

New life is learning experience

By Kathy Harmon

Food, floor rugs and language are three aspects of American life that have been the hardest for the Hisagais, the School of Journalism's adopted family, to get used to.

The Japanese family began an adventurous learning experience last fall when the head of the household, Keizo Hisagai, came to UNL as a Fulbright scholar. He will spend about one year at UNL doing research, taking some classes and just observing American life.

Hisagai said that during the stay his family is trying to become as "Americanized" as possible.

To the Japanese family, this means becoming almost more "American" than some natives. This includes leaving their shoes on while at home—a custom that is forbidden in Japan.

"America has different customs," Hisagai said. "But, I really don't feel relaxed with my shoes on—it's a big problem."

Not to be entirely indifferent to their culture, a pair of shoes sits beside the door of the ranch-style home they are renting. The shoes, called Geta shoes are actually wooden thong-like sandals, which stand on wooden pegs that are about a half inch high. Mrs. Hisagai says they are worn with Tabi socks, which have seams between the toes and are traditionally removed before entering a home.

Food a big problem

The family, which includes a 7-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter, cited food as another problem.

Hisagai said they try to eat American food most of the time and reserve their native Japanese cooking to only twice a week. He said this has been difficult for the family, since they are not used to American food, which his wife describes as "a little greasy" to us.

She said Japanese cooking consists of a lot of fish and many vegetables, in contrast to the meat-laden American diet.

Hisagai said that language was the family's biggest problem. Although both he and his wife, who has a bachelor's degree in American literature, speak excellent English. Hisagai said it is especially a problem for his children, who did not know the language before coming here.

His son is attending Hartley Elementary School in a class designed for students whose native language is not English, but he said the change is definitely causing some anxiety. He said their daughter seems to be having the least difficulties with this problem and plays with neighborhood children happily despite the fact she only knows a few English words.

A working journalist

In Japan, Hisagai is a working journalist for the Western Japan Daily which has a circulation of 650,000. He said he loves to write and concerns himself with reporting the facts.

Before coming to the United States, he wrote a story on the plight of Japanese fishermen caused by the rising oil prices. Hisagai said this has been a real problem since fish is a main staple of the Japanese diet. He has also written many news articles on nuclear power.

During his stay, Hisagai will concentrate on the subject of U.S. energy policy, as well as other controversial issues like the women's movement.

"The U.S. is a very influential country and the Japanese people need to understand it," he said. Hisagai said he hopes to be able to write better about America and increase his reader's understanding after his stay here. The Fulbright scholar said he is planning to write a series of articles about his visit when he returns to Japan.

Hisagai also visited the United States last February when covering a professional Japanese baseball team at camp in the western United States. The team, called the Hanshin Tigers, was there to practice before the baseball pennant game in Japan.

A spokeswoman for the National Fulbright Association, headquartered in Washington, D.C., said having a scholar at a university is "an honor." She said that many times the scholars request Ivy League universities like Harvard or Yale, since they have heard about these universities in their own countries.

The Fulbright scholars are chosen according to their professional and academic records.

Vandalism...

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"I'll personally offer a reward of \$100 to anyone with solid information about this incident," Coffey said. The Grounds department also has offered a \$100 reward in this instance, Dasenbrock said.

Another example came last year between Thanksgiving and the end of the semester, Coffey said.

"I think five cases were reported of small pine trees being cut down or tops taken out of the larger ones—obviously for Christmas trees," Coffey said.

Public fixtures such as outdoor lights, fire exit signs, water fountains, rest room fixtures, windows and doors are other targets of campus vandals, Fey said.

Dasenbrock said trash containers, planters, signs, signposts, bike racks, lawns and lawn sprinkler systems around campus are also vandalized.

All of these actions affect morale, Dasenbrock said.

"Earlier this year the litter problem around Broyhill Fountain got so bad the people on the crew were ready to walk off the job in protest," he said.

Doug Zatechka, director of UNL housing, said he also sees staff apathy caused by vandalism.

"A janitor who tries to do a good job cleaning up a lounge one day comes back the next and finds a mess with paper all over and lounge furniture broken. Then he thinks, 'What's the use?'"

Administrative action

Administrators and police, however, are not sitting idly by. Last year when the vandalism problem on one residence hall floor became so bad, Zatechka notified all the residents of the floor that they would be moved to other halls across campus. Damage to the floor included more than 20 broken light bulbs, broken windows and screens, three damaged doors and damaged fire equipment.

Since no one admitted causing the damage, Zatechka left the blame with the entire floor. Even though 13 students were eventually allowed to stay, the majority was split up and moved to other halls.

"I won't do that again," Zatechka said. "I'll send the whole floor in front of a bunch of faculty members and let them decide."

Students reported for vandalism in residence halls meet with their floor's student assistants and residence hall director. If the reports accumulate, the student is asked to leave the hall. But if a student is caught tampering with fire safety equipment, severe action is taken, Zatechka said.

That action, according to Glen Schumann, assistant director of UNL housing for maintenance, includes removal from the residence halls, an automatic appearance before the UNL judiciary board and a possible hearing in the civil courts.

"Two years ago we had 46 fire alarms go off in residence halls. Then we told the students, 'If you start a fire or pull a false alarm you're out of the hall.' Last year, we had seven false alarms," Zatechka said.

Although student most likely caused the damage to the halls last year, which cost \$20,000 for labor and materials, students have also become involved in curbing vandalism, campus officials said.

Damages tabulated

Last year, a pilot program was started on some floors at the Harper-Schramm-Smith residence complex, said Ron Hald, a student assistant in Cather Hall and a former resident of Harper-Schramm-Smith.

"The damages for each floor were tabulated and included in the floor minutes," Hald said. The program was "successful enough to try in all other halls this year," he said, "as a system-wide test project."

Efforts to provide a monetary incentive to students who report vandals also have been discussed, Hald added.

Such a program exists in Lincoln, according to Gail Gade, director of Campus police. Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards and anonymity to citizens who furnish information about crimes. Gade, a member of the board of directors of the organization, said he will consider recommending to the board the inclusion of a \$100 reward for reports on vandalism.

Campus officials all mentioned the environment and a sense of community as important factors in the prevention of vandalism.

"I think that when people care about where they live and respect each other, it (the campus) becomes a nicer place to live," Schumann said.

Dasenbrock said "we also have to fight desperately to keep the campus from becoming a slum."


Fey agreed, saying, "Vandalism does incur more vandalism—it really does," he said. "If an area can be kept nice you can prevent vandalism."

Dasenbrock said "in the long run the effort pays off. But it's a challenge to us every year."

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