Obiriner Students Head Out to North America

Although many Obirin students have studied in North America over the years, the first I remember is Akihiro Gotoh, now General Manager of the Finance and Accounting Center at Obirin. In 1981, Akihiro was our first Junior Year Abroad student to go to Oberlin College in Ohio. Since then, many others have followed in his footsteps – on Junior/Sophomore Year Abroad, semester programs, and short-term programs during vacations. For many it is an experience that changed their lives, gave them a focus for their future, taught them independence, helped them understand diversity, improved their English and their knowledge of their chosen field of study, or was just fun.

It has been an honor for me to be part of that endeavor in the 1980s and now again thirty years later. Seeing the faces of students I met at the airport last week full of excitement but also trepidation is what makes this job special and worthwhile.

We hope you enjoy the photos of some of the groups that arrived in August. Junior/Sophomore Year Abroad students arrived individually at their schools, but groups also arrived for four summer programs in North America: volunteer internships in San Francisco, California; company internships in Torrance, California; UCLA English summer school in Los Angeles, California; and University of Victoria summer school in Victoria, British Columbia.

—Maria Domoto
Executive Director, OGFA
Miyoko Hirabayashi, Obirin Junior College Class of ‘69 English Major

Miyoko Hirabayashi has many fond memories of Obirin’s founder Yasuzo Shimizu. A student in the 1960s, she was fortunate to have many opportunities to hear his stories and learn from him. Even 45 years later, those memories are vividly alive and positively influence her. She still recalls her entrance ceremony when Shimizu-sensei said: “You don’t have to call me president. Call me Yatt-san! In this school there are students from all over the country, even from overseas. All of you come from different cultures, with different skills, academic backgrounds, and personalities. You might not be better than someone else, but each of you has a special gift. Schools shouldn’t gather only smart students. You might have a kind heart, play music or sports, or have some other special gift. This world is made of many kinds of people. School is the same. Make many friends. Travel around the world and stay in a friend’s house, not a hotel. Expand your circle of friends around the world. Obirin does not have a fence around the campus. I have it open so anyone can come in freely.”

According to Miyoko, Shimizu-sensei “taught us to search for our special something, let it grow and flourish, and look at everything in life as a learning opportunity.” He created Obirin culture and his spirit is still alive in today’s Obirin.

While at Obirin, Miyoko played in the guitar club. The club’s first engagement was at a concert hall in Shinjuku. The guitar instructor was Osuke Ito, a leading Japanese guitarist. Miyoko’s fellow club member Rutsuko Honda went on to become a professional vocalist. Miyoko later learned the concert Master of Ceremonies was a student named Toyoshi Satow, now President and Chair of Obirin.

In 1976, Miyoko moved to the U.S. and was surprised to meet classmates living in Los Angeles. Decades later, they still get together. “We talk about many things, but everyone agrees that we really went to a great school. We feel every word that Shimizu-sensei left us. His spirit is alive in those of us living abroad. His lessons from long ago are still valuable today.”

After moving to the U.S., Miyoko earned her real estate license, studying at night while working at a bank. When she was discouraged and wanted to quit, she remembered Shimizu-sensei’s words: “Don’t give up. If you seek, there’s always a path open somewhere.” That helped her to stay on track. While in the real estate business, she served people with various ethnic backgrounds and in spite of challenges in values and thinking she has become a better person through those encounters. She hopes that the next generation of Obiriners will see more of the world with their own eyes, listen to others, embrace their own opinions, and always respect the good things represented in Japanese culture while learning about other cultures.

Miiro Koda in internship program in Torrance, CA with homestay children.

仕事はやって慣れてきました。忙しいですが楽しいです。私は子供が苦手でしたが今ではパズルなどと一緒に遊んでいます。とても可愛いです。ホームステイも仕事も毎日楽しくてアメリカに来て良かったです。

Naomi Hosaka (left) with friends in the American English Program at UCLA

英語で主に会話する様になり様々な問題もありますか、友達に交えてもらい楽しく過ごしています。私たちがLAにいるのはわずかな期間ですが、何の為にこの留学プログラムに参加したのかその目的を忘れる事無く、失敗も成功も出来るだけ経験していきたいと思います。

Obirin group studying in Victoria, Canada

皆ビクトリアでの生活に慣れホストファミリーとも毎日楽しく過ごしています。大学では午前中に授業、午後はアクティビティと充実した日々を送っています。残り数週間と短い期間ですが、それぞれの目標に向かって頑張っていきたいと思います。
Scott Saylor
Oberlin ’02
Shansi ’02-'04

Scott is a freelance Japanese-to-English translator living in San Francisco. Although his specialties are chemistry, pharmaceuticals, and general medicine, he also does legal translations and whatever his clients request.

Scott started Japanese when he was 14 years old. He saw his sister writing hiragana and thought it would be cool to write in a different language. From that moment he became “hooked” on the idea of learning Japanese, so at age 15 he became an exchange student at Keio High School in Tokyo. He also studied at Waseda University and Kansai Gaigo University.

With those experiences under his belt, Scott didn’t have much difficulty as a Shansi fellow. “Obirin was a very welcoming, cheerful place. Students were very friendly and professors in the ELP and other programs were very kind. I noticed that students were very involved in extra-curricular clubs, which I thought was great.” Though he thought Obirin didn’t look that much different from universities in the U.S., he was surprised at how many students had part-time jobs.

While teaching English at Obirin, Scott pursued his own interests: the Japanese medical system and the Japanese language. After surviving an additional year on his own in Tokyo, he went back to the U.S., where he received an MA in Japanese Translation and Localization Management from the Monterey Institute.

He describes translation as “harsh”: “You need to figure things out within the context of the client’s industry and look for hidden meanings, dialogue, or stories in the original documents that are not obvious in the text. You need to be sure not to send wrong information. To be successful, you need to translate an average of 3000 words into English a day.” He works until late at night to make client deadlines, but has improved his skills with each job. He loves Tokyo (even in the rainy season!) and looks forward to living there someday again.

If anyone needs professional Japanese-to-English translation, here’s Scott’s website:
https://sites.google.com/site/tusk79translation/home
Ted Conrad
Reconnaissance
Japan ’91-’92
Western Washington
University ’94

Ted is a financial manager and part owner of a freight forwarding company in Seattle, WA. His interest in Japan and its culture started with “Star Blazers,” an American TV adaptation of the Japanese anime, “Space Battleship Yamato,” which he watched when he was a little boy. “I absolutely loved that show! In school I would draw lots of pictures of the Argo (Yamato) instead of paying attention to the teacher,” he recalls.

Later he read the book Shogun by James Clavell, which became a popular TV miniseries. He became even more fascinated with Japanese culture as a result. So he enrolled in the RJ program to learn the language and culture. He remembers the RJ program as having a good balance of Japanese language courses and business and culture classes. While busy studying, Scott enjoyed exploring Japan with his classmates, people whom he would never have been able to meet had he not attended the RJ program. He recalls, “We discovered Japan together and had a great time doing it.”

“My homestay family was in Chigasaki, and it took me quite a while to commute to school. One bike, two trains, and a bus! About an hour and a half. It seems so long now, but you adjust and it becomes normal. I would spend my time sleeping or reading books. Doesn’t sound so bad now!”

Even more meaningful was that he met his future wife Michiru at Obirin. She was an Obirin student and his classmate at the time.

“It was a wonderful experience to have at that age! My eyes were open to a different culture and a different way of thinking, that has certainly enhanced my life.” Scott still loves Japanese animation and would like to live in Japan again sometime in the future. “The RJ program offered me the opportunity and the structure to make it all happen,” he says. The battleship Yamato brought him to Obirin, which gave him a positive impression he will keep for the rest of his life.

RJ／考察日本プログラムの終了式
桜美林大学に短期留学している RJ／考察日本プログラムの留学生の終了式が 7 月 29 日、前原堂チャペルで行われました。この夏でプログラムを終了する留学生 51 人のうち 27 人が終了式に参加し、一人一人に終了証で手渡されました。終了生を代表して、中国の Zheng Danyang さんとタイの Jutamat Wongsa さんが日本での思い出ことなどをスピーチし、後、和田明広国際センター長は「桜美林大学で学んだみなさんは家族です。日本にはあなたたちの家があり、家族がいます。またいつでも帰ってきてください」とお祝いの言葉を贈りました。秋学期に新規で来日する留学生は 47 人、合計で 68 人の短期留学生が在籍する予定です。

桜美林大学のウェブサイトをリニューアルしました。
今回のリニューアルでは情報の種類を明確にして、よりアクセスしやすいよう対象者別にサイトを大きく 3 つに分けました。
1) 大学の教育についての情報 本体サイト：
http://www.obirin.ac.jp/
2) 在学生、卒業生、保護者向けの情報 オペリンナーサイト：http://obiriner.obirin.ac.jp/
3) 入試に関する情報 受験生サイト：
http://admissions.obirin.ac.jp/
今までのサイトと比べ、動画なども多く掲載しています。ぜひ一度アクセスしてみてください。