

VIVA ! ひめじ

< English Version > December.2003 No. 7

Issued by Himeji International Association
Newsletter editing volunteer
URL <http://www.himeji-iec.or.jp>

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< PEOPLE > A Catholic priest; Mr. Michael P. Dulnun

Father Michael is from the north part of Philippine, Ifugo. He came to Japan in 1998 as a missionary of the Junshin Association, currently staying at Aboshi Catholic Church. He is engaged in missionary work very enthusiastically in many forms such as reading international mass in Japanese as well as in English, and saying mass for children. Based in the Aboshi Catholic Church, he keeps himself busy running around on propagation also at Himeji, Shikama, Kakogawa and Tatsuno churches.

Originally he wanted to go to Brazil, so when directed by the Junshin Association to fly to Japan, which was his third choice, he couldn't hide his shock and anxiety as it came so unexpectedly. "The biggest problem I had was, of course, the language.", he said. For the first two years, he spent his time in Japan studying Japanese at a Japanese language school in Osaka city. Students from China account for more than 80% at the school, therefore he was in the surroundings where he communicated with others in English. And it's not so difficult to imagine how hard it was for him to learn "Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji (Chinese characters)" which he had never seen before.

Another thing he found surprising was, that everybody rushes home in the evening, especially in winter, streets become empty as soon as it gets dark. That reminds him of his hometown being busy until late in the evening and he misses it.

Asked what Japanese culture he likes, he said "I like festivals, hot springs, and Japanese food except Natto". The answer was just like him, who has lively personality. He was especially excited when talking about Banshu Festival. According to him, men in loincloth were something so similar to what could have been seen in his hometown in the past, that he took pictures of them with surprise and sent them home in Philippine when he saw them at the festival.



Having calm, cheerful, friendly and frank character, he makes others relax and forget the fact of seeing him for the first time. The two-hour interview with him passed so quickly in the entertaining atmosphere, and we laughed nonstop all along.

We thought that the problems he had, such as the boundary of language he suffered from, and having missed home because of cultural differences, have now turned into the energy and confidence for him to visit churches and support all people in there.

XinChao!

“Hello!” (in Vietnamese) No.1

Recently the number of foreign residents has been increasing and various international programs have been created here and there in Japan. Himeji is no exception. Some ten thousand foreign tourists visit our city each year and the foreign resident population has reached to more than ten thousand. There are more Vietnamese people in Himeji (*1) than any other foreigners, making up about 10 percent of the population. This is the highest foreign resident population rate in Japan! (Along with Kobe, which has about the same.)

So, why do many Vietnamese nationals live in Himeji?

Between 1964~1975, it is said that more than one million people fell victim to the Vietnam War. Almost half of the war victims were children. Deprived of their land and houses, they were forced to escape from their own country at the risk of their lives. In 1979 the Immigration Promotion Center was opened in Nibuno, Himeji as a refugee reception facility.

It was the first such center in Japan. Father Harrie Quadvlied of Himeji Catholic Church and his fellows contributed a lot to the opening. There the refugees were supported in learning the Japanese language and received job placements; a total of 2,600 Vietnamese stayed at the center until it closed in 1996.

Thus it is almost a quarter of a century since Vietnamese people came to Himeji as a result of the war. At present there are some who were brought over by their relatives and also some trainee technicians have been coming to Himeji.

How are the Vietnamese children getting along in Himeji?

The following composition by Pham Van An sheds light on their situation, for example, the joy and satisfaction of family reunion, the affection for their own family and their determination.

On coming to Japan

I came to Japan five years ago. My father escaped from Vietnam as one of the ‘boat people’ (*2) ten years ago. In Vietnam there was a war more than 20 years ago. My father was a sailor of the South Vietnam Navy. After the war South and North Vietnam became one nation. But the jobs and the land and houses of the defeated Southern people were taken away after the war. I was told that Father had a hard time then because he was a sailor.

After a family talk, it was decided that my father, my uncle and my five-year old cousin would

attempt to escape from the homeland. In Vietnam it is natural for men to risk their lives for their family. My father worked hard to bring us over so I could come to Japan.

After coming to Japan, what troubled me most was the language. For one month I studied Japanese at the Center. But I couldn't learn easily enough; I couldn't understand what my other classmates were saying at Tohori Elementary School. I couldn't help feeling uneasy.

Changing to Hanada Elementary School, I became a member of Class 1 in the 1st Grade. I was afraid that I wouldn't make any friends. But I was happy, because finally I could live with my father. I lived with my father, mother and my three sisters. As we came to find the housing small, we moved to Jotou. I was very nervous about getting used to the new school, but I became happy because I made a lot of friends.

But at the end of December in my 4th grade year my father died. He worked so hard for us that he ruined his health without noticing it. Suddenly at night he suffered a heart attack. After losing her husband who had worked so hard in a unfamiliar foreign land, my mother was too shocked to rise.

Since then almost two years have gone by. I now can talk fairly well in Japanese. But when it comes to the essay questions of Japanese, social studies, science or math, I still have some trouble in understanding the meaning of the questions. Though I study at "Ikiiki Class"(*3), I am a little bit afraid of entering junior high.

But I wish to work hard to help my mother and my family in place of my father, as I am the only man in my family now. Toward that aim I will try to study very hard, even if it is difficult now.

Pham Van An, the writer of this composition, is now in his first year of the 3rd Course of Shikama Technical High School. He does his best both in his job and in his study

(*1) by the Survey of the Alien Registration per Nationality as of Sep. 30, 2003.

(*2) In the post-war economic disorder those who escaped from their homeland by sea were called "boat people".

(*3) The name of Japanese language supplementary class for children of foreign residents held at Joutou Elementary School. Also a class called "Banbe (i.e. friend in Vietnamese) Room" has opened at Hanada Elementary School.

Pham Van An, the author of this composition, is currently a freshman in the 3rd Course of Shikama Technical High School.

He works during the day.



Vietnamese children meet with a variety of surprises and difficulties depending on when they have come to Japan.

*Children born in Japan to Vietnamese parents may have difficulty because their parents often can't help them with their homework, so they must find someone else who can. They are also teased, being called "a Vietnamese who has never been to Vietnam".

*Vietnamese students who come to Japan in their elementary school days find it difficult to accustom themselves to Japanese culture. A teacher said, "Vietnamese students find it difficult getting used to Japanese tastes such as school lunches. They also find it hard to participate in Japanese school events such as sports. When they talk with senior people, they avoid eye-contact and talk with their arms across their chest, which is a sign of obedience in Vietnam. However, Japanese teachers misinterpret this position as rude."

*Children who come to Japan in their junior high school days seem to have many questions and anxieties also. For example, they sometimes feel that Japanese students are rude to their teachers, and say that they can't understand the Japanese approach to study. Their teachers may acknowledge the huge task that Vietnamese children face; to enter high school, they must learn the same content as Japanese students. This includes *hiragana*, *katakana* and more than 1,000 *kanji*, which Japanese students of their age learn and use in their study.

The above examples are not specific to Vietnamese children but are the same for all multinational children. One teacher said, "Some Vietnamese children help each other by translating Japanese."

Next time we will present people and classes that help Vietnamese children and a composition of a junior high school student who danced Moulin, a traditional Vietnamese lion dance. Don't miss the next edition!

Reader's Column

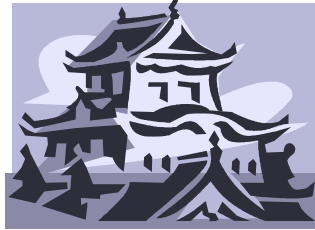
[Himeji as 'sumiyasui-machi' (easy to live in)]

Jennifer Krasnoff

I would describe Himeji as 'sumiyasui' (easy to live in). Actually, it's a

lot like my hometown, Adelaide (Australia) in that the city center

has one major shopping strip (Miyukidori/ Rundle Mall), there's a decent supply of parks and trees and on the whole, one can 'get a grip' on the city. Himeji is not so big as to be overwhelming, as may be in Osaka or Melbourne. You can almost feel like But it's not so small that you have to put up with easily bored. get



A favourite past-time of mine has

been riding my bike around

Himeji with my husband, Phillip. On sunny days especially, it's a real spirit-lifter. Bike riding is not so easy in Adelaide – unless you're on a bike trail, you have to stick to the road, you're not allowed the freedom of the footpath. In Adelaide, I am a primary school teacher of Japanese. In South Australia it is compulsory for all children to learn a foreign language from the day they enter school. I thought a year in Japan would be a great way to improve both my language skills and level of cultural understanding. It's been all that, plus I've made a lot of new friends.

If there's one thing a year overseas will teach you, it's how to be a stronger, more self-reliant person. But it's interesting to know that one of the best ways to conquer our problems is to ask our friends for help! I have found Himeji to be a very friendly town. From my Japanese colleagues at work to the people I live with at Shirasagi Residence, everyone has always been willing to help me out when I've had some trouble. Living in a new country, especially one so different to Western culture like Japan, can bring its share of strife and worry. But I've found that if you just talk to people about it, they are likely to help you solve your problem, from a minor to a major hassle.

It seems like a short time ago that Phillip and I were standing at Adelaide airport with our family and friends, the Australian sun blazing outside, while we waited to board a plane that would take us into the heart of Himeji winter. We've had the most fantastic year and with only 2 months to go until our return, I'm starting to realise all the many people, places and experiences that we are going to miss so much!

To anyone who is just starting their year-long (or longer?) Himeji adventure, I would say this: See as much of Japan as you can while you're here (the Lonely Planet Guide is useful and be sure to give yourself plenty of time!) Also, keep communication lines open with your new workmates/ roommates/ flatmates and whoever else you happen to meet! People come to Himeji from all over the world and bring with them insights that can open up new worlds to you.

The Japanese people I've met have all been nothing short of totally supportive, warm and welcoming.

All these people will help make life in Himeji easier and so much more fun – all you have to do is ask!

Events Information

12 / 31 16:00 ~

“Wanuke” Festival (Oharae)

Place : Harima-no-kuni Sosha

We have “Wanuke” Festival (Oharae)” twice a year (at the end of June and December.)

We go through the big Chi-no-wa and pray. It is said that it has the power to keep away evils.

How to pray.

- 1: Go through the Chi-no-wa. Turn left and go back where you were.
- 2: Go through the Chi-no-wa. Turn right and go back where you were.
- 3: Go through the Chi-no-wa, and pray.

New years eve ~ New years day

Mt. Shosha at night

Place : at Shoshazan-Engyoji · Shoshazan-cableway

12 / 31 21:00 ~ All-night-long Cableway

* usually 9:00 ~ 17:00 every 15min.

23:50 ~ The watch-night bell at the main temple

* We can ring the bell one time

after the abbot.

1 / 1 7:00-ish~New years sun in the morning

How to go: Take a Himeji public bus no. 6 or 8

Bound for Shoshazan-cableway(about 30min)

fee

One way adult : ¥ 500 child : ¥ 250

Round ticket adult : ¥ 900 child : ¥ 450

mid-January

All Japan Kite-Flying Contest

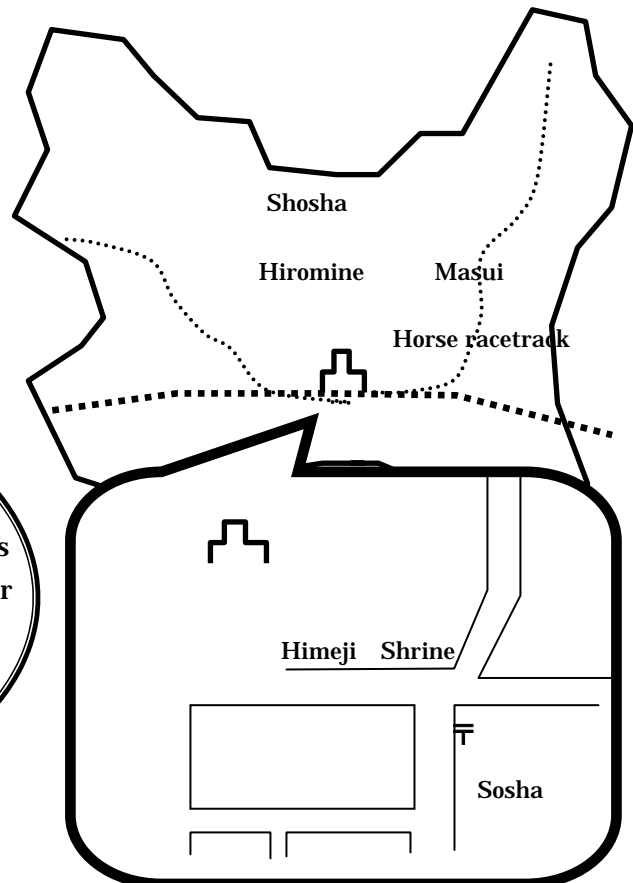
Place : Himeji park race track

See hundreds of kites
in the sky.

1 / 15 ~ 17 Hatsu-Ebisu Festival

Place : Harimanokuni Sosha

We will have a festival for the god Ebisu, who is a “Fuku-no-kami” (brings good luck). We wish for the well-being of families and the doing of good business. You can enjoy the Hoekago-parade with Fuku-musume near Himeji-station and the shopping district.



1 / 18 13:00ish Onioi at Engyoji-temple “Syujyo-e”

Place : Shoshazan-Engyoji <http://www.shosha.or.jp/>

A red ogre and a blue ogre appear in the main temple carrying a torch or a sword. They drive away evils by dancing the “oni-odori”. We call them “Aka-oni” and “Ao-Oni”. They’re really not ogres. They are really Doji called “Ototen” and “Wakaten”, gods of the mountains. During prayer, talismans called “Oni-no-hash” are scattered and people scramble to get them. An event not to be missed!

2 / 3 Mame-maki (Setsubun)

“Setsubun” is a Japanese festival for good health.

We throw beans, saying “Oni-wa soto! Fuku-wa uchi!” (“In with luck! Out with the devil!”).

“Oni” means diseases or disasters.

And, we eat as many beans as years we are old. We believe it will bring you good health and happiness for the year.

Harimanokuni-sosha around 16:00 Mochi & Mame-maki from the main temple

Shoshazan-Engyoji around 13:30 Mame-maki

Some packed beans will contain a ticket which you can exchange for a Kannon, Silver Kannon or ookagami-mochi.

We wish you luck!

Himeji Shrine “Tsuina-shiki”

13:30 ~ Tondo

14:00 ~ Mame-maki

Hiramine-Shrine 16:00 ~ Mame-maki

2 / 11 Mt. Masui Onioi

Place: Mt. Masui Zuiganji-temple

11:00 ~ 15:00 Mochi-maki after a lottery & “Shinji”

Shinji: In with luck and out with the devil

Event Report

The 8th International Festival

On Sunday, October 26th this year, the 8th International Festival was held at Otemae Park. It was truly a wonderful day. The work of many volunteers allowed people to experience and enjoy many different cultures.

A lot of special dishes from many different countries were available at the cooking booths for only ¥100 each!

People from all over the world who are living in Himeji, taught us their delicious recipes so we could enjoy the flavours of their home countries.

The audience was charmed by traditional dances on the stage. The internet allowed us to talk with people in China. The festival was truly international – there were no borders amongst us!

There were also opportunities to try out a new language at the languages workshop and try on a new outfit at the ‘clothes from around the world’ stall.

Next time, why don't you join us !

FOR MORE ABOUT FESTIVAL, visit:

<http://www.himeji-iec.or.jp>



Information from Himeji International Association

International Friendship Event ~ Japanese Winter ~

To those who would like to experience the culture of a Japanese winter or to those who would like to introduce it, how about taking part in the International Friendship Event "Japanese Winter"?

Date & Time: December 21st, Sunday, 2003 10:00 ~ 14:00

Place : Cooking classroom on 3rd floor of Egret Himeji

Content : Let's cook dishes of the season! (New Year's hotchpotch etc) Let's write a New Year's card!

Who can participate: Anyone

Number of people : 30 people. We will receive applications on a first-come basis. We look forward to your early application.

Where to apply : Himeji International Association Tel 0792-87-0820 Fax 0792-87-0805

News from the Library ~ Story Corner ~

We have meetings for reading storybooks to children at the Himeji International Center library. If you want us to read picture storybooks and nursery tales from your own country, or if you would like to read them to children, please contact us. Any subject is OK like Vietnamese tales or Brazilian stories. Tel 0792-87-0820 Fax 0792-87-0805

editor's postscript

For a long time now we have been wanting to start up a Vietnamese edition of VIVA!himeji. We hope not only Vietnamese living in Japan but also people who want to study Vietnamese will read it. We are calling for any interested persons who would like to help with this venture to contact us at the address below. Thank you ☺



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We really appreciate all your help.

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