



# Sports & Activities



## Sumo Wrestling

In spite of the popularity of baseball, sumo remains the traditional national sport of Japan. Descended from religious rituals performed at village Shinto shrines, sumo today is a highly competitive sport practiced by skilled and very big athletes; it is also a highly organized business.

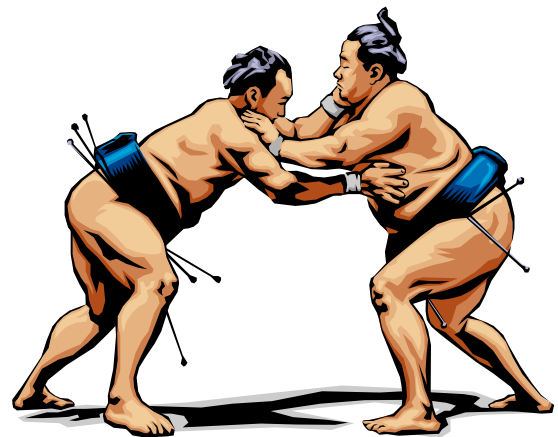
For an introduction to sumo, watch the bouts on television, but you may want to see at least one day's bouts in person. Grand sumo tournaments are held six times a year – in Tokyo in January, May and September; Osaka in March; Nagoya in July; and Fukuoka in November. Tournaments last fifteen days, Sunday through Sunday. Television coverage (NHK Channel 1) begins at 3pm in the afternoon and runs through the last bout at 6pm (on some days, broadcast may not begin until 3:30). From 3pm until 4pm you will see juryo division wrestlers (lower upper division). Then, at 4pm the upper division (makuuchi) wrestlers, wearing colorful, heavily embroidered “aprons” enter the ring in an elaborate ceremony. If there are grand champions (yokozuna) participating, they enter the ring in individual ceremonies. After a 20-minute delay for the wrestlers to change, the upper division matches begin.

Sumo is wrestling – accompanied by strict ritual and with an equally strict code of behavior – and the upper-ranked wrestlers are big men. They weigh from 300 – 550 pounds and average about 6 feet tall. Do not be fooled by their bulk and trademark large stomachs – these men are superb athletes, very strong, tough, and surprisingly agile and quick.

Bouts take place on the dohyo, a raised platform of stamped earth, approximately 20 feet square. Embedded in the earth of the dohyo are bundles of rice straw forming a circle approximately 15 feet in diameter. The wrestlers face off several times in the center of the dohyo. After a certain amount of ritual, the referee signals them to wrestle. They take a stance similar to a football lineman and charge at each other. Matches last from a few seconds to almost three minutes; the average match is over in less than 30 seconds. The loser is the first wrestler who touches the earth with anything except the soles of his feet or who touches the earth outside the circle of rice straw bundles.

While the wrestling match itself is worth watching, it is the accompanying ritual which makes sumo uniquely Japa-

nese and somewhat mysterious. The dohyo is considered sacred ground; a purification ceremony precedes each tourney. Only wrestlers and officials may step on it and no one else may even touch it. (This restriction is lifted at the end of each tourney for the awards ceremony when representatives of embassies and sponsoring companies and associations troop onto the dohyo to award trophies, banners, and other prizes to the winner. To date, however, women are still prohibited from having contact with dohyo.) The referee's garb is based on the dress of a Shinto priest. The wrestlers enter the ring and perform the same ceremonies as those used when entering temple grounds – purifying the mouth with a sip of water, clapping hands to alert the Gods to your presence, and bowing respectfully.



### The Wrestlers

There are no free agents in sumo. Each wrestler belongs to a *heya*, or stable, and wrestlers stay with one stable their entire career. (Most stables are located close to the arena in Tokyo. If you go to the area, particularly when there is not a tourney in progress, you can wander the streets around the stables and look inside to watch the daily practice ses-



sions.) Life in sumo is based on strict hierarchy. While this may seem stifling, it has its own freedom because a wrestler's position is based strictly on performance – winners move up, losers are demoted (except for grand champions who, if they begin to lose consistently, retire). Young men entering a stable start at the lowest rank (except for successful college wrestlers who may start at a middle rank).

The lower ranks do the cooking, cleaning and all other menial tasks, wear the simplest cotton kimonos, wait upon the upper rankers, and do not eat until everyone else is finished. Along with this near-servitude, they must endure a physically and mentally demanding training regimen. Many drop out, but those who stay and win are promoted, have lower-ranking wrestlers assigned to wait on them, and gain the privileges that come with rank. The upper division, *makuuchi*, has five ranks and the next lower division, *juryo*, has one rank. Promotion to *juryo* is a difficult step because the number of wrestlers in *juryo* and *makuuchi* divisions are controlled; if no *juryo* wrestler is demoted, there simply is not a position available. (Centuries ago, champion wrestlers were called *seki*, or barrier. Defeating all of one's opponents was known as *seki o toru* – taking the barrier. Today, upon promotion to *juryo*, wrestlers are called *sekitori*.) In *makuuchi*, the highest rank is *yokozuna*, or grand champion. The next lower rank is the *ozeki* (junior champion), then some *sekiwake*, *komusubi*, and *mae-gashira*. The sport's ruling body, the Sumo Association, maintains two wrestlers with the rank of *ozeki*, *sekiwake*, and *komusubi* (one each East and West) and 30 *maegashira* (15 East and 15 West, ranked *maegashira* 1 through 15). For each tournament, the wrestlers are divided into East and West groupings, half the wrestlers on each side. While the Eastern positions traditionally are more prestigious, this division today is more symbolic than anything else.

Upon entering sumo, a wrestler adopts a professional name – his *shikona*. The *shikona* may be based on the wrestler's home (Kitanoumi, "northern sea", is from the Sea of Meiregion of Hokkaido). A wrestler may borrow part of his *shikona* from an important coach or mentor. Another common practice is for the stablemaster to give each wrestler a *shikona* incorporating characters from that stable's name or names of previous wrestlers.

Wrestlers are self-supporting until they reach *juryo* at which time they are paid salaries by the Sumo Association. Because they spend all their time in the stable, unsalaried wrestlers depend mainly on family support. In 1992, *juryo* wrestlers were paid \$5,000 per month, *maegashira* \$6,000, *sekiwake* and *komusubi* \$8,000, while *yokozuna* made over \$13,000 monthly. This, of course, did not include gifts and endorsements.

### Before a Bout

As the *makuuchi* division wrestlers enter the ring at 4pm each day, they enter by side, East and West, and by rank – the first to enter is the number 15 *maegashira*, the last is that side's *ozeki*. The *yokozuna* enters the ring individually in a special ceremony, each day. After all wrestlers have entered the ring, they face inward, raise their arms, clap hands in unison, raise their aprons a couple of inches, then leave the ring the same way they entered. These motions simulate those used

upon entering a temple grounds: raising the arms shows you have no concealed weapons, clapping hands signifies spirits and bodies are purified, and hitching up the apron frightens away evil spirits as well as signifying a wrestler's intention to win the match.

When the time arrives for a bout to begin, the referee for that bout enters the ring as does a minor official who announces in a falsetto, stylized voice, the names of the two wrestlers. The referee makes the same announcement and the wrestlers step onto the *dohyo*. They face each other, stamp their feet, slap themselves on the thighs, raise their arms, and clap hands in a prescribed ritual after which they move to respective corners of the *dohyo*. Each wrestler squats and is given a dipper of water (*chikara mizu*: water of strength); he rinses his mouth, spits out the water and wipes his mouth with a small napkin (*chikara gami* – strength paper). Each wrestler then takes a handful of salt from a basket at the corner, turns toward the center of the ring, and tosses the salt onto the ring. The two wrestlers then enter the ring, face each other, bend down into the starting position, glare at each other, and repeat the process of going to the corner, stamping feet, and tossing salt. Meanwhile, two attendants are methodically sweeping inside the ring and the area immediately outside the rice ring. The purpose of this ritual is to purify the ring (salt and sweeping), frighten away evil spirits (stamping feet, clapping hands), and purify the wrestlers (water). Sweeping around the outside of the rice bundles also has a practical purpose – the official can look at the swept surface for a footprint indicating that a wrestler has stepped outside the ring.

After several face-offs, the referee signals that the bout is to begin. The wrestlers toss one more handful of salt and are offered a final sip of water. They then move to the center of the ring and face off in a squatting position. A wrestler must touch the ground with both hands before charging – the touch can be very fast. The wrestlers charge and grapple. Of the 48 sumo techniques to throw an opponent, many involve getting a grip on the opponent's *mawashi* (the diaper-like sash which is the only garment worn while wrestling) and throwing him, while other throws resemble judo tosses. One wrestler simply drives a shoulder into his opponent and forces him out by brute strength.

At first, it may seem as though anything goes. Wrestlers slap each other in the face, thrust their hands into the opponent's throat, and generally attack aggressively. There is, however, some order and purpose in all this. Kicking your opponent, grabbing or pulling the hair, and hitting with a closed fist are prohibited. (Occasionally you will see one wrestler slap another and stun him – the *slappee* drops to the *dohyo*, dazed for an instant. That slap would probably break the neck of a normal person.) Wrestlers work to perfect offensive and defensive techniques and throws. And, at the end of the match, when the winner is announced, the move or technique by which he won is announced.

When one wrestler touches the ground or is forced out of the ring, the bout is over. The referee indicates the winner, the wrestlers bow to each other, the loser departs, and the winner's name is announced by the referee. From time to time, sponsors offer gifts of money or merchandise to the win-



ner of popular matches. In that case, the referee presents the winner with a stack of envelopes containing cash and prizes.

### Seeing Sumo in Person

On the surface, the preliminary rituals seem to have a sameness to them. They are not. Watch carefully during the preliminary rituals and you will see the personalities of the wrestlers. Some shake a little salt around their feet, others toss a handful into the ring. Some wrestlers taste the salt from their fingers. Some wrestlers glare and instigate a staring match, to which the crowd responds with cheers.

From time to time, both wrestlers hit the ground and a decision is too close to call. At this point, you will see the five judges - each former wrestlers, dressed in formal black and gray kimonos, seated stoically around the edge of the ring - rise from their seats, enter the dohyo, and talk it over. Actually, the chief judge is wired for communication with a booth where other officials study a videotaped replay to determine the winner. The chief judge is told the decision, the judges return to their seats, and the wrestlers - who have been waiting patiently off the dohyo - re-enter the ring to hear the chief judge announce the decision. If the outcome is too close to call, they will wrestle again, complete with preliminary salt-tossing, stamping, clapping, and glaring.

After watching a few tourneys on television, you must see one day's match live. Only in person can you appreciate the size and speed of the wrestlers and the accompanying pageantry. Be warned that tickets to the sumo tournaments are difficult to obtain. During the fifteen days of the tourney, matches start daily at 9:30am with the most junior wrestlers, winding up at 6pm when the *makuuchi* division finishes. General admission tickets go on sale at 8am for that day's matches; you may buy one ticket only (that is, if four of you want to go to sumo, all four must stand in line and each person must buy his/her own ticket); prices are ¥1,500-¥2,000 (1992). Your ticket is for a numbered seat which is yours all day. Once inside the

entrance gate, do not leave the arena grounds; you can't come back in. Tickets are easier to obtain early in the tourney on weekdays. I recommend arriving at the arena around 8am, Monday through Friday of the first week of the tournament. The Tokyo tournaments are the second and third full weeks in January, May and September at the Kuramae Kokugikan Hall. The Kokugikan arena is immediately beside the Ryogoku Station on the JR Sobu Line.

Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. You will get a general admission ticket which puts you in the upper rows. While there are no bad seats, some are better than others so you will want your camera with telephoto lens and your binoculars. Food and drink are permitted in the arena. You can buy food at the kiosks in the arena but if bentos are not your fare, take your lunch and snacks.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take the Chuo Line from Fussa, Ushihama, Haijima, or Akishima Stations and ride to Ochanomizu (second stop past Shinjuku, approximately one hour). At Ochanomizu, change to the Sobu Line (the yellow train on the other side of the platform) headed for Akihabara. Ryogoku is the third stop (after Akihabara and Asakusabashi). At Ryogoku Station, when you get off the train, look straight ahead and you will see the sumo arena. Turn left (the direction from which the train came) walk to the end of the platform, and take the steps down. Important: Buy your return ticket now - lines at the ticket machines are *very long* when the matches are over because everyone is trying to leave at the same time. (Reverse this process coming back. At Ryogoku, take the Sobu line toward Asakusabashi to Ochanomizu - 3 stops. From Ochanomizu, take an orange Chuo Line train to Takao (or Hachioji or Toyoda), getting off at Tachikawa. At Tachikawa, transfer to a train for Ome or Okutama, getting off at your original station.)

Exit the station and walk to the arena. At this point, do not stop to see the sights - get your admission ticket first. You will see tall colorful banners on bamboo poles - just beyond them on the right is the front entrance. The ticket booths are to the right and left of the entrance gates. Get in line and buy your ticket. At the ticket windows they will have English language schedules of the day's matches which list the wrestlers' *shikona* and their records to date in the tourney.

Before entering the gate, walk around the area. Among the fluttering banners (the characters on the banners are the names of wrestlers) you will see *banzuke*, a large piece of paper with a complicated mass of kanji written on it, posted on a wooden billboard. The *banzuke*, published two weeks before the tourney, announces the rankings for that tourney. You will also see a tall bamboo tower. Traditionally, drummers went through the streets announcing the start of the matches. Today, drummers play from this tower the first day and drumming is played through loudspeakers on the tower at the end of each day. Watch the crowds coming from the train station - you'll see lower-ranking wrestlers arriving by train. They wear the traditional cotton *yukata* and wooden clogs. If you walk back toward the train station, just past the tall banners you will see a driveway entrance which is used by the wrestlers. As the day goes on and the upper division wrestlers begin to enter, crowds gather at this entrance to get photographs and autographs. Ticket scalping is not permitted, but study the crowds on the sidewalk

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-Joe Schlatter



and you will spot a few men who would be right at home outside the Super Bowl, offering scarce tickets for many times the box office price.

Now that you have your admission ticket in hand, you may enter the arena whenever you wish. If you went early to get your ticket, you may want to do something else for a few hours, then return to the arena around 3pm to watch the upper division matches. Your ticket has a seat location on it. There are maps posted throughout the arena (in Japanese) or you should be able to find an attendant who will gladly lead you to your seat. Stands throughout the arena sell food and souvenirs. One popular souvenir is a name card; wrestlers slap their hand onto a big stamp pad of red ink, press their handprint onto a piece of heavy paper board, then write their name in brush calligraphy over the handprint. These are inexpensive and nice to frame.

### Resources

For a thorough study, I recommend *Sumo From Rite to Sport* by P. L. Cuyler, for sale in the local bookstore. It is well-organized and well-indexed. This book also has a map showing the locations of stables near the arena. You can watch practice sessions; the best times are weekdays, around 10am.

#### **"Sumo World"**

Published by English-speaking foreign sumo enthusiasts, this magazine comes out 10 days before each tourney; it usually shows up on Yokota 3 to 5 days before a tourney. Each issue features results of the last tourney, predictions for the next tourney, articles on wrestlers, techniques and sumo history. The program listing of the *banzuke* for the upcoming tourney is also printed complete with names, ranks, photos, height, weight, age, and records of *makuuchi* and *juryo* division wrestlers.

Joe Schlatter

## Sword Fighting

### Kendo

Zanshin is the total awareness of all that is around and within. To study the sword is to study zanshin, to be strong with the sword is to be strong with zanshin, to master the sword is to master zanshin, to master zanshin is to never draw the sword.

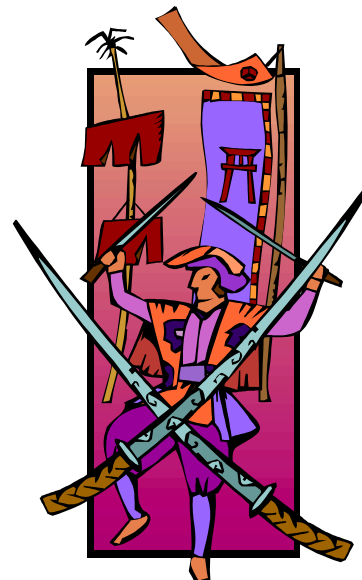
In the fall of 1600, Lord Tokugawa achieved victory at the battle of Sekigahara and eliminated the last serious opposition to unifying the nation under one rule. Sengoku Jidai, the Age of a Country at War, had ended and a new found peace settled over a land that had known almost 500 years of constant warfare. Peace had brought with it a philosophical change to the warrior class. *Kenjutsu*, the art of the sword, began to transform itself into kendo, the way of the sword. Where *kenjutsu* had once prepared the warrior in the use of the sword to overcome an opponent, kendo now taught the development of mind, body, and spirit to overcome the obstacles in life.

In the early 17th century several schools of swordsmanship were founded as the warrior class pursued their perfection of self. As these swordsmen developed their deadly skills, they often went on pilgrimages across the country to seek out masters in various styles to learn all they could. Later, they would perfect their own styles and established schools based on it. It was not uncommon in this age to have two swordsmen test their skills against each other with live blades. Most these confrontations ended in death for one or both opponents. In the years prior to the Tokugawa Shogunate, swordsmen often tested their skills on the battle field. Now that the wars were over the swordsmen had to find a new method of training against an opponent. Here lies the roots of modern kendo.

At first the students practicing sword techniques used wooden swords against each other instead of live blades. However, this still resulted in serious injuries and death. By 1760

the *shinai*, bamboo sword, had been developed which lessened the blows encountered in matches. The *kote*, thick leather gloves, were also developed around this time. Between 1765 and 1770 the *do*, body protector, started to be used and sometime soon after the *men*, head protector was developed. During the Meiji period, it was decided to make kendo a part of school curriculums because of the discipline and moral values that it taught. There were several meetings of the great sword masters of the day to help structure modern kendo. Today, kendo has changed little since the Meiji period and is a combination of several schools of swordsmanship.

Kendo is now an international sport practiced in over 34 countries around the world including Europe, South America, New Zealand, Australia, North America, and Korea. The popu-



larity of kendo has grown so much in the last decade that it was seriously considered as an exhibition sport in the Olympic Summer Games in Australia.

The Yokota Kendo Club was founded on 4 April 1992 and is the oldest established martial arts organization at Yokota. Here Americans get the rare opportunity to study this ancient art form from three top ranking kendo instructors. Classes are bilingual and advanced students get the opportunity to visit several schools in the local area. One such school is the Keiten-kan Dojo in Akishima, which dates back to the early Meiji period. The dojo, training hall, is over a hundred years old. Here students have the chance to train in a traditional style dojo and relive a bit of history.

James Alexander

## Naginata

During the 12th century, the naginata was the weapon of choice for the fierce warrior monks. It was comprised of a wooden shaft approximately 7 feet in length and mounted by a long slender curved blade approximately 3 feet in length. Designed to bring down a horse and its rider, the blade, when used in wide sweeping arcs, could cut like a sword while maintaining a distance. The shaft could be used for in-close combat to thrust at vital spots or sweep the legs out from under an opponent.

With the introduction of firearms to Japan, the naginata became obsolete on the battle field and became a weapon used mainly by the wives and daughters of warrior families. These women were expected to be prepared at a moments notice to defend both the household and the honor of their families. The naginata not only gave them the skills to do this, but also the noble qualities of etiquette, self-discipline, and strong morale values that earned them both admiration and respect from all the girls to cultivate the spirit and build strong character.

Today naginata is fast becoming a popular sport internationally. Tokyo hosted the First World Naginata Championship Tournament on 30 July 1995 with teams from Japan, USA, France, Brazil, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, and New Zealand.

The main target areas in naginata are the shins, but the head, wrists, and torso are also targets. The naginata is a very flexible weapon that allows attacks from any direction and quick defense. The actual fighting techniques are similar to boxing and will give one an excellent workout.

The Yokota Naginata Club was founded in January of 1993 by members of the Yokota Kendo Club. Its head instructor is Yoshida Kunie who has over 60 years of experience in naginata. Classes are held every Saturday on base, but students also have the opportunity to workout twice a week at the Tachikawa Budo Kan, a martial arts center dedicated to all the martial arts from Japan.

James Alexander

## Baseball

With more Japanese baseball players following Ichiro Suzuki and Hideo Nomo into the major leagues, American fans in Japan have an opportunity to scout talent that may soon be playing Stateside. But whether you're looking for the next international superstar or a unique cultural experience, a trip to the ballpark can be both a fun and inexpensive way to see another side of Japan.

The American pastime of baseball is a passion here. From an early age, boys learn to play the game with dreams of glory. In the spring there is a Spring Select Tournament (Haru no Senbatsu Taikai) for high school teams at Koshien Stadium in Osaka. This is an invitational tourney for the cream of the crop. Each high school team vies for the right to represent its district. 49 teams then go on to the summer National High School Championship Series (Zenkoku Koukou Yakyuu Senshukai Taikai) in August. The top teams' seniors are usually drafted to the professional ranks. Baseball is also played competitively on the college/university level, but most players seek jobs in corporations after graduation.

The national pastimes of both the U.S. and Japan have been compared to sushi and McDonald's fish filet sandwich. Same basic ingredients, different preparation and packaging. The rules are the same, three strikes you're out, tie goes to the runner, that sort of thing, but Japanese have added their own twists to the game introduced here in the 1870s by American



teacher Horace Wilson. Japanese play tie games, conduct marathon training sessions prior to each game, bunt runners into scoring position, and tip their hats when pitchers hit batters.

But it's the atmosphere at the ballpark that sets the Japanese apart. To most Americans, the bleacher bum conjures up images of a laid-back fan, slouched on a wooden bench in a



remote corner of the outfield stands, sunglasses on, beer in hand, soaking up rays while taking in the game. In Japan, the inhabitants of the cheap seats are anything but laid back. The night air comes alive with the pulsating sounds of bass drums, the slapping of plastic megaphones and the squeal of trumpets blowing off-key renditions of “Anchors Away,” “Popeye the Sailor man” and the “Mickey Mouse Club Anthem.” The Japanese call these royal rooters the *oendan*, a highly-organized cheering group, spurred on by whistle-blowing, flag waving, drum-beating cheerleaders.

An evening in the bleachers offers the perfect place to blow off steam. For the salaryman who has put in another 10-hour day for an overbearing supervisor, the ballpark is his place to unleash his aggressions toward an opposing outfielder or his own favorite batter at the plate. After several drinks, the reserved office worker becomes a screaming siren of sarcasm and scorn toward the visiting and home team alike. The cheering never stops, regardless of the score. Even when the game is over, the diehard fans are reluctant to leave. Many will remain standing on their seats, still chanting over the whine of gas-powered blowers herding trash from around the bleachers. The outfield grass on the losing side is littered with plastic megaphones, thrown there as a sign of disgust and disappointment in their team’s effort.

The higher priced seats may offer a better view, but they’re not as much fun. Usually reserved for corporate “pretty people,” the seats surrounding the infield and in back of home plate are the place to see and be seen. They sit on their hands, cheering only the most dramatic play. Even then, they behave with utmost decorum. The constant noise swirling around the stadium is both distracting and entertaining for foreign players. “Going to a Japanese baseball game is like going to a UCLA-Notre Dame football game,” said former Montreal Expo Warren Cromartie, who played here in the 1980s. “These people are dedicated. They cheer to the last out.”

If food’s your thing, the menu at stadium snack stands is a cross between Benihana and Burger King, with meat dumplings served next to corn dogs and pizza slices. From sushi to squid on a stick, Japan’s favorite ballpark fare is a far cry from peanuts and Cracker Jack. The cracking sound of peanut shells gives way to the slurping of ramen noodles. The crunching pretzels are replaced by the gnawing of fish jerky. But fear not, at some of the modern stadiums such as Tokyo’s Big Egg and the spanking new domes in Osaka and Nagoya, fans can stuff themselves with McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken. At the newer parks, the gleaming concession stands are clearly labeled “Japanese Food & Drink” and “American Food & Drink.” Most signs are in Japanese, but most counters feature picture menus. It’s better to use the point and shoot method when ordering since a hot dog is really *hotto doggu* and french fries are *furaido poteto*, and your server may not know what you’re talking about if you don’t speak the lingo. Don’t worry, Coca Cola is the same in any language.

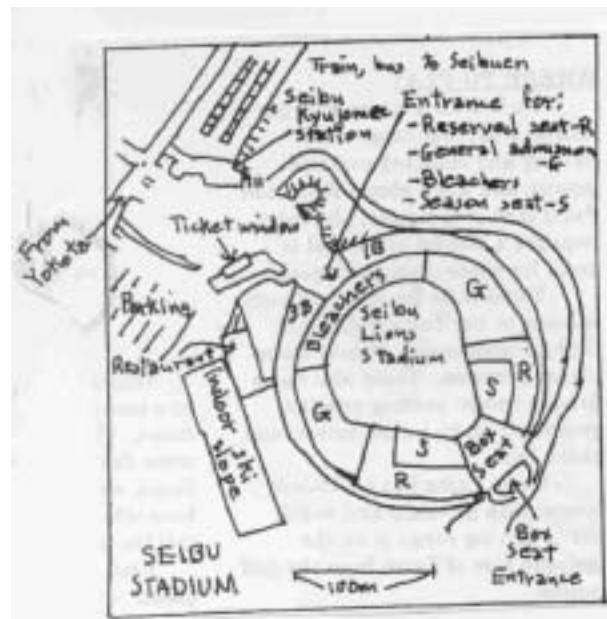
With beverages such as Pocari Sweat and Calpis for sale, you’d think most fans would go thirsty. That’s not the case here though. There’s plenty of alternatives to wet your whistle, from Coke to coffee to cold green tea. And, of course, there’s enough beer to float the USS Independence. Some ven-

dors patrol the aisles with a keg strapped to their backs. If whiskey and water is your pleasure, belly up to the portable bar.

Of the 12 Japanese professional teams, six are home-based in the Tokyo area. The Nippon Ham Fighters and very popular Yomiuri Giants occupy the Tokyo Dome. The Yakult Swallows play in rustic Jingu Stadium, the Yokohama Bay Stars play a baseball’s throw away from Chinatown, and the Chiba Lotte Marines play out near Disneyland.

Each team can have three foreign players on their big league roster at a time, and many do have major league experience. With the success of Ichiro and the other Japanese players currently playing in the States, the baseball over here is finally getting recognition from American fans. Just think, after your tour in Japan is up and you’re back in the States watching baseball on TV, you can impress friends by saying, “I saw (fill in the name) play when he was in Japan.”

Harry Thompson from the *Yokosan*



## Seibu Lions Stadium

The closest ballpark to Yokota Air Base is Seibu Stadium, about a 30-minute trip out the East Gate. (The Yujo Community Center has maps to the stadium, schedules, and discount coupons.) Tickets range from about ¥1600 for outfield bleachers to ¥3200 for infield reserved seats. (Tickets for kids are ¥500.) On selected weeknights and most weekends, fans can bring a blanket and spread out on a sloped grassy area just over the outfield fence. And unlike Stateside ballparks, the Japanese have no problem with you bringing coolers and picnic baskets. They do frown on bottles though.

The professional season runs from April through September. Games are only called because of heavy rain. Games can



end with tie scores due to the 11PM night curfew when games must end.

### Notes about catching a Seibu Lions game

- After you have purchased your game tickets, buy your return train tickets to avoid the rush after the game at the building to the left of the exit from the train station.
- As you walk into the stadium, a stadium employee may hand you a small piece of paper. If your number is drawn during the game, you will receive a prize. About three winning numbers at a time are flashed on the large screen over the scoreboard at different times between innings.
- If you have a Reserved Seat ticket, your seat location will be printed on a line on the lower right of your ticket: 1) the block of seats (A= lower, B= upper), 2) the aisle, 3) the row, and 4) the seat number itself.
- There is limited parking; we advise taking the train.

Eddie Leavengood, Joe Harb

## Baseball at the Tokyo Dome

Tokyo Dome or the “Big Egg” is the home of two teams, the popular Yomiuri Giants of the Central League and the Nippon Ham Fighters of the Pacific League. As its name implies, it is a covered stadium. Seat prices for Giants games range from ¥1,000 to ¥4,900, for Nippon Ham Fighters, from ¥1,100 to ¥4,200. Giants night games start at 6pm and day games at 1pm. Nippon Ham day games start at 1pm and night games at 6:15. For ticket availability, call 03-3811-2111.

**DIRECTIONS:** Go to Fussa Station and purchase a ticket to Suidobashi. Take the train from Track 2 and if necessary transfer at Tachikawa for a train to Tokyo (Tracks 4 and 5). Get off at Shinjuku, and take a Sobu Line train from Track 9 to Suidobashi, the 7th station after Shinjuku.

## Golf

Golfers on the Kanto Plain have many opportunities to enjoy the game at several U.S. courses. Instruction by qualified professionals is available for anyone from the beginner wanting to learn to play the ancient and honorable game to the low-handicapper seeking to perfect a fade. Pro shops offer a variety of equipment, while driving ranges and practice greens provide opportunities to sharpen skills.

### Where to Play

- On **Yokota** is a nine-hole par-3 course, a driving range with putting and chipping practice greens, and a pro shop. While the Par-3 may look simple, playing it requires a careful touch and is great for sharpening your game. Tel. 225-8815/8817
- **Tama Hills** Recreation Center is home to the Tama Hills Golf Club, a challenging 18-hole championship course. Tama also has a driving range, putting practice green, pro shop, locker rooms, and snack bar. Tel. 224-3426/3416/2223
- **Camp Zama** has an 18-hole course with pro shop and snack bar; a driving range is on the opposite side of Zama from the golf course. Tel. 263-4975, 228-3779
- **Atsugi Naval Station** has an 18-hole course, driving range, practice greens, pro shop, and snack bar. Tel. 264-6749/3709/3779/3788

### Golf General Guidelines

USGA and local rules apply to all courses. Local rules are printed on scorecards and posted in pro shops and starter shacks. The 18-hole courses have winter greens and summer greens. If in doubt, check with the starter as to which greens are in play. Also, determine the rule for shooting your ball onto the wrong green.

Generally, personnel stationed at a base have priority for tee times. That is, Yokota personnel come first at Tama, Zama people at Zama, etc. If you want to play at a base where you are not stationed, call the pro shop beforehand. Each course has provisions for guests—non-military U.S. personnel, third-country nationals, and Japanese nationals. The green fees for guests are considerably higher than fees for I.D. card holders. Japanese military personnel and Japanese base employees are treated differently from other Japanese, so check with the pro shop.

Each course has an annual green fee which you can pay so you don't have to pay each time you play (except for cart or club rentals). If you play regularly, the annual fee is well worth the cost.

Each course is closed one day a week for maintenance and tee times may be limited on other days because of special events or organizational tournaments. Call the pro shop.



Each pro shop offers the usual services of repairing clubs, replacing grips, matching clubs, etc.

### Golf lessons

Group and individual lessons are available at each golf course for a nominal fee. At the Yokota Par-3, group lessons are available weekly. Check with the pro shops for lesson details.

### Where to buy equipment

You can find golf equipment in the pro shops of each course and the sporting goods sections of each base exchange. Prices are good, equivalent to prices in Stateside golf discount shops. Each shop has the basic club sets, bags, bars, shoes, and specialty clubs and sets as well as some of the latest equipment. Beware: Inventories will vary. If you are looking for a cannon-style driver made from the latest space-age-materials, or if you need a size 15-AAAA shoe, you'd better have your brother-in-law in Topeka send it to you.

If you wish to give your wallet heart failure, you can shop in the Japanese golf shops. (see *Golf Stores section*) However, they are well-stocked with the latest equipment and every golf gadget known.

If you go to Korea, look for golf bags and golf gloves; name-brand bags and gloves are made in Korea. You can buy a near lifetime supply of gloves at the shops in Itaewon. Be careful!! Most of these gloves are seconds so inspect them before buying a couple of dozen. Even with minor flaws, they are a bargain.

Joe Schlatter



## Snow Skiing

Skiing in Japan can be lots of fun if a skier avoids the crowds. The downhill season ranges from December to May, with most people hitting the slopes January through early March. Depending on location, the quality of the snow is powder in late January and early February, changing to heavy wet snow in March. The slopes range from rural single-chairlift operations to interconnecting areas with highspeed-covered-quads and gondolas that have hosted the World Cup and Olympics.

In the Kanto Plain, there are basically two ski clubs composed of foreigners. The first, the **Kanto Ski & Snowboard Club**, is based at Yokota and starts its season with an informational meeting in October followed by a signup party in November. The club is open to anyone and usually runs 4 overnight trips per season. Its most popular trips are the one to Sapporo just before the Snow Festival and to Nagano's Shiga Heights and Zao over the 3 day weekends in January and February. (The Sapporo trip is scheduled to coincide with the Snow Festival on the last day of the trip. This allows for comparatively lower prices and smaller crowds on the slopes.) Announcements are run on AFN and in the Fuji Flyer during the early fall.

**Shin Yi Ski Club**, started by a group of DODDS teachers, but now mainly composed of foreign residents of Tokyo, operates about 9 trips by train per season. It holds a signup meeting near the end of the year in downtown Tokyo and a post-

season get-together during the summer. The trips usually consist of a Friday night departure from Ueno station. Because Shin Yi uses the train system, the trip is shorter than Kanto's, however, not as much luggage or food can be taken (many skiers opt to send their skis ahead by "Black Cat", the equivalent of UPS).

The Services Squadrons/MWR at most bases (Outdoor Recreation Center at Yokota) run many trips throughout the season. They also rent equipment at a reasonable price, and provide maps to the major ski areas. They have free lessons offered along with low cost equipment rental.

Skiers can also set up their own trips. The nearest slopes are about 3 hours by car or 1-1/2 hours by bullet train. On weekends, especially Sundays and holiday weekends, the roads and the slopes become very congested. Food and lodging prices vary widely, depending on the type of accommodations. Lift tickets run from about ¥1500 for 11 runs to ¥11,000 for 3-day tickets including gondola access.

Teresa Negley

There are a number of web sites including <http://www.skijapanguide.com> that can also help you.



## Ice Skating

### Showa-no-Mori

Showa-no-Mori is an indoor ice-skating and hockey rink near Mori Town Mall in Akishima. Admission is as follows: ¥1,200 per adult, ¥900 per student (junior through senior high school), ¥600 per child (to age 12). Skates can be rented for ¥500 a pair (sizes 15-30cm). There is a ¥300 fee for observers. Four hours of free parking is available, just take your parking ticket to the front desk for validation before you leave. The rink is generally open October-May, 10am—7pm every day of the week. The summer hours in June, July, & September are noon-7pm on weekdays and 10am—7 pm on weekends. During August, the rink is open noon-6pm.

A discount is available for groups of 15 or more and ice skates can also be rented from Outdoor Recreation (\$1.50/day). To take advantage of the discount, one person from the group must collect the yen and pay for the entire party. Lessons in English can be arranged.

Vending machines that dispense hot chocolate and coffee are available as well as a snack bar that sells hamburgers, fries, and soba. Of course, bringing your own snack and drinks will reduce the cost. This rink has a “warming room.” Even though this is an indoor rink, it can get very chilly inside.

**DIRECTIONS:** Showa-no-Mori is about a 10 minute drive from Yokota’s East Gate. Refer to the directions in Shopping to ESPA and Moritown Mall. Tel. 46-9350.

Fran Bonn, 1/97

## Bicycling

There are a few nice bicycle rides from Yokota.

- **Showa Memorial Park** is a nice easy ride. To get there, bicycle out the East Gate. Take a right, then immediately take the first left –almost straight out the gate. Take this small, quiet road alongside the parks until it dead-ends into the big road. Walk your bicycle across the street at the cross-walk, turn right, then cross the river just beyond the road as soon as you can. You will find a wide, quiet bicycle path that winds its way among trees along the river all the way to an entrance to Showa park exclusively for bicyclists. Plan on about 40 leisurely minutes from the gate.

- **Tama River:** Another nice bicycle ride is along the Tama River. There are a number of ways of getting there, pretty much they all involve going straight West out the Fussa or Supply gate, across both railroad tracks until you get to the river. There is a bicycle path that runs along the river. One of the easiest ways to explain is to turn left out the Fussa gate and then turn right at the first light, follow this straight until you come to the river. Access to the path can be obtained by going to the left just before the river. I have been told this path goes all the way to the ocean.

- **Tamko Lake:** There is a beautiful bike path around Tamako Lake to the north-east of base. There are many ways to get there out the Terminal or East Gates. Use a map or have someone show you their favorite way, because it’s a little complicated to explain.

- **For More Information:** Check out the Bicycling Museum (Sightseeing section) and Outdoor Recreation for more trails in the local area. There is also a bicycling club on base which you can get more information from.

## Camping

- **Tama Hills:** The easiest and most convenient place to camp around base is at Tama Hills. The camp sites are very spacious and separated from one another. You can rent pretty much everything you need from Outdoor Recreation. It costs \$1.00 per person per night for a site. Some weekends may be full so you should call Tama Hills outdoor recreation at 224-3413 for reservations.

- **Kawai Camp Site:** The Yujo Community Center can help you with directions to the Kawai Camp Site (Tel: 0428-85-2206). It is located about an hour from base in Mitake on Ome Kaido just past the Kawai JR Station. To use the facilities for the day it costs 400 Yen/person. To stay overnight in a tent costs 700 yen per person. They also have lodges that cost between 6,000 and 40,000 yen per night. You need reservations for the lodges. Note: you may not take your own fire wood or charcoal to Kawai camp site. You must purchase your fuel there for 600 to 1,300 yen.

For list of outdoors stores to purchase camping equipment see *Shopping* section.

There are a number of locations along the Tama River to fish and as you drive by you may see many people fishing. Do NOT think that you can just pull in along the river and throw your rod in the creek, you must pay first. Fishing in Japan is more



## Fishing

expensive than in the States. You can count on spending at least 3,000 Yen for a one day fishing license. The outdoor recreation center has a number of trips, both river fishing and ocean fishing. If you want to go on your own you can check with them or the Yujo Community Center. There is a place, the Okutama Fishing Center (phone: 0428-78-8393) about an hour from base (by train or car) very close to the Kawai camp site listed above. They are open from 07:00 to 16:00 and cost 3,000 Yen/day for live bait fishing (bait 600 Yen) or 3,500 Yen/day for lure and fly fishing. See Akigawa in Sightseeing section for another location.

See *Shopping* section for the location of a fishing supply store and some outdoors stores.

## Hiking

If you like to hike, there are many areas close by where you can go. Two recommendations are Mt. Takao and Mt. Mitake. Although you can usually find a noodle diner and soda machine along the tourist path, you can also find benches where you can eat a sack lunch. However, you may not find any garbage cans as part of an effort to promote hikers taking their trash home instead of littering the area.

### • Recommended Reading:

- Day Walks Around Tokyo (and More Day Walks Around Tokyo) by Jonathan Walters,
- Hiking in Japan : an adventurer's guide to the mountain trails by Paul Hunt, published by Kodansha Int'l,
- Hiking in Japan from Lonely Planet Publications
- the English edition of the Chichibu-Tama National Park Okutama Nature Map available through the Mitake Information Center (by the train station), the Mitake Visitor Center (up on the mountain), and the Okutama Visitor Center. All visitor centers are closed on Mondays. Some hikers find deciphering signs easier through comparison of the Japanese version with the English version (both maps cost ¥200 each). A wonderful investment, the English map covers the large Okutama area, and has mini-maps of paths in certain areas that are not always available at the site in separate English editions.

Check the library for copies of the books, or see the "Shopping" section for English bookstores

- **Mt. Takao:** Take the cable car up, visit the various temples beyond MonkeyLand, picnic at the summit, and walk down Routes 3 or 5. Pick up an English version map of Takao-san at the cable car ticket window. For more information, refer to Sightseeing.

- **Mt. Mitake:** It's easiest to drive up and park behind the cablecar station (Y900 all day, more overnight). You can take the cable car up or save yen and walk all the way up to the mountaintop shrine area (it's harder on the knees to walk down). The steep concrete path starts opposite the ticket booth to the cable car. In addition to the shrine at the top, there are scenic loops plus trails to other areas in the region. If you're hardcore, you can start at the Ome train station or Yoshino Baigo plum grove near Hinatawada train station, then hike your way up to Mt. Mitake via connecting trails. Easier 4km walks line either side of the Tamagawa River in the Mitake Gorge be-



tween JR Mitake and Sawai stations. *Note:* There are a few steep steps along the route to Kanzanji Shrine on the south bank near a bridge. To rest, stop at the riverside restaurant near Sawai and watch the kayakers or visit the small Gyokudo museum on the other side of the river.

Teresa Negley

## Mt. Fuji

It is impossible to live in the Kanto Plain and ignore the dominance of Fuji-san. This nearly symmetrical form is a symbol of Japanese culture. It has been an inspiration to artists and a natural wonder for the rest of us.

Regardless of the beauty, when one attempts to reach its 12,388 feet (3,776 meter) summit, caution is necessary. We were fortunate to make our first try with experienced climbers who gave us sound advice. We have made it to the peak twice, once during the day and once after dark. Both climbs were challenging and the night climb almost too much of a struggle.

Should you decide to go for the top, preparation can help ensure an enjoyable trip. First, look at yourself objectively. Are you up to a demanding climb involving several hours of steady exertion? If you are in moderately good condition, you should be able to make it but it is no stroll in the park! The official climbing season is from July 1 - August 31, so start exercising early if you are out of shape.

Trim your toenails the week before to prevent irritation. Also, make sure you get a good night's sleep before the climb. Weather can ruin your climb and make things extremely dangerous on the slope. Storms and plunging temperatures are fairly common, particularly at night. Keep track of the weather and have extra clothing and rain gear. Clothing is important.



Climb in long pants with a windbreaker instead of shorts and a sweatshirt. A hat and a small towel are handy. Also, you will notice most folks with a climbing stick. This is not only a practical tool, it makes a great souvenir of your adventure when adorned with the various brands from stations along the way. Climbing sticks are for sale at all the souvenir shops near and at Station 5.

The following sensible precautions were extracted from a Services planning guide:

- ◆ When it is a stormy day or there are signs of lightning, cease climbing and find shelter in a hut.
- ◆ Do not stray from the climbing path due to the great dangers of rock slides and of getting lost.
- ◆ If you are part of a group, follow your leader's directions and do not venture out on your own you might end up on a different side of the mountain.
- ◆ Do not be in a hurry! Climb the mountain slowly and be careful not to over-exert yourself.

There is a fine line between adequate equipment and over-preparation. This list from the base and it seemed to provide the necessities. Many items can be rented from Outdoor Recreation at low cost.

- Hiking boots
- Medium backpack
- Rain gear
- About 2 liters of water per person
- Sunglasses
- Sunblock (Yes, even if it's chilly the sun is very strong, you will burn!)
- Jacket
- Utility gloves (Cotton gloves are available at 100-yen stores.)
- Flashlight plus extra batteries/bulb
- Band-aids and Ace bandage
- High protein foods & painkillers
- Camera. You can't take an excursion like this without lasting memories!
- 10,000 Yen for expenses
- 6,000 Yen for tolls (includes Fuji admission)
- Walking stick: 1,000 Yen (stamps for the stick available at each station for 200-300 Yen each)
- Station huts: for overnight stay or weather emergency (about 5,000 Yen)

◆ It is better to take frequent short breaks rather than to stop only a few times for long periods.

◆ If a person is injured or sick, perform first aid, carry him/her to the nearest mountain hut, and contact a doctor.

◆ If you climb at night, climb with care. In rocky areas be especially careful of your footing.

Remember, it is easy to stumble and fall. Accidents involving rockslides are frequent. If you encounter rock slides, shout so other people will know. Stay to the inside of the path where footing is firmer and the wall offers protection. If you hear thunder on a clear day, it probably is a rock slide in progress - don't waste time looking up at the sky, immediately hit the ground closest to the wall.

Although there are several trails, the one originating at Lake Kawaguchi with your start at the Fifth Station is recommended. A short word on climbing at night. You may want to leave the 5th Station at 3pm to arrive at the top at 9pm and sleep in one of the lodges; we found that the ¥5,000 is worth it. You will then be in good shape to see the sunrise. Take at least two good flashlights, or one with extra batteries.

To make it a delightful memory, exercise caution and common sense. Have fun!

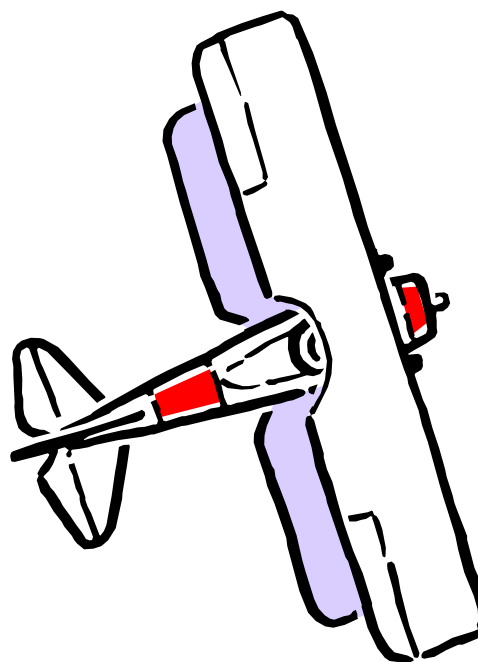
Jim and Susie Shaw

The Yujo Center has maps and climbing guides. They also have several tours over the summer.



## Flying

If you thought that the only way to see Mt. Fuji was to climb it or the only way to see the ocean was to take an all-day trip you have missed the boat...or rather the plane! Private flying here in Japan is a wonderful way to "get above it all" and we have an Aero Club right here at Yokota. You must be an I. D. card holder to utilize this club. An average time and cost estimate to get a private pilots license from start to finish is one year and \$3000 but this depends on each individual. Initially it costs \$180 for your books and the viewing of the video tapes. You set your own pace for studying and taking the tests. You need minimum of thirty hours of flying time before you can test for your private license. A certified instructor pilot goes up with you each time to teach and guide you (and yes, to reassure you). Training is in Cessna 152 airplanes, which are two seater light airplanes. The scariest, yet most exhilarating experience is when you realize that you really are flying the plane. The first time I took off, made a turn over towards the horizon and flew over to the ocean, I knew I was hooked. You, too, can escape from the hubbub of Tokyo and enjoy the city from a bird's eye view. Call the 374th Services Yokota Flight Training Center at 225-8988. They are open daily 0730-1730 in Bldg 4304. They can also arrange for one time sight-seeing flights and sometimes offer specials for holidays.



## Sailing and Diving

### Yokosuka Sailing

An assignment to landlocked Yokota need not be an end to sailing. Sailboats are available for rent at Yokosuka Naval Base. The Yokosuka Sailing Center is located at Fleet Activities, Yokosuka's Green Bay, next to McDonald's (and across from the Marine Barracks).

The hours of operation are Monday, Thursday, Friday 10am-7pm; Saturday, Sunday 8am-7pm. A license is required. Rentals range from \$3 per hour for a rowboat to \$40 per day for a Catalina. Monthly sailing classes are offered. For sign up or further information call 243-4155.

**DIRECTIONS:** Follow the directions to Yokosuka Naval Base. From Yokosuka's main gate, turn right and continue past the hospital. Turn right at the first main intersection and continue until you see McDonald's on your right. The Sailing Center is right next to McDonald's. Your best bet to beat the traffic is to leave Yokota by 6am. You should arrive in time for breakfast at McDonald's.

Jan DeForest, Jenny Perham 8/97

### Diving

There are several diving sites within a two to three-hour drive from Yokota, mainly on the Izu Peninsula southwest of Tokyo. The best visibility is from September to March and the water temperature (50-70 degrees F) requires a wetsuit or drysuit.

Due to the proximity of the Kuroshio Current there are colorful coral semi-tropical sea life.

Better known areas are Manazuru near Odawara, Atami down the coast, Izu Oceanic Park (Izu Kaiyo Koen) near Ito, and Osezaki near Numazu. Others are Hayama near Yokosuka, Futo on the other side of Tokyo Bay, and

Heda, Kumomi, and Dogashima on the western side of Izu. Equipment can be rented at these locations and tanks can be filled.

Scuba diving has become very popular and on summer Sundays, these areas are crowded with classes.

*Please note:* Due to the laws in Japan, nothing may be removed from the water. The local fishermen enforce this strongly and divers are arrested for taking lobster or shellfish. Local dive shops cultivate good relations with the fishermen, and occasionally hire their vessels for boat dives.

Diving in Japan can be expensive: expressway tolls, entry fees, parking charges, and tank refills all run between ¥500-1500 each. Organized tours cost over ¥12,000 per day (insurance, transportation, lunch, tanks and weights usually included). Divers economize by taking their vans and packing lunches, in addition to camping.

For further information, check with a dive shop here or at the site (some attendants speak English). Also, both NAUI and PADI have offices in Tokyo. At Yokota, the Finatics Club (225-7093) can be contacted about classes. The club has members who dive nearly every weekend of the season.

Jody Powell, Teresa Negley



# Dancing

For many of us on Yokota Air Base and in the surrounding communities, the word “Tanabata” has two meanings. Tanabata Matsuri, also known as the Star Festival, is the name of a colorful Japanese holiday with Chinese origins. Two lovers, a cow herder and a weaver, kept apart in their mortal lives, come together in the sky as the stars Altair and Vega. Tanabata Matsuri marks this annual reunion on the seventh day of the seventh month.

Tanabata also has a second meaning. It is the name of a group of Yokota women (and every once in while a man or two!) who learn to perform Japanese festival or folk dancing. The organization was started over 20 years ago by Masako Collins as a means of spreading good will and friendship by joining the Japanese in their traditional “odori” or festival dances. Just as the Tanabata festival celebrates the coming together of two lovers, the group symbolizes the coming together of two cultures.

The dancers wear a yukata (summer kimono) tied with an obi. Although the patterns of both the yukata and the obi have changed throughout the years, the color scheme has consistently been red, white, and blue. The group is taught the dances by the ever patient Hanayagi-Sensei, who volunteers her time to practice with them weekly. The dancers perform at local Japanese festivals as well as various functions on base. The Tanabata Dancers offer the unique opportunity of experiencing Japanese culture first hand, and the group is always received with enthusiasm! Over the years, they have made many friends both on and off base.

Membership is open to anyone over the age of twelve in the Yokota community (women AND men!). Dedication of members has kept enthusiasm high-no small feat since the membership is constantly changing. The dance season runs from mid-March to early November and new members are welcome at any time. The dances are not difficult to learn and the “old-timers” always help out the newcomers.

If you would like to learn more about Yokota’s Tanabata Dancers, contact the Wing Public Affairs Office for information. Hope to see you at a festival!

Leslie Kann, Janie Norton 97

Frequently the Taiyo center on base has dance classes of different varieties from swing to ballroom. Call 225-6955 for more information.



*Photo courtesy of Theresa Negley*



# Notes:

