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Couple bridges international gap with music

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NIKA NASHIRO,
MARINE CORPS INSTALLATIONS PACIFIC

“Although there are obstacles in language, there is no such thing in music. Music is a wonderful medium to establish friendship,” said Shiori Danni, a leading private in the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force.

Music is a universal language that resonates and unites people from different backgrounds, capable of building new comradeship and friendships, while strengthening existing ones. Throughout the world, people think and speak in different languages while looking at life through various views. Having a common appreciation for music can help bridge the gap between diverse cultures.

For Corey and Shiori Danni who tied the knot in May 2018, music plays a big part in each of their lives. They are both active-duty service members playing brass instruments in military bands, but they are serving different countries.

Sgt. Corey Danni, a euphonium player with the III Marine Expeditionary Force Band,

arrived to Camp Foster in 2016. Corey earned a bachelor’s degree in music education from the State University of New York at Fredonia. He has taught music at Tonawanda Middle School and High School, Tonawanda, New York, and has coached a marching band at Lancaster High School, in Lancaster, New York before joining the service. Realizing he wanted to go back to musical performance, the Buffalo, New York, native, decided to join the Marine Corps where he could serve his country and play euphonium in tandem.

“The euphonium is rare. It had a strong tradition with military performances during the American Civil War. Since that tradition stuck around, euphonium players are highly sought after in military”



U.S. Marine Sgt. Corey Danni, a euphonium player with III Marine Expeditionary Force Band, and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Leading Private Shiori Danni, a French horn player with the 15th Brigade Band, married in May 2018.

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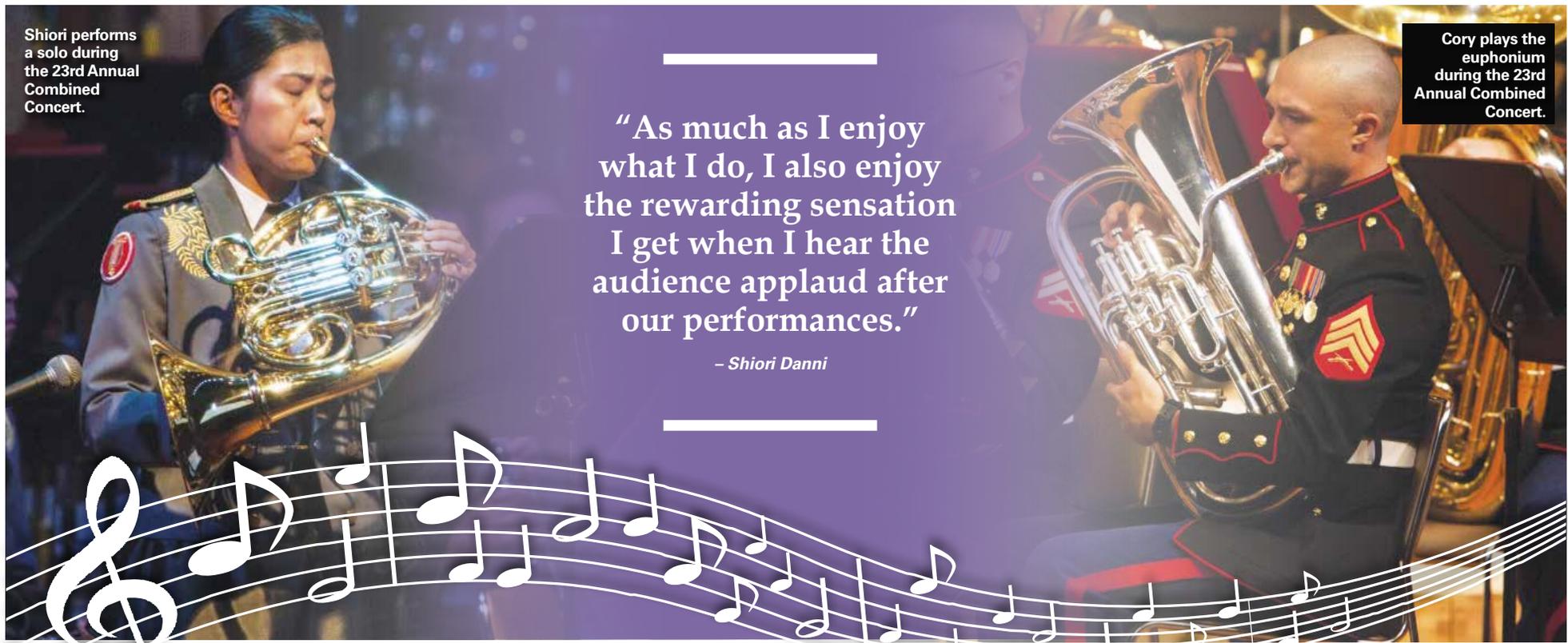
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Shiori performs a solo during the 23rd Annual Combined Concert.

Cory plays the euphonium during the 23rd Annual Combined Concert.

“As much as I enjoy what I do, I also enjoy the rewarding sensation I get when I hear the audience applaud after our performances.”

– Shiori Danni

bands,” said Corey, who started out learning how to play the trumpet and eventually transitioned to playing his current instrument for the past 14 years.

Shiori first came to Okinawa in 2012 as a graduate student studying French horn at the Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts. Upon receiving her master’s degree in music, she went to pursue a career in which she could play and serve others – leading her to join the JGSDF. In 2015, Shiori, an Awaji Island, Hyogo prefecture, native, was assigned to the JGSDF 15th Brigade Band on Camp Naha.

“As much as I enjoy what I do, I also enjoy the rewarding sensation I get when I hear the audience applaud after our performances,” said Shiori, who played the piano growing up and has played French horn for the past 16 years.

Corey and Shiori first met while getting fried chicken and waffles for lunch with mutual friends who were also band

members, in January 2017 at Chatan Town, Okinawa.

“I was immediately drawn to Shiori,” said Corey, who appreciates learning and experiencing Japanese culture. Shiori, likewise, felt an unexplainable connection with Corey when she first met him.

Although there were language and culture differences between the couple, they overcame those obstacles through interests and appreciation for each other’s unique background.

The key to a good relationship is to have a lifelong commitment to one another, to respect each other, and be grateful at all times, according to both Corey and Shiori.

Military musicians, like Corey and Shiori, travel around playing at events to connect with local communities. Sometimes bridging gaps with other countries may not be easy, but music breaks barriers.

“As a military musician, I am expected to help accomplish the Marine Corps’ mission through the use of music, which leads to

building better friendships and relationships with other countries and cultures,” said Corey.

Performing in military uniforms is not always easy. The nature of the uniforms may bring a mystic or even stern aura, but the performances humanize band members which softens any potential tension, according to Shiori.

“Before joining the SDF, I had a rigid image of service members wearing uniforms. But after joining the service, I am proud to be wearing the uniform as an SDF member, especially when I’m playing the Japanese National Anthem. I realized that military uniforms should not interrupt the audience from enjoying the music. And for spectators to enjoy the music, I need to show them that I am enjoying playing the music first,” said Shiori.

While Corey and Shiori typically play with their respective bands, there is one performance they take part in together. The JGSDF 15th Brigade Band and the III MEF Band have been developing their bilateral

relationship through music over the years, most recently as they hosted their 23rd Annual Combined Band Concert, Sept. 8 in Okinawa Civic Hall, Okinawa City.

The combined band concerts are to strengthen the Japan-U.S. relationship and express the friendship that the countries have today through music, according to JGSDF Capt. Ken Yamashita, the officer in charge for 15th Brigade Band.

“The combined concert reinforces our commitment to the Okinawa residents. We are guests here. We gain a lot of cultural capital here through performances,” said Chief Warrant Officer Andres Navarro, the officer in charge for the III MEF Band.

The audience members composed of Okinawa residents and American spectators may not have spoken the same language at the combined concert. But once the music hit them, the vibe reverberated through the air as their synchronized clapping got louder with enthusiasm exhibiting the bilateral

alliance we have today.

To some, music may be something that inspires, encourages, and provides motivation to themselves. To others, it may be part of their lifestyle. According to Corey, music is meditative, whereas Shiori defines it as part of her everyday life. Although music may hold different meanings to the Danni, it still has established a significant foundation for both of them.

Music binds those with different backgrounds and cultures, and those who speak different languages. Music can act as a universal tool which creates friendships and new alliance.

The Japan-U.S. relationship, whether seen at the community or international levels, can be portrayed through the Danni and the combined concerts. Efforts such as these friendship and cultural exchanges increase mutual understanding, accepting differences, being respectful and showing gratitude, bringing harmony to existing and future relationships.



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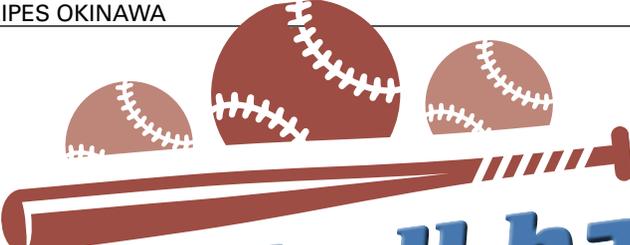
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Baseball back on Okinawa for limited time only

STORY AND PHOTO BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Every February, fields of cherry blossom trees wow the masses on Okinawa. But they're not the only fields generating excitement. February also means the boys are back in town – for spring training baseball. All 12 Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) teams have kicked off practice, with nine of them here on Okinawa for the warm weather. The island is to the NPB what Arizona and Florida are to the MLB. Without a team of its own, regular season baseball is a rarity on Okinawa. And, unlike the regular season games, fans can watch and interact with professional players close up. A lot of quality baseball will be on display for the people on Okinawa. Prior to the actual spring training games, which are set to begin late February, there will be a number of practice and intra-squad games to be played in stadiums across Okinawa, most of which are free to watch. Some stadiums are close to U.S. military facilities. The Japanese teams don't have an Aaron Judge or Mike Trout on their rosters, but players like Ryan Cook or Norichika Aoki might ring a bell to MLB fans. The weather is getting better, so why not get out and enjoy some baseball while it lasts.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



NPB Teams on Okinawa

CENTRAL LEAGUE



Hiroshima Toyo Carp

DATES: Feb. 15 – Feb. 26
LOCATION: Koza Shinkin Stadium (near Kadena Air Base and Camp Foster, GPS Coordinates: N 26.333087, E 127.790218)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 14, 20

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Kris Johnson (P), Johnny Hellweg (P), Casey Lawrence (P)



Tokyo Yakult Swallows

DATES: Feb. 1 – Feb. 26
LOCATION: ANA BALL PARK a.k.a. Urasoe Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Camp Kinser, GPS Coordinates: N 26.251310, E 127.723570)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 5, 12, 19

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: David Buchanan (P), Albert Suarez (P), Dave Huff (P), Wladimir Balentien (OF), Norichika Aoki (OF)



Yokohama DeNA Bay Stars

DATES: Feb. 1 - Feb. 27 (First team); Feb. 1 – Feb. 26 (Farm)

LOCATION: Ginowan Municipal Baseball Stadium (First team, near Camp Foster and MCAS Futenma, inside of Ginowan Seaside Park, GPS Coordinates: N 26.282497, E 127.737381)

Kadena Town Baseball Stadium (Farm, near Kadena Air Base and Torii Station, GPS Coordinates: N 26.369679, E 127.770183)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 6, 12, 18, 22 (First team); Feb. 7, 12, 16, 21 (Farm)

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Spencer Patton (P), Jose Lopez (1B, 3B), Neftalí Soto (1B, 2B, OF)



Chunichi Dragons

DATES: Feb. 1 – Feb. 27 (First team); Feb. 1 – Mar. 28 (Farm)

LOCATION: Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (First team, near Kadena Air Base and Camp Foster, GPS Coordinates: N 26.311735, E 127.758349); Heiwa no Mori Baseball Stadium (Farm, near Torii Station, GPS Coordinates: N 26.397382, E 127.745814)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 6, 13, 20

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Daisuke Matsuzaka (P), Dayan Viciedo (1B, OF), Enny Romero (P), Joely Rodriguez (P), Zoilo Almonte (OF), Steven Moya (OF, 1B)



Yomiuri Giants

DATES: Feb. 13 – Feb. 28

LOCATION: Okinawa Cellular Stadium (near Naha military port, GPS Coordinates: N 26.203543, E 127.672991)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 18, 22

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Scott Mathieson (P), Ryan Cook (P), Christian Villanueva (3B), Taylor Jungmann (P), Alex Guerrero (OF), Hisashi Iwakuma (P)



Hanshin Tigers

DATES: Feb. 1 – Feb. 27

LOCATION: Kariyushi Hotels Ball Park Ginoza (near Camp Schwab and Hansen, GPS Coordinates: N 26.484100, E 127.973340)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 4, 8, 13, 18, 22

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Randy Messenger (P), Pierce Johnson (P), Jefry Marté (1B, 3B, OF), Rafael Dolis (P), Efen Navarro (1B, OF), Kyuji Fujikawa (P)

PACIFIC LEAGUE



Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters

DATES: Feb. 15 – 25 (First Team); Feb. 1 – 23 (Farm)

LOCATION: Nago Shiei Baseball Field (First team, near Camp Schwab, GPS Coordinates: N 26.593055, E 127.966972), Akeomi Sky Dome (First team, near Camp Schwab, GPS Coordinates: N 26.592751, E 127.963803), Kaigin Stadium Kunigami (Farm, GPS Coordinates: N 26.726975, E 128.162014)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 18, 22 (First Team) Feb. 4, 9, 15 20 (Farm)

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS ON THE SQUAD: Nick Martinez (P), Justin Hancock (P), Johnny Barbato (P)



Chiba Lotte Marines

DATES: Feb. 1 – Feb. 11 (First team); Feb. 1- 21 (Farm)

LOCATION: Ishigaki City Chuo Athletic Park Baseball Stadium (GPS Coordinates: N 24.345124, E 124.171505)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 6 (First team); Feb. 6, 12, 18 (Farm)

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Mike Bolsinger (P), Josh Ravin (P)



Tohoku Rakuten Eagles

DATES: Feb. 1 – 9 (Kumejima Island), Feb. 11- 21 (Kin Town)

LOCATION: Kumejima Island Baseball Stadium (GPS Coordinates: N 26.349624, E 126.734652); Nakazato Baseball Stadium (GPS Coordinates: N 26.336017, E 126.813090); Kin Town Baseball Stadium (near Camp Hansen, GPS Coordinates: N 26.462516, E 127.941525)

DAYS OFF: Feb. 5, 15

NOTABLE FORMER MLB PLAYERS: Frank Herrmann (P), Zelous Wheeler (OF, 1B, 3B), Jabari Blash (OF), Alan Busenitz (P)

Practice games

FEB. 11

Dragons vs. Hanwha Eagles (KPB) @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Kadena), 1 p.m.

FEB. 12

Dragons vs. KIA Tigers (KPB) @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Kadena), 1 p.m.

FEB. 13

BayStars vs. Marines @ Ginowan Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Futenma), 1 p.m.

FEB. 14

Dragons vs. Marines @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Kadena), 1 p.m.

FEB. 16

Dragons (Farm) vs. Hanwha Eagles (KPB) @ Heiwa no Mori Baseball Stadium (near Torii), 1 p.m.

Swallows vs. BayStars @ ANA BALL PARK a.k.a. Urasoe Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Kinser), 0:30 p.m.

FEB. 17

Dragons vs. Swallows @ ANA BALL PARK a.k.a. Urasoe Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Kinser), 1 p.m.

Giants vs. BayStars @ Okinawa Cellular Stadium (near Naha Military Port), 0:30 p.m.

FEB. 18

Dragons vs. Hanwha Eagles (KPB) @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Camp Foster and Kadena Air Base), 1 p.m.

FEB. 19

Dragons (Farm) vs. BayStars @ Heiwa no Mori Baseball Stadium (near Torii), 1 p.m.

FEB. 20

BayStars vs. Marines @ Ginowan Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Futenma), 1 p.m.

FEB. 21

Dragons (Farm) vs. Hanwha Eagles (KPB) @ Heiwa no Mori Baseball Stadium (near Torii Station), 1 p.m.

Swallows vs. BayStars @ ANA BALL PARK a.k.a. Urasoe Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Kinser), 0:30 p.m.

FEB. 22

Dragons vs. Samsung Lions (KPB) @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Kadena), 1 p.m.

BayStars (Farm) vs. Hanwha Eagles (KPB) @ Ginowan Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Futenma), 1 p.m.

FEB. 25

Dragons (Farm) vs. BayStars @ Heiwa no Mori Baseball Stadium (near Torii), 1 p.m.

FEB. 26

BayStars vs. KIA Tigers (KPB) @ Ginowan Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Futenma), 0:30 p.m.

Giants vs. Dragons @ Okinawa Cellular Stadium (near Naha Military Port), 0:30 p.m.

Spring Training games

FEB. 23

Dragons vs. BayStars @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Kadena), 1 p.m.

Swallows vs. Tigers @ ANA BALL PARK a.k.a. Urasoe Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Kinser), 1 p.m.

Giants vs. Eagles @ Okinawa Cellular Stadium (near Naha Military Port), 1 p.m.

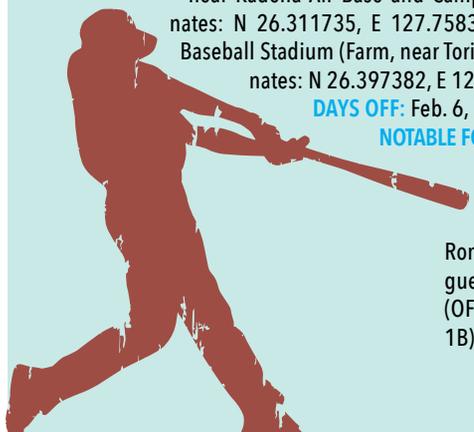
FEB. 24

BayStars vs. Carp @ Ginowan Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Futenma), 1 p.m.

Dragons vs. Tigers @ Chatan Park Baseball Stadium (near Foster and Kadena), 1 p.m.

Swallows vs. Eagles @ ANA BALL PARK a.k.a. Urasoe Municipal Baseball Stadium (near Kinser), 1 p.m.

Giants vs. Fighters @ Okinawa Cellular Stadium (near Naha Military Port), 1 p.m.



Every year, humpback whales migrate to the temperate waters near Okinawa to give birth to their calves.



Warm winter waters off the coast of Okinawa draw whales, watchers

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AYA ICHIHASHI, STARS AND STRIPES
Published: Jan. 17, 2019

The Kerama Islands are only about 25 miles from Naha — just an hour-long ferry ride away. But, during the winter season, the waters surrounding the small group of islands might as well be a world away from the hustle and bustle of Okinawa's largest city, as the area transforms into one of the best whale-watching spots in the world.

Every year, humpback whales migrate to the temperate waters near Okinawa to give birth to their calves. For those interested in seeing these massive mammals up close, several whale-watching tours are offered throughout the winter season. (The whale-watching season runs through early April.)

The best way to take a whale-watching tour is to take a high-speed ferry from Naha to one of the Kerama Islands (which can cost up to 5,970 yen, or about \$55, roundtrip for adults) and to then choose a tour operator upon arrival. I opted to head to Zamami Island, where I signed up for an excursion offered by the Zamami Whale Watching Association.



The best way to spot a whale is to look for the streams of water the whales expel from their blowholes, as they look like fountains shooting out from the ocean.

your excursion, as the waters can be quite choppy.

After checking in, visitors are given a short introduction to humpback whales, but the presentation is conducted in Japanese. Once aboard, the designated whale searchers on the boat's crew scan the waters and guide the boat captains to nearby pods of whales.

The best way to spot a whale is to look for the spouts of warm air that the whales expel from their blowholes as they exhale — the spouts look like fountains shooting up from the ocean.

Another easy way to spot whales is to find ones that are

breaching or slapping their tails on the water's surface.

After disappearing into the water, it could be anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes before the whale surfaces again.

A pod of mothers and calves is much easier to watch, as the calves cannot remain submerged for long. Because of this, the young whales usually hang out near the surface of the water and are more visible to whale watchers.

On one whale-watching excursion, I once saw a mother whale teaching her calf how to breach by leaping from the water. It was one of my favorite memories in 11 years of living on Okinawa.

Several years ago, I had another close encounter with a mother whale and her calf as they swam beneath the boat. The whales

were so close that I could see the barnacles on the mother whale's skin.

After your whale-watching excursion, take the local bus (300 yen for adults) from the port to Furuzamami Beach, one of the most popular beaches on the island. Furuzamami was voted the best beach



A variety of operators, including the Zamami Whale Watching Association, offer whale watching excursions near Okinawa.

in Japan on TripAdvisor and has two stars from the renowned Michelin Guide.

The waters of Furuzamami Beach are relatively warm in winter, reaching about 68 degrees Fahrenheit — so it is nice enough to dip your feet in or snorkel, if you bring your own gear. There are few local restaurants on Zamami Island, and the information desk at

the port is always happy to offer recommendations.

To see a whale up close is a rare opportunity, and many enthusiasts travel great distances hoping to catch a glimpse. But on Okinawa, world-class whale-watching in the winter is only a short ferry ride away.

ichihashi.aya@stripes.com



OKINAWA WHALE WATCHING

COSTS: Prices for whale watching excursions vary based on the company and length of the tour. Individuals should also factor in the cost of the ferry to an excursion's departure point if not purchasing a tour that departs directly from Naha. The Zamami Whale Watching Association's tour, which departs from Zamami Island, costs 6,000 yen (or about \$55) for adults and 3,000 yen for children.

INFORMATION: zwwa.okinawa/englishinformation

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The waters of Furuzamami Beach are relatively warm in winter, reaching about 68 degrees Fahrenheit — so it is nice enough to dip your feet in or snorkel, if you bring your own gear.

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It's Pixar playtime at Tokyo Disney Sea

STORY AND PHOTO BY KIM B, JAPAN TRAVEL

Your favorite characters are back for another celebration of Pixar stories this winter at Tokyo Disney Sea. This limited-time, Pixar-themed event "Pixar Playtime" is running now until March 25th.

"Pixar Playtime Pals" show returns to the center stage at the Mediterranean Harbor, featuring characters from "Toy Story," "Incredibles," "Finding Nemo," as well as an appearance by those from "Monsters Inc.," "Brave," "Up," "Ratatouille," and "Inside Out." Pixar takes over the park with various entertainment programs, including Lightning McQueen's

"Victory Lap" around the American Waterfront area, and Remy's pop-up restaurant performance.

Pixar turns the park into a massive board game, and will probably make you wonder if you are in fact, a toy.

Also be sure to check out the Pixar-themed souvenirs and food menu, only available during the event.

Until March 20th, the Tower of Terror ride is revamped with special effects and drops patterns for a limited time. Guests are invited to Hotel Hightower for a tour to discover the secrets of Shiriki Utundu, a cursed idol responsible for the disappearance of Harrison Hightower. Remember not to look at him in the eyes.

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AFN launches audience survey

AFN PACIFIC

YOKOTA AIR BASE – American Forces Network Pacific has launched an online survey to measure audience size and use of its TV, radio and social media services.

AFN-Pacific Commander Air Force Lt. Col. Eric Badger says the survey will help focus the network's efforts to better serve its audience of more than 160,000 military members, Department of Defense and other U.S. government civilians, and family members in the Pacific region.

"The news, sports and entertainment programming we

deliver provides our audience members a touch of home while also helping connect commanders with their community members," Badger said. "This survey empowers our audience to help us determine if our current efforts are effective."

The 2019 AFN Pacific Audience Survey, which takes less than five minutes to complete, is open through Feb. 15 and can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9FB9MWG> or by scanning the survey's QR code.

A link to the survey is also posted to all AFN Pacific Facebook pages.



Stripes Sports Trivia

Being the Robin to a team's Batman can seem like a slight. When it comes to the Michael Jordan Bulls, Robin was an all-time great and Basketball Hall of Famer named Scottie Pippen. Few remember that Pippen, the No. 5 pick, was traded to the Bulls for Olden Polynice on draft day. Which team made the ill-fated trade?

Answer

Seattle SuperSonics

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DID YOU KNOW?

For Japanese, Guam is one of the most popular overseas tourism and wedding destinations. More than 900,000 Japanese visit the island, which is more than 70 percent of all visitors each year. Two-night tour packages to Guam are cheap and the three-and-a-half-hour flight from Japan alleviates the typical jetlag.

Kanji of the week

花

hana/ka (Flower)

Language Lesson

It's wonderful.

Subarashii desu.

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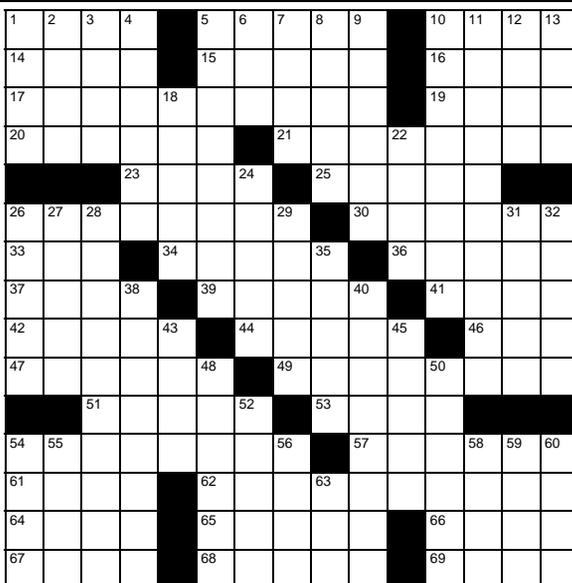
STARS AND STRIPES

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Pageant title
- 5 Gothenburg native
- 10 Party thrower
- 14 Workout woe
- 15 Like candles or crayons
- 16 Quite fond of
- 17 Work against
- 19 Den denizen
- 20 Call for
- 21 It may be arranged
- 23 Baby powder ingredient
- 25 Baker's need
- 26 Luxury Chrysler until 1993
- 30 Bivouac
- 33 Scand. land
- 34 Void, as a marriage
- 36 Homework helper?
- 37 Divisible by 2
- 39 Doomed one
- 41 iPhone assistant
- 42 Send to a specialist
- 44 Belly button
- 46 Restroom sign
- 47 Bone-boring tool
- 49 Replant timber
- 51 Befitting a king
- 53 Courtroom request
- 54 Out of control
- 57 Drink of the gods
- 61 Musical based on "La boheme"
- 62 Like some tumors
- 64 Unit of measure
- 65 More eccentric
- 66 Bratty talk
- 67 Genealogy diagram
- 68 Repulsive
- 69 Pony's gait



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- 2 Computer symbol
- 3 Word with up or down
- 4 It has 100 seats
- 5 Sign of an injury
- 6 Theme of the 1968 movie "Where Eagles Dare"
- 7 Final, e.g.
- 8 Tooth trouble
- 9 Salad follower
- 10 Flower used in herbal teas
- 11 "Wait your turn!"
- 12 Guys-only party
- 13 Pulled apart
- 18 Coronet
- 22 Carry on
- 24 Big name in cameras
- 26 Lifeless
- 27 Bekins worker
- 28 First choice
- 29 Like some calendars
- 31 Societal norms

- 32 Out of _____
- 35 Pivoting bar
- 38 Ancient drug for grief
- 40 Petroleum plant
- 43 Temper tantrum
- 45 Successful dieter
- 48 UN member
- 50 Get a new actor for
- 52 Lavin or Blair
- 54 Worry
- 55 Derriere
- 56 New England fishes
- 58 Ski lift
- 59 Moreover
- 60 Staff symbol
- 63 Parrot or puppy

Answers to Last Week's Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Easy

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

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:

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

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MY FAVES Mainland destinations

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES OKINAWA

The Land of Rising Sun is home to many amazing tourist attractions. You may have been told to visit Kyoto and Nara, or an MWR tour may already have taken you on a trip to Mount Fuji.

According to travel comparison site Travelko, the most popular traveler's destinations within Japan (as of autumn 2017) include Tokyo Disneyland, Sapporo (Hokkaido), Kyoto, Hakata (Kumamoto), Naha (Okinawa) and Osaka.

Although I can't argue with the rankings, these sightseeing spots are often extremely crowded with domestic and international tourists. Looking for a hotel room or parking in these areas? It's usually tough and often comes with a high price tag.

If you want to enjoy one-day trip near your location in a relaxing and less-crowded atmosphere, why don't you try the following attractions, instead? I've visited them several times and see them as great places to enjoy an easy one-day trip. Visit them and you'll find out why!

■ KAWAGOE (Kanto Plain)

Called "Koedo" (little Edo), streets lined with traditional clay-walled warehouses, a three-tiered bell tower, a majestic castle and numerous Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples make the town a highlight of eastern Japan. The historic town can be reached in only a couple of hours by car or train from any of the U.S. military installations in the Kanto Plain, making it an ideal destination for a day trip. The town is very tourist-friendly, with its main attractions, such as Kawagoe Castle, classical fire observation tower and "Candy Street," centrally located and close together. A free parking lot caters to visitors and tourist information centers are located everywhere, providing a variety of invaluable background on the town, including free sightseeing maps. The classic-looking Koedo Kawagoe Loop Bus also enables tourists to access most of the sights quickly and easily with guides available in English, Japanese and Chinese.

■ NAMAMUGI (Kanto Plain)

Namamugi is home to Soji-ji temple, one of the largest and busiest in Japan. Each of its 26 buildings, such as Buddha hall, bell tower and main hall has a unique majestic look with traditional tile roofs and elaborate black wooden walls. Namamugi Uogashi Dori (literally, fish market street) is filled with countless fish shops where you can buy fresh seafood. The street is very busy from 6 to 10 a.m. The town also has a Kirin Brewery that you can tour and get a free tasting at the end. The beer is fresh and very tasty, and a staffer will teach you the perfect way to pour canned beer into a glass.

■ SHUZENJI (Camp Fuji)

Situated in the hilly center of the Izu peninsula, the town offers hot spring resorts, open-air bathes on a river bank, elegant Japanese bridges, classical gray-tiled inns and pristine, yet charming temples and shrines. Shuzenji Onsen

is considered the oldest of its kind in the Eastern Japan and is listed as one of the nation's greatest 100 hot springs. All the hot water in town comes from a hot spring in the middle of the river. Shuzenji is one of the best places to check out the gorgeous autumn colors in late November. The colors are great, but the town has year-round appeal.

■ KUROISHI (Misawa)

A two-hour drive west from Misawa AB gets you to Kuroishi, an attractive city that is home to impressive streets filled in traditional wooden arcades, an abundance of hot springs, a craft art museum and Inn of Lamps in a pristine forest. As the name indicates, this impressive hot spring relies solely on light produced from its lamps. Situated deep in the valley, it sure will offer you a surreal, quiet and serene bathing experience. Tsugaru Kokeshi-kan Museum displayed countless Kokeshi dolls, charming wooden folk craft dolls widely produced in Tohoku (northeastern) region of Japan. Walking down Nakamachi Komise Street is fun, as it is home to sake breweries, tasty restaurants, souvenir shops and live music.

■ HIMEJI (Iwakuni)

Anyone wishing to experience an air of Japan's traditional and elegant past should consider visiting Himeji in Hyogo Prefecture. A three-and-a-half-hour drive from MCAS Iwakuni brings you to this quiet, calm and conservative city that harkens back to its old-world roots. The streets are filled with old-fashioned eateries and clothing stores as well as countless souvenir shops catering to tourists drawn to the 400-year-old Himeji Castle. The castle is one of a very few to have remained standing after World War II. There are many volunteer guides on hand, some that speak English. In addition to the historic landmark, Himeji offers visitors a classic Japanese garden, Koko-en, and a decent zoo. In all, Himeji not only impress you with the majesty and elegance of traditional Japan, it will give you new memories that will last a lifetime.

■ HIRADO (Sasebo)

The exotic look created by traditional Japanese homes shadowed by gothic-style cathedrals and a Dutch Trading Post with stone port facilities, makes Hirado a great attraction on the Western island of Kyushu. Fortunately, Hirado is only a 40-minute drive from Sasebo Naval Base. You can check out majestic Hirado Castle, which gives you a good view of the whole town and harbor against a backdrop of blue sea and the Mutsura Peninsula. The Dutch Bridge is Hirado's signature stone-made arch bridge over the river between the castle and downtown. The main street is lined with shops, restaurants and cafes housed in traditional Japanese buildings. Walking up a sloping stone path to the Hirado Church, you will encounter a very impressive view of the spire and cross of another Catholic church in combination with the traditional Japanese tiled roofs and grave stones of Komyoji and Zuionji temples.

