted by," the official said.

To avoid of the competition altogether, some students turn to using recommendations from their existing schools to gain admittance.

So, for those who do opt for the traditional cram-and-exam method – with, perhaps, less fervor than their forefathers – how sweet is the taste of success?

Not very, according to a student who entered a private prestigious Tokyo university after cramming like crazy to make the cut.

"Once it's over, the pressure and motivation to study are gone," he says. "After having spent so many years studying just for exams, many of us have little sense of what comes next – or how to shape our futures."

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

### Alternative attitudes

But things are changing and according to a Japan Juku Association official, so is the level of students' ambitions. Gone are the days when most students viewed Japan's entrance exam system as if it were a life-or-death matter.

"Many are not setting their goals very high for prestigious

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### A little luck of the 'ema' for exams

You may be familiar with bunches of small wooden plaques with drawings of horses and Japanese characters written on them that can be found hanging in Shinto Shrines. These "ema," or horse icons, are used as



prayers or wishes for good luck in certain endeavors.

Japanese believe that their wish and prayers will come true if they write them on these plaques and hang them as offerings to the Shinto gods. Some of the common wishes for success include work, family peace, health and (yes, you guessed it) school entrance examinations.

As each shrine is dedicated to certain deities, different shrines are frequented for different types of fortune. Tenjin is the Shinto god of scholars, and his shrines are called "tenmangu."

Many students who are going to take entrance exams visit Futenmangu in Futenma, Okinawa; Dazaifu Tenmangu in Fukuoka Prefecture; and Yushima Tenjin in Tokyo to offer ema for success. There are many others elsewhere throughout the nation.

Ema are sold at these shrines for about 200 to 1,000 yen (\$1.80-\$9). Students write their name and wish on the blank side and hang it with all the others.

In February, you will likely see many students offering these ema at shrines near you.

- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan



# Stripes Sports Trivia

Four non-quarterbacks have scored four career touchdowns in "The Big Game," while only one has five – Emmitt Smith. While Smith's five may seem pretty impressive, who's the far-and-away all-time leader with eight career TDs in the NFL's featured game.

Answer

Jerry Rice

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

For this week's edition, I turned to Tofugu for their take on like vs. love in Japan: The concept of "like" and "love" in Japanese may be a little difficult for you to gauge because the word "suki" could mean both/either "like" or "love." More simply, aishiteru has a completely different weight to it than the words suki or even daisuki (really like). In many ways, it holds more gravity than when English speakers say "I love you" because people can "love" donuts or movies or even use it the hashtag #love to describe a picture of something they took on their phones. Aishiteru, however, is used for only one purpose. Aishiteru is when the words aren't just said, but felt as well.

Kanji of the week

愛

Ai/ito(shii) (Love)

## Language Lesson

Let's meet at the station.

Eki de aimashoo.

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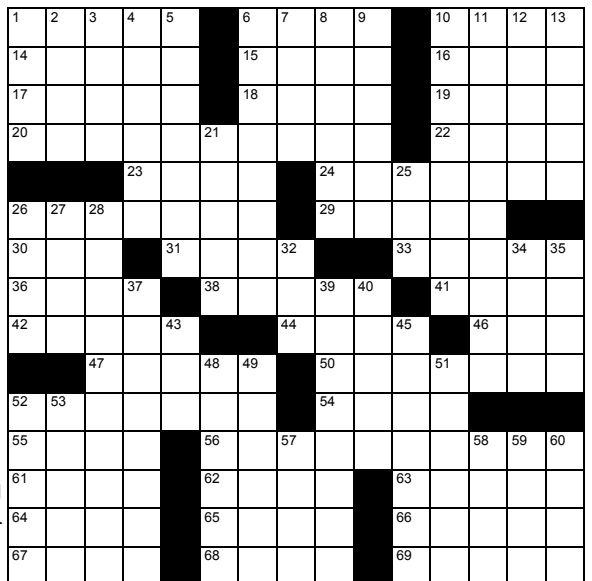
Sat. & Holiday Close at 5pm (Closed Sun.)

## The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

### ACROSS

- Philatelist's purchase
- Copycat's request
- Open, a little
- Study aide
- Positive aspect
- Millennium Falcon captain
- Overhead
- Worst finish
- She, on the sea
- Payment
- Storybook start
- Pond denizen
- Trainee
- Series featuring Joe Friday
- Ready for a refill
- Headstone abbr.
- Consider
- Sum up
- "The Sound of Music" backdrop
- Word before school or route
- Cowgirl Evans
- Equestrian command
- Spare parts?
- "What'd I tell ya?"
- Regarding, old-style
- King who wrote "Joyland"
- Cowboy's pal
- Church bell sound
- Beginning to cry?
- Gymnast's roll
- Chris who played Captain Kirk
- Minnesota player
- Orphan of comics
- Circle parts
- More or \_\_\_\_\_
- Weighed down
- Anagram for 68-Across



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- "Anything \_\_\_\_?"
- Freshwater fish
- DOWN
- Have the lead
- Toothpaste holder
- Molecular bit
- Bekins specialty
- Role-play, say
- Painter's problem
- Shepard in space
- Hired goons
- Think highly of
- Like chocolates in a sampler
- The Man in Black
- Lewis Carroll heroine
- Rodeo performer
- Canary's call
- 30-day mo.
- Downer
- Nettle
- Make an \_\_\_\_\_ (stop by)
- GPS predecessor

- Aweather's opposite
- Ball-\_\_ hammer
- Summer attire
- Give out
- "Door's open!"
- Slammer
- Gourmet seasoning
- Get cozy
- Bricklayer's tool
- Two-dimensional
- Kind of cross
- In flames
- Magnolia State, briefly
- Menu option
- In \_\_\_\_ of (replacing)
- Campsite sight

### Answers to Last Week's Crossword:

A	D	D	S	S	H	A	P	E	P	A	R	K
F	R	E	T	C	A	R	O	L	A	L	O	E
R	A	C	E	I	N	C	O	M	P	L	E	T
O	B	E	L	I	S	K	C	O	L	L	E	E
L	E	N	S	T	H	R	U	M				
A	C	E	T	O	R	E	E	M	A	I	L	
H	E	R	O	R	I	E	L	E	L	V	E	S
E	L	A	N	S	O	N	A	R	L	A	V	A
M	E	T	E	R	T	A	C	E	T	N	E	T
B	E	A	U	T	G	E	A	R	A	L	E	
P	R	O	S	E	S	E	C	T				
A	G	I	T	A	T	E	G	O	K	A	R	T
J	U	B	I	L	A	T	I	O	N	C	U	R
A	R	I	D	L	U	C	R	E	A	M	E	N
R	U	S	E	S	P	E	E	D	O	P	E	D

## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

### HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:

8	7	4	2	1	5	6	3	9
1	9	6	3	4	7	5	2	8
5	2	3	8	6	9	1	4	7
3	8	2	9	5	1	4	7	6
6	5	7	4	3	8	2	9	1
4	1	9	7	2	6	3	8	5
2	6	8	1	7	4	9	5	3
9	3	5	6	8	2	7	1	4
7	4	1	5	9	3	8	6	2

5		3						
	4					5		7
			4			2	8	3
9	3		7			8		
8				9				4
	7	4	6					
	2			5		4		
		9		1		7	6	
			9	8				

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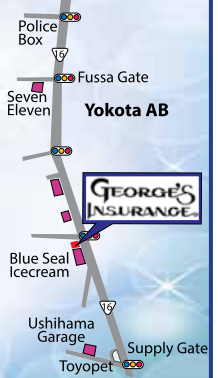
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