



Staff photo by Craig Andresen

Japanese exchange students Yoshiaki Tsutsumi and Kazunori Takagi relax in the Selleck cafeteria. The students will be spending their first Christmas in America.

Exchange students to learn traditions

By Martin Neary

The distance from Lincoln to Nagoya, Japan is about 4,000 miles. Two Japanese foreign exchange students said there are almost as many differences in Christmas traditions as miles between the two cities.

Kazunori Takagi and Yoshiaki Tsutsumi came to UNL from Nanzan University in Nagoya as part of an exchange program which also sent three Nebraska students to Japan. Kazu and Yoshi, as their friends call them, flew to the United States in August.

Takagi and Tsutsumi both live in Selleck Hall and are preparing to celebrate their first Christmas in America. Christmas is not celebrated as a national holiday in Japan but it is a commercial thing for businesses, Tsutsumi said. Most households do have a special Christmas dinner which includes cake, Takagi said. Santa Claus also can be found at many Japanese shopping centers.

This year, Takagi and Tsutsumi will be staying with their host family to learn how Americans celebrate the holidays.

Phyllis Todd, a Japanese citizen of Lincoln who has hosted over 50 agriculture trainees, will serve as host to the students. Tsutsumi and Takagi said they are looking forward to Christmas and to helping Todd decorate her Christmas tree.

Tsutsumi and Takagi said they expect Christmas in the United States to be comparable to the Japanese New Year.

New Year's Day is the biggest holiday in Japan, the exchange students said.

"It's kind of a Christmas, because families get together with relatives and kids get money," Takagi said.

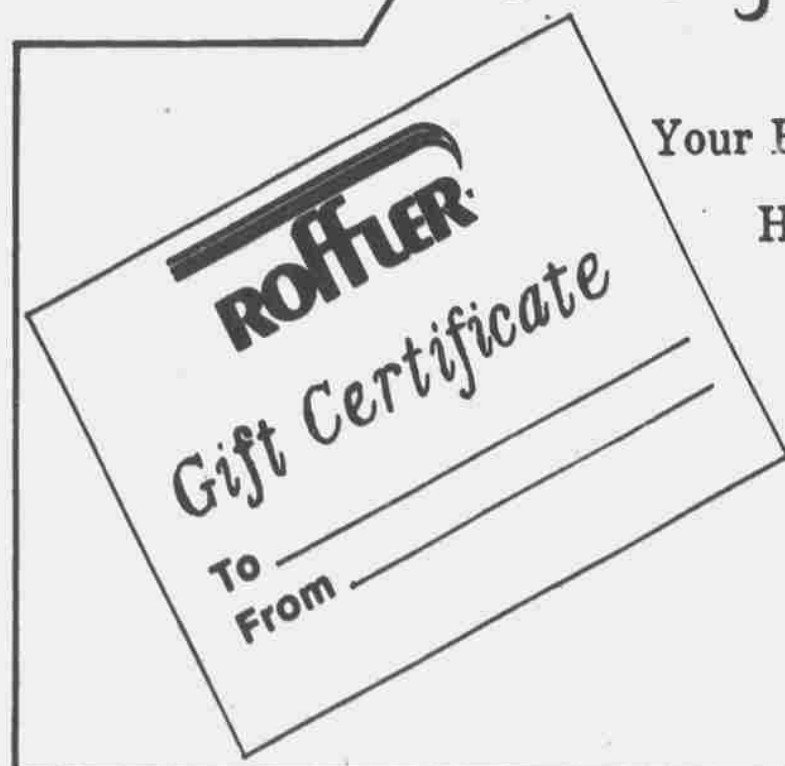
The Japanese get a one-week vacation during Shogatsu, the New Year's holiday and kids are even allowed to drink, Tsutsumi added. The money that children receive during the festivities is called the New Year allowance. Other than the allowance, the students said there is no exchange of gifts.

Takagi and Tsutsumi said Halloween, the first American holiday they experienced, had some strange customs. The two joined right in, though, by dressing up and attending costume parties.

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