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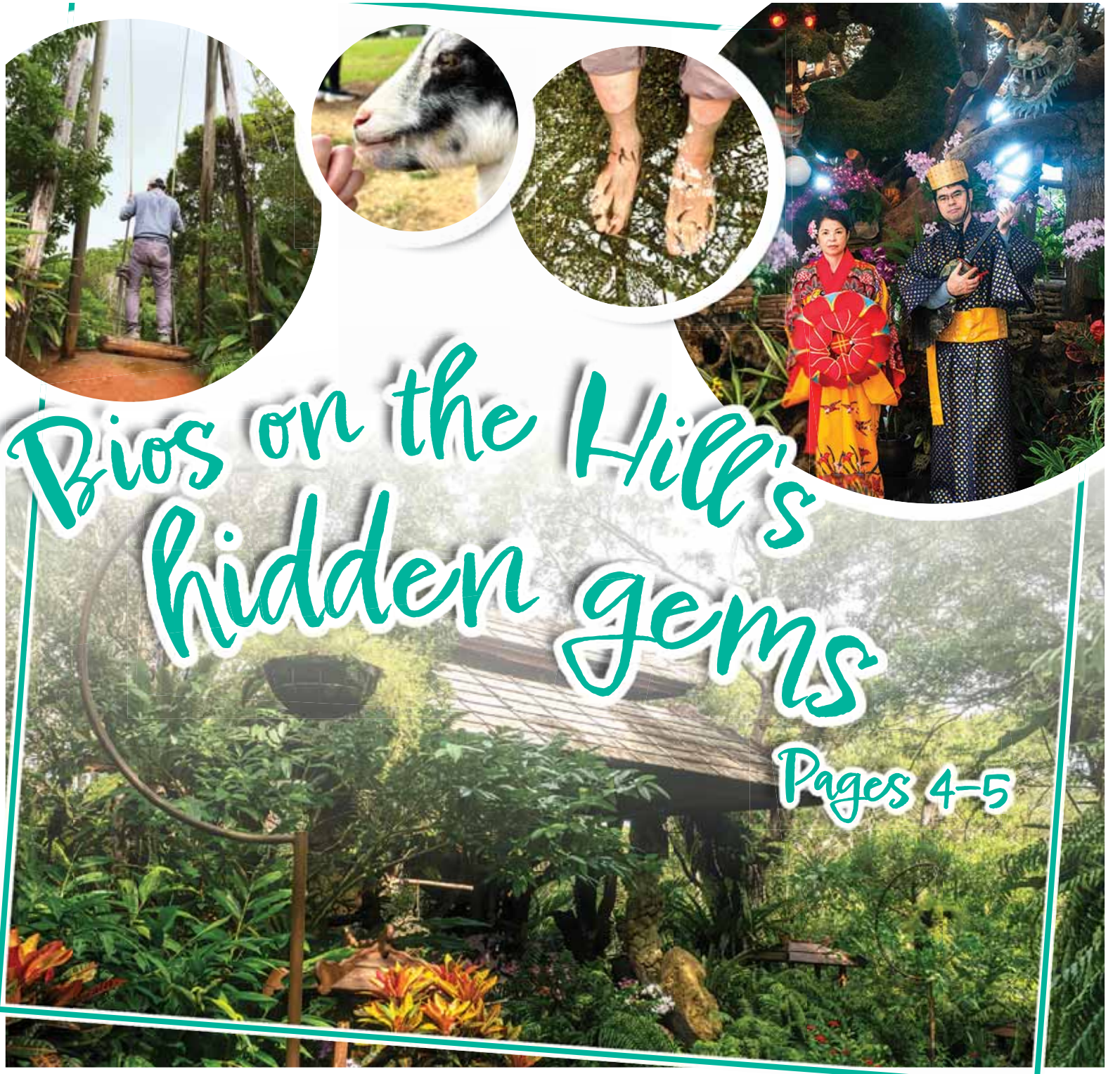
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Fix in for yet another unwitting pet

Our 18-month-old yellow lab, Gilligan, has been bumbling around wearing a plastic cone on account of having had neuter surgery on Monday. Gilly is the third of the Molinari family dogs, so this isn't our first rodeo. Gilly's predecessors, first Dinghy and then Moby, were neutered, too, and each dog spent their post-operative weeks moping around in a "cone of shame."

Gilly, a goofball, seems oblivious to the loss of his manhood marbles, and is therefore coping quite well. A keenly intelligent poodle-mix, Dinghy's masculinity wasn't fazed by his sudden lack of testosterone — in fact, he became known for his critter hunting prowess and dog park domination. However, to our middle dog, Moby, a sweet simpleton with a one-track mind for tennis balls, neutering surgery was a shocking betrayal.

We were living on base that winter, when I told my friends they wouldn't be seeing Moby for a while. When I explained why, the men collectively cringed and hitched their knees together.

First thing Monday morning, Moby loped out our front door into the crisp morning air just like always, his stout wagging tail on one end and a big sloppy smile on the other. I opened the minivan's door, and Moby hopped right in, probably expecting me to drive him to the beach to chase balls and eat dead fish.

But instead, we drove 25 minutes northward to the veterinary clinic. Once parked, I opened the door to let Moby out.

"Hey, lil' buddy! C'mon, this is gonna be fun!"

Moby was a blockhead, but even he knew something was up. He was hesitant to emerge, wondering why I'd left the tennis balls in the car. When I tugged at his leash, he pulled back, causing all his neck flub to bunch up around his face.

Finally, Moby noticed that the air outside the minivan was a veritable cornucopia of intriguing odors, so he jumped out to investigate years' worth of animal pheromones, territorial markings and nervous involuntary spillage in that parking lot. On my way to the clinic door, the leash stopped with a jolt while Moby sniffed, then licked, then marked tufts of dead grass peeking through cracks in the asphalt.

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari



In the waiting room, Moby wasn't sure if he should hide or jump for joy. On one hand, there were lots of fun-looking dogs and people in there, and even one small hissy thing that made a peculiar yowling sound. But on the other hand, there were unfamiliar smells in that waiting room, like medicine ... disinfectant ... and fear.

Before Moby's blockhead could figure it all out, the veterinarian's assistant led him away. I watched his tail wag as he looked up at her, probably thinking she was taking him to chase balls.

Oh, the irony.

Several hours later, Moby was back in the minivan, stunned at having been robbed of his virility and wondering why there was a ridiculous cone around his head.

The physical pain in his nether regions was a mere annoyance compared to the humiliation of the cone. It soon became the bane of his existence. He knocked over lamps and spilled his water.

Worst of all, it got in the way of chasing balls.

At the end of the week, when Moby had reluctantly accepted that he'd be wearing that blasted cone for the rest of his life, it suddenly cracked and fell off while he was rolling in the snow. Moby stared at the cone a moment, not sure if he should be sad at losing another appendage or happy to be rid of it. Instinct took over, and Moby pounced onto the cone, grabbing and shaking it with all his might.

Killing the cone restored Moby's faith in his lingering masculinity, and as he trotted back to the house with his head held high, I could almost hear him say, "Nothing will ever get between me and my balls again."

Every year, millions of homeless dogs and cats are needlessly euthanized. Spaying and neutering is the best way to control overpopulation. At www.humanesociety.org, you can find low-cost services and organizations offering financial aid for pet care and surgeries. Give your milpets the good care they deserve.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*
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Find hidden gems

Bios on the Hill

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Bios no oka, a.k.a. Bios on the Hill, a nature-oriented theme park in Uruma City, has been my happy place in Okinawa for a long time. A slow ride on a water buffalo cart or gliding across the waters of a peaceful lake by boat at the park has been a nice getaway from stressful daily life.

Though the large park is famous for its buffalo cart, boat rides and orchids, there are other activities I have not tried there. Bios on the Hill is designed like an intricate world of a fantasy role-playing game, so it is easy to visit and not catch all the attractions there in one visit.

My curiosity of what other hidden gems I might enjoy at Bios on the Hill, led me to plan another trip there. This time, however, I enlisted the help of my coworker Saori Tamanaha, a sales representative from Stars and Stripes, and Ai Horie, a Bios on the Hill sales representative, to guide me.

Photo session in Ryukyuan costume

Trying on traditional Okinawan attire is a popular activity for tourists visiting the island. This activity can range from 3,000 yen or more per person. But, at the park, you can don an outfit of the Ryukyuan Kingdom for 1,100 yen (approx. \$7.16 tax included) for a 10-minute photo session using your camera or smartphone.

Ryusou is traditional Okinawan clothing similar to kimono, but in more dynamic colors. These colorful robes draw influences from both kimono and hanfu, Chinese traditional attire.

The photo session is available at the Hanai/Nishimachiya shop, where visitors can purchase souvenirs and try other hands-on activities.

The shop has many options of beautiful, hand-crafted clothing and props like fans, Sanshin guitars, and hanagasa, an Okinawan hat with the motif of a lotus flower, to go with the outfits.

Wearing costumes is not really my thing, but the stage against the backdrop of beautiful orchid flowers made me look arguably better than I would in a normal photo studio. Plus, a giant ornament of a dragon made from plants,

was watching behind me. With the legendary creature being a symbol of the Ryukyuan Kingdom, I felt like a hero from the anime standing near it in my ryusou. Saori also joined me, and we got to pose as a musical duo in our traditional ensembles.

A session with Dr. Fish

As you've traveled around Japan and Okinawa, you may have encountered Garra Rufa a.k.a. Dr. Fish, a unique and fishy way to get a pedicure. Bios on the Hill also offers Dr. Fish pedicures in a small spa inside the same building as the photo studio.

I've tried it before at Enoshima Island off the mainland, but I didn't know what I was getting myself into when I dipped my toes in the spa at Bios on the Hill.

Two wooden bathtubs, one square and another shaped like a boat, accommodate roughly eight people each. The room is decorated with wooden ornaments that made me feel like I was outside in nature and not inside a spa in a building.

After checking in, we were given a "patient's registration card" that reminded us that there are no refunds after your 10-minute session with Dr. Fish starts. We got to sit at the boat tub and soon as I dipped my feet in, dozens of Dr. Fishes swarmed.

There were no other customers during our session, so the Dr. Fishes attacked my feet. It was ticklish but it felt nice. Soon, the 10 minutes were over, yet the ravenous Dr. Fishes were not backing down. They could have certainly spent a little more time on my feet, but I called it an end before my cuticles were completely devoured.

For the fee of 550 yen (tax included), this turned out to be a satisfying experience.

Children are allowed to try Dr. Fish, and kids three years and under can use it for free with a parent's admission. There are other rules and etiquette for a visit to Dr. Fish, so pay attention to the signs and staff at the spa.

Intricate ficus trees and orchids at Tounchi

With our feet squeaky clean, we were shown around the park by Horie. In previous visits, I headed straight to Ayaufuniba, a lake for boat rides, or to Ashibiuna, the field for water buffalo cart rides. This time, Horie showed me other spots that are smaller but worth exploring deeper.

Tounchi, a ficus garden, is one I'd overlooked in the past. This interesting attraction displayed trees in intricate designs I enjoyed browsing. A lot of attention and patience, Horie said, was needed to create designs with the ficus benjamina, which recreates Okinawa gates and houses.

The ficus trees arranged in this manner gave an air of beauty like an Hayao Miyazaki animation like My Neighbor Totoro or Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind.



VIEW VIDEO!



s at the Hill

The paths surrounding the area were also adorned with stunning orchid flowers like *Oncidium Sharry Baby*, which gives off a chocolate-like scent, and other colorful blooms.

According to Horie, the orchids are replaced weekly so there are always blooming orchids present along these paths.



Giant swing and hammock

Bios on the Hill may be a place for me to relax and unwind, but the park also offers plenty of recreational activities to enjoy. Reach great heights on a giant swing at Umuiuna lawn near Lake Thinzumigumi.

The swing is on the bank of the lake, so the ride is a thrill that made me feel like I was throwing myself in the air over the water.

Riding the giant swing very much reminded me of the title sequence of "Heidi, the Girl of the Alps" where Heidi, the heroine of the animation show, rides a giant swing against the backdrop of the mountains of the Alps. Although there are no mountains around the area, swinging over the lake felt equally exhilarating.

After riding the giant swing, we headed to Umachimou, another field by the lake, where visitors can lay in a hammock. In contrast to the exhilarating swing, relaxing in the hammock surrounded by the trees was a nice break.

Goat and Water Buffalo

To end our visit to the park, we dropped by to say hi to the resident goats and water buffalo at the Ashibiuna section. Feeding a little goat with carrots was fun but a little bit of a struggle as the hungry kid tried to snatch all the carrots. The water buffalo was at work diligently pulling a cart with customers on. When I approached the huge animal to take a photo of it, I did not feel any danger. The hard-working animal even stopped for a second as if to offer me a photo op.

Just like my previous visits to the park, my time at Bios on the Hill gave me a sense of happiness, and a kind of satisfaction much different from the ones I would get from big theme parks. kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



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WEBSITE

*For Dr. Fish, the 550-yen admission covers only one person (sharing it with another person is not allowed). Make sure that you don't lose your shoes and socks. You can eat and drink at the spot but be careful not to drop the food or drinks into the tubs. Smoking is prohibited.





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Dodgers' manager, son of a US Marine, returns to Okinawa for World Series honor

BY KEISHI KOJA AND
BRIAN MCELHINEY,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: December 6, 2024



"The award I receive today from the city of Naha, I will hold it right next to my World Series trophy."

- Dave Roberts

NAHA — Dave Roberts, the son of a U.S. Marine father and Japanese mother, was recognized at his birthplace on Dec. 5 for his part in the Los Angeles Dodgers' World Series victory.

Roberts, the Dodgers' manager, skipped the team to its eighth World Series title and his second as team manager in October. The Dodgers took the title in five games over the New York Yankees.

"Winning the World Series for the Los Angeles Dodgers ... was incredible, an incredible challenge," he said during a ceremony at Naha City Hall. "But the final piece for me was to come to Naha to be with my people and celebrate with you guys, together."

Roberts received Naha's Special Honor Award in the city assembly room in a ceremony attended by the mayor, all 40 city assembly members, the media and observers in the upper gallery. Afterward, he greeted thousands of Okinawans on the lower level of city hall.

The award is given to people or organizations who contributed to Naha's standing in Japan, according to the city's website.

The Dodgers' win was doubly sweet for Japanese baseball fans thanks to the contributions of Japanese players Shohei Ohtani, who became the first player to hit 50 home runs and steal 50 bases in a single season, and Yoshinobu Yamamoto.

Roberts was born in Naha, Okinawa's capital city, in 1972 to Waymon Roberts, a U.S. Marine,

and his wife, the former Eiko Ikehara, a native of Okinawa. Roberts lived the life of a military child, moving to his father's duty stations in California, North Carolina, Hawaii and a second stint on Okinawa, according to a 2015 interview with Yahoo News.

The elder Roberts retired as a gunnery sergeant in 1998, according to the interview. He died in March 2017, according to an obituary by the Associated Press.

Roberts' mother tossed out the first pitch at Japan Night at Dodger Stadium on July 13, 2018, according to ESPN. Her son was the catcher.

Roberts focused on his Okinawan heritage during Thursday's ceremony, which he attended with his son, Cole Roberts, sister Melissa Parker and niece Mia Parker.

"Okinawan people are different than any people in the world," he said. "Family is everything. There is respect, there is love, and that's something, for me — that's part of who I am. And everything I do with my job — I take the Okinawan people with me."

Naha Mayor Satoru Chinen presented Roberts with the award

certificate, and assembly chairman Yoshitaka Nohara presented him with Okinawan pottery.

"This achievement helped to let the country know about our city," Chinen said at the ceremony. Roberts' "flexible strategies, his personality and overall, his smile, which is like the sun of Okinawa, make our citizens proud."

Afterwards, Roberts met privately with Chinen and U.S. Consul General Andrew Ou.

Roberts played Major League baseball from 1999 to 2008 with a batting average of .266 before becoming the Dodgers' manager in 2016. He played for the Cleveland Indians, the Dodgers, Boston Red Sox, San Diego Padres and San Francisco Giants.

"The award I receive today from the city of Naha, I will hold it right next to my World Series trophy," he said. "This means just as much as winning the World Series to me. As a young boy growing up to a man, I never would have imagined standing here in front of you."

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Cynthia McKeague

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Roberts greets fans at the city hall in Naha. Photos by Keishi Koja, Stars and Stripes

Stripes Sports Trivia

Who was the first player, after a record-breaking season in which he led his team to an NBA-record 73 wins and set an individual record of 402 three-pointers (smashing his own previous league record of 286 set the year before), in NBA history to be elected league MVP by a unanimous vote?

Answer

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry

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DID YOU KNOW?

Japan itself may be an island but did you know that the country is made up of nearly 6,900 islands? Besides the mainland, Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku and Okinawa make up the other of the five main islands. Of all the remote islands in the archipelago, 421 are reportedly inhabited. Tokyo Prefecture alone is home to 219 islands, of which 11 are inhabited. Next time you go on an island adventure make sure to check the map!

Kanji of the week

滝

Taki (waterfall)

Language Lesson

Are you O.K.?

Daijoubu desuka?

Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 ___ Romeo

5 It's sold in bars

9 Canned meat since 1937

13 Pale anagram

14 More than suggest

15 Madcap comedy

16 Fluid rock

17 Like the fabled piper

18 Motionless

19 Be in charge of

21 Summer quencher

23 "Hondo", for one

24 Prickly shrub

25 Very skillful

27 Hoops grp.

30 Maintain

33 Sign before Virgo

34 Think tank nugget

35 Krasinski of Hollywood

36 Work shirker

38 In the vicinity

39 Quite often

40 Piece of pipe

41 Parody

43 Detail on some tickets

44 Acme

46 Medium's deck

48 Classic Dodge

52 Bond's drink

54 Franc division

55 Words to live by

56 Flower part

58 Iris's place

59 "Cheers" role

60 Coloring

61 Road turn

62 Vogue rival

63 Adjusts, as a clock

64 Means justifiers, at times

DOWN

1 Give the OK

2 Way off base?

3 Top picks, informally

4 Common rental

5 Lucky horse-shoe, e.g.

6 Get one's bearings

7 Go gray

8 AKC concern

9 Smooths, as wood

10 Made believe

11 Part of a plot

12 Prefix with physics or data

15 Like some speeches

20 Char, as a steak

22 Decorator's concerns

26 Pompeo of "Grey's Anatomy"

28 Bridges of Hollywood

29 Org. for seniors

30 Cracked

31 Without help

32 Rigged court proceeding

34 River float, at times

37 ADA members

42 Zip

44 Kind of number

45 Actor's study, perhaps

47 Make amends

49 1999 film, "Any ___ Sunday"

50 Revise

51 Digests digests

52 Like some beds

53 Leaf-stem angle

57 Corn site

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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Courtesy photos

Coming-of-Age Day incites rite of passage

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI & SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Be-coming an adult is an important milestone in most cultures, and in Japan it is celebrated on Seijin-no Hi, or Coming-of-Age Day, the second Monday of January (Jan. 13 this year). While the rite of passage, like it did before the pandemic, is making its way back, there has recently been a major change in its social context.

Effective April 1, 2022, the Civil Code regards 18 years of age as the start of adulthood in Japan. Prior to that, the age of adulthood was set at 20. The Ministry of Justice explains that the change was intended to respect the right of decision of those 18 and 19 years of age, and to encourage their participation in the society.

Although this change enabled young men and women at such ages to rent an apartment or to have a credit card without consent of their parents, they still need to wait until turning 20 before

consuming alcohol or betting on horse races. The same goes for their participation in a coming-of-age ceremony.

In many municipalities in Okinawa as well as on the mainland Japan, ceremonies on January 13 will continue to be targeted to those at 20 years of age. That means 18- and 19-year-old youths still are on the waiting list to get invited unless they were born before April 2 in 2005. Nonetheless, you will most likely see many young adults in suite and tie or kimono celebrating their adulthood.

The ceremony may leave behind some new adults outside the party venue, but the reason for this occasion is expected to remain the same: to mark Japan's young men and women becoming legal adults.

With the recent change taking effect, in Japan, starting at the age of 18, young men and women are subject to the laws and social responsibilities that bind adults. Regarding participation in politics, they will need several more years of maturing before running

for a public office. The minimum age for a congressman and mayor is 25; it is 30 for a senator and governor.

"The purpose of this holiday is to congratulate and encourage young men and women who attain the legal age of adulthood to fulfill their new-found responsibilities and become self-reliant members of society," said Masahiko Uchino, of the National Cabinet Office's holiday section. The number of new adults has been decreasing in recent years due to Japan's shrinking birthrate. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the number of new adults (age 18) as of January 1, 2024 is 1.06 million (550,000 men and 520,000 women) – a decrease of 60,000 from last year and less than half the 1976 peak of 2.76 million. The number of new adults (age 18) in Okinawa as of January 2024 is 15,504. The birthrate was 8.7 newborns per 1,000 people in 2023, the highest among all 47 prefectures in the nation. Nothing new for Okinawa, which

has been the prefecture with the highest birthrate for the past 50 years.

The tradition of celebrating coming-of-age in the middle of January can be traced back to ancient times, although the national holiday was established for Jan. 15 in 1948. (In 1998, it was moved to the second Monday in January as part of Japan's Happy Monday system, which moved several holidays to create three-day weekends.) Originally, coming-of-age was celebrated on or around Jan. 15 according to the old lunar calendar. Traditionally called "koshogatsu" (Small New Year's), it was the day of the first full moon of the year. "It was considered right to celebrate coming-of-age in the beginning of year with festive atmosphere," Uchino said. Although there was no precise age that determined the onset of adulthood throughout Japan's feudal era, it was usually celebrated when boys reached the age of around 15 and when girls reached about 13. The Meiji government set the legal age of adulthood for

both sexes to 20 in 1876. "Seijin-shiki," or coming-of-age ceremonies, are generally held the morning of the national holiday at local city offices throughout the country. Those who turn 20 during the current school year, which runs from April 1 to March 30 the next year, attend. During the ceremony, heads of local government and guest speakers from various backgrounds give speeches and small presents are handed out to the new adults. On this day, young adults also often visit shrines or have parties with family and friends after the ceremony. In some Okinawan villages, such as Shiraho, Ishigaki City, new adults perform a dance to thank the villagers for their support.

Although there will be some work to do to open the door to the 18 and 19 years old, Seijin-shiki has been back in order, and the rite of passage continues in a manner to ensure the safety of others.

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Dressing the part in style

For most of young women, Coming-of-Age Day and the related ceremony are an opportunity to dress up in their most formal clothes. Many don "furusode," a style of kimono with long sleeves that hang down.

The furisode is the most formal style of kimono worn by an unmarried woman in Japan. It is made of very fine, brightly colored silk, and is commonly rented or bought by parents for their daughters to wear to celebrate their coming-of-age.

By wearing a furisode, a young woman signifies that she is both single and a legal adult, and thus available

for marriage, since the garment may not be worn either until adulthood or after wedlock. In this sense, a furisode might be associated with the formal gowns worn by debutantes in the West.

A full furisode set is very expensive, so it is usually borrowed from a relative or rented. Typically, a young woman rents a kimono, dresses up and has her hair styled at salon before having a formal photo shoot at a portrait studio to commemorate the occasion. This can easily cost 150,000 yen (\$1,000) or more. Purchasing a new kimono set may cost more than 1,000,000 yen (\$6,670).

There are some young men who might wear a traditional dark kimono, called a "haori" (half-coat) and "hakama" (loose-legged pleated trousers) on this holiday. However, nowadays most of young men wear a Western suit and tie for the occasion.



Speakin' Japanese

Coming of age

Jan. 13 is "Seijin no Hi (coming of age day)" in Japan. Let's try these phrases and congratulate our new adults!

"Go-seijin Omedetou gozaimasu"

= Congratulations for coming of age.
(*"go"* = a prefix to express something in a polite way, *"seijin"* = adult/coming of age, *"omedetou gozaimasu"* = congratulations)

"Otona no Nakama-iri desune"

= Now you are an adult member of society.
(*"otona"* = adult/grown-up, *"Nakama-iri"* = join)

"Tomoni Shakaijin Toshite Ganbari-masho"

= Let's work hard together as adult members of society.
(*"tomoni"* = together, *"shakaijin"* = adult member of society, *"toshite"* = as, *"ganbari-masho"* = let's work hard)

"Atarashii Koto ni Dondon Charenji shite itte Kudasai"

= Please keep trying something new.
(*"atarashii"* = new, *"koto"* = thing/stuff, *"ni"* = a

particle to indicate an object, *"dondon"* = a phrase to indicate a momentum, *"charenji"* = challenge, *"shite/suru"* = do, *"itte"* = go, *"kudasai"* = please)

"Minna Ouen Shite-imasu"

= Everybody is rooting for you.
(*"minna"* = everybody, *"ouen"* = rooting, *"shite-imasu"* = be doing)

"Shakaijin toshite seicho shite itte Kudasai"

= Keep being a better adult member of society.
(*"shakaijin"* = adult member of society, *"toshite"* = as, *"seicho shite/suru"* = grow up/step up, *"itte"* = go, *"kudasai"* = please)

"Ookiku Habataite Kudasai"

= Fly high and be successful.
(*"ookiku"* = widely, *"habataku"* = flutter one's wings, *"kudasai"* = please)

"Korekarano jinsei ni Takusan no Deai to Shiawase ga Aruyouni Inotte Imasu"

= I wish you meet many wonderful people and find a lot of happiness.
(*"korekarano"* = in the future, *"jinsei"* = life, *"ni"* = in/at, *"takusan/takusan-no"* = many/a lot of, *"deai"* = encounter/meeting, *"shiwase"* = happiness, *"ga"* = a particle to indicate a subject, *"auyouni"* = so that there is~, *"inotte imasu"* = be praying/wishing)

- Shoji Kudaka, Stripes Okinawa

Pronunciation key: "A" is short (like "ah"); "E" is short (like "get"); "I" is short (like "it"); "O" is long (like "old"); "U" is long (like "tube"); and "AI" is a long "I" (like "hike"). Most words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, but "OU" is a long "O" with emphasis on that syllable.