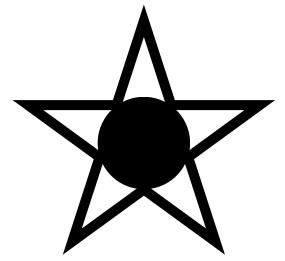


ASAHIKAWA INFO



July 2024, Volume 332

Hokkaido News Top 5

June 2024, compiled by the AIC from Hokkaido News

Japanese Sports Day Accompanied by International Student Cheers (6/1)

On May 31st in Higashikawa, the town's Welfare Technical School hosted its first sports day event in 5 years. Approximately 180 international students from 14 different countries and 120 Japanese students competed in various events such as tug of war and ball rolling. Throughout the sports day, participants were challenged to communicate among themselves or with teachers in order to win their games. Many of the students found the sports day to be a refreshing new experience.

Multicultural Exchange in Asahikawa (6/4)

On June 1st, approximately 30 local residents and international residents of Asahikawa gathered at FEEEL for a conversation-focused multicultural exchange. Participants were divided into 6 groups of 4 to 5 people, enabling them to communicate in Japanese, English, other foreign languages, as well as through hand gestures and body language. The Asahikawa International Center plans to offer more multicultural exchanges every season.

Reverberating Vigor Fills The City: The Hokkaido Great Music Parade (6/9)

On June 8th, music filled the city as the 92nd Annual Great Hokkaido Music Parade marched through downtown. A total of 81 organizations and approximately 2,800 musicians performed in the march. Despite the summer heat, this event attracted as many as 11,000 visitors to the city, including family, friends, and tourists. Additionally, there were 6 stages throughout Heiwa-Dori Shopping Street where energetic musical performances were held.

Middle School Students from Bloomington, Illinois Meet The Mayor (6/11)

In early June, six middle school students from Bloomington-Normal, Illinois (USA), accompanied by their chaperones, visited Asahikawa as part of a sister city exchange program. During their visit, host families from Asahikawa took them to various sights around the city. During their courtesy visit with Mayor Hirosuke Imazu, the students recounted their experiences, describing the locals of Asahikawa as "kind" and the city scenery as "beautiful."

Dwindling Intercity Buses (6/23)

Throughout Hokkaido, there has been a decline in intercity bus routes, with certain routes being completely suspended. For instance, the number of buses between Asahikawa and Monbetsu has decreased from 6 buses (3 round trips) to 4 buses (2 round trips). Similarly, the routes between Asahikawa and Engaru, as well as Asahikawa and Esashi, have gone from 2 buses (1 round trip) to being suspended. This decline could be attributed to population decreases affecting ridership, as well as a shortage of bus drivers.

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For more information,
please scan the QR code to
access our website



For further information or to register for events, contact:

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Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido



Summer Night Jazz Festival in Jyofukuji 2024 夏の夜のJazz Festival in 静福寺 2024

Get swinging during Jazz Night right at Takasu's Jyofukuji. H Zettrio, Megtaro, and other musicians take the stage for a night of music.

Date: 7/6 (Saturday)

Time: 14:00 (Entry), 14:15 (Start of performance)

Location: Jyofukuji (11-sen 6-go, Takasu Cho, Kamikawa-gun)

Admission: 6,500 (General Admission), 3,500 (Junior High and High School students), FREE (Elementary School students and below)

Kawamachi Fest かわまちフェス

On 7/7 at 7pm on the 7th minute, let's all "Kanpai" by the water. Drinks, food, and live performances available!

Date: 7/7 (Sunday)

Time: 13:00~20:00

Location: Asahikawa Station Southern Exit Square

For Details: <https://mizbedekanpai.mizbering.jp/>

Scan for more info



Festival Float Pulling Experience 山車のひき手体験

Experience a summer to remember in Asahikawa by being a part of the festival!

Event Details

Date 8/3 (Saturday)

Time: 19:30 - 21:40 (may change)

Location: Tokiwa Park Grounds (Reception starts at 17:45)

Registration Deadline: 7/10 (Wednesday)

Admission: ¥1,000 (Covers wooden tag and T-Shirt)

For Queries: toshikoryuka@gmail.com

Scan to register



Korean Culture Exhibition 韓国文化紹介展

To promote Korean culture as well as Asahikawa-Suwon Sister City Relations, there will be a Korean Culture exhibit with food, photo exhibit, and hanbok-dress up experience for everyone to enjoy!

Event Details

Date 7-13(Saturday) ~ 7/15(Monday)

Time: 13:00~17:00 (7/13), 10:00~17:00 (7/14), 10:00~16:00 (7/15)

Location: Ash Atrium (I-jodori 7-chome, Asahikawa)

Admission: FREE



Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido



Nagayama Marche

永山マルシェ

Delicious! Cute! Relaxing! From delicious food stalls to crafts, from kitchenware to fortune telling, the Nagayama Marche has something everyone can enjoy!

Event Details

Date: 7/15

Time: 10:00 - 16:00 (Monday)

Location: Yawaragi Funeral Hall (2-jo 9-chome 2-22, Nagayama)

Lavender Festa Kamifurano

ラベンダーフェスタ上富良野

Witness the magnificent lighting of Farm Tomita's iconic lavender field at Kamifurano! The main event's performances and activities will take place on 7/21

Event Details

Date: 7/13 (Saturday)~ 7/21 (Sunday)

Time: 19:30~21:30

Location: Hinode Park Lavender Garden, Kamifurano Town, Hokkaido



Kamikawa Shrine Festival

上川神社祭り

Food stalls, games, and many more. Experience the Kamikawa Shrine Festival with your family and friends.

Event Details

Date: 7/20 (Saturday 17:00~20:00)

7/21 (Sunday 11:00-20:00)

7/22 (Monday 11:00-17:00)

Location : Tokiwa Park, Asahikawa

Asahikawa Taisetsu Sanroku Festival

旭川大雪さんろくまつり

Asahikawa's biggest festival is happening this August! Parades, dance performances, food stalls, and fireworks!

Event Details

Date : 8/1 (Thursday) - 8/3 (Saturday)

location : Mainly 3-jo 6-chome, Asahikawa

Ishikari River Asahibashi (8/1 Opening Ceremony (18:00) and Fireworks (19:45))

Heiwa-Dori Shopping Street (8/2 Citizen Dance Parade (17:30)) & **(8/3** Portable Shrine Procession)

Tokiwa Park & Showa-Dori (8/3 Rekka Tanabata Festival Parade (17:15))



A Baby Boomer Learns English

Episode 4: Starting A New Life in Germany (1990)

Written by Noriaki Gentsu



At Pension Börgener, Osterode am Harz, Germany (1990)

(Continued from Episode 3)

Introduction

The year 1990 brought about an important chapter in my life which coincided with a historical movement in Europe. Here I reflect on my challenges in starting a new life in Germany which eventually wove the abundant connections of friends from many different countries which I still hold onto in my present retired life.

Osterode am Harz, Autumn 1990

On October 3, 1990, I was alone in my flat in Osterode am Harz (Osterode by Mount Harz), a small town near the border of former East Germany, where I breathlessly watched the President Richard von Weizsäcker of Germany delivered a speech on TV to commemorate the historic German Reunification.

It felt like the whole country had been filled with an uplifting feeling of peace. Back in November 1989, the Berlin Wall dramatically collapsed, marking the approaching end of the Cold War. Numerous citizens from East Berlin crossed the wall, and people from both sides

held each other; shedding tears of joy in the midst of the historical moment.

Three months prior, in August 1989, I was in West Berlin on a business trip for about a week. I had then thought of doing a day trip to sightsee East Berlin, however I didn't because I thought I would do that next time. After the collapse of the wall, I realized that, "There might not be a 'next time' when it comes to traveling."

Flashbacks, 1984-1990

During my first trip to Germany and Europe in 1984, my company was producing VCR decks at our factory in Osterode to comply with the EU's requirements to remedy the trade imbalance between Europe and Japan. Over time, it worsened, and the EU required Japan to create further effective measures to increase the added value made in Europe to the total cost of a VCR sold in Europe.

Our first solution was that we jointly develop the chips with European semiconductor makers and buy them from their factories. This involved European companies located in

Hamburg, Munich, Freiburg, Grenoble, Lyon, and Eindhoven.

Our second solution was to establish a new development center in Germany, adding to the already existing VCR factory, in order to optimize costs and designs for Europe

I was responsible for both projects and made a mid-term business plan, leading me to then trailblaze to Germany.

Istanbul and Izmir, March 1990

In March 1990, I was on my way to Germany to open a temporary office inside our VCR factory in Osterode. I was to be stationed there to manage the aforementioned projects. On the way to Germany, I stopped over in Istanbul for one night and moved to a hotel in Izmir to attend the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) Izmir Meeting of 1990 for about a week.

As I sat at the hotel porch in Istanbul and saw the rolling waves in the Bosphorus Strait, I thought to myself: that as I breathe here and now, I am crossing continents from Asia to Europe. I believe that I will find something valuable in Europe in exchange for what I have left with my family back home; that it would be all right because we would travel and see it together someday in the near future.

During my stay in Izmir, the Turkish National Committee offered a bus tour to Ephesus, an ancient city in Turkey's Central Aegean region. The remains there reflected centuries of history, from classical Greece to the Roman Empire. Standing on the paved streets, weather-beaten squares, baths, and other monumental ruins, I imagined people actively working in this Mediterranean commercial center during ancient times.

Osterode am Harz, Spring 1990

In March 1990, just after the IEC meeting in Turkey, I stayed for three weeks at a small hotel called "Pension Bögenger" in Osterode. It was run by a family that had several guest rooms, each equipped with a toilet and a shower. In a large hall where breakfast was served, I was impressed with the quality and volume of the breakfast, which included varieties of breads, cheeses, and sausages.

Later I learned that this is the standard in Germany. A German had taught me a saying: "Eat breakfast like a king, eat lunch like a nobleman, and eat supper like a beggar." Apparently, this way of eating not only comes from German culture but also makes sense in terms of food nutrition studies.

In the evenings, I often went out with a Japanese colleague, who was temporarily staying at the same hotel, to have Italian food at Piccolo Mondo or Chinese food at Golden Dragon.

I also had meetings with the factory management regarding my second project of establishing a development center. However, my first priority at the time was the semiconductor project. I quickly visited companies in Hamburg, Freiburg, Munich and Grenoble, ended my three-week operation and left for Osaka.

Osterode am Harz, Summer 1990

In June, I flew to Germany for the second time that year. A few days later, Mr. Ogata, my former teammate in Osaka, joined my office in Osterode. That made two of us. We were to work on our second project: the opening of the Audio Video Technology Centre (AVTC).

In our office, which was our factory's open space, there were two desks, two telephones and a fax machine. We needed to closely communicate with our counterparts in Osaka because we temporarily depended on their operational budget and cooperation.

We typed and faxed our plan daily to share with our Osaka office. We had only a few hours in the morning to communicate with them. Otherwise, we would have to wait until the next day due to the seven-hour time difference between the two offices. (We had to wait for the Internet until Windows 95 appeared in 1995 to make things much more efficient.)

We wanted to buy many items and instruments to be able to develop VCR in Germany. The purchasing section of the factory helped us do so. One day, we ordered some plastic trash baskets for our office only to get the estimated delivery time of nine weeks returned from them. With Germany's impending reunification, Eastern Germans significantly boosted

demand in Western Germany's markets by purchasing goods.

On weekends, my young Japanese colleagues, who were already working for the factory, drove me to Goslar, a historic town in Niedersachsen (the state of Lower Saxony). It is in the Harz Mountains area and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its Old Town with lots of timber houses. On other occasions, they drove me to mountain roads toward small countryside restaurants.

I noticed that whenever they ordered food, they all spoke simple German, which worked very well. They were not entirely very fluent, but they had to communicate with German workers in the German language. That motivated me to be more ambitious in improving my German based on my English ability.

In July, after having required on-the-road driving lessons, I got an Audi as a company car. Mr. Ogata and I awkwardly drove together on Autobahn 7 to Maschsee (Lake Masch) in Hannover.

At the end of July, our factory entered three weeks of summer vacation and was entirely closed. In Germany, people have six weeks of vacation aside from sick leave. Each German state starts their summer vacation on different timings. The whole country seemed to stop economical activities. As such, I flew back to Osaka so that I could prepare for my third flight to Germany that year in September, when my office, AVTC, would be officially operative.

Enjoying Trips and People

As I flew frequently to Germany and France, I used to greet, chat, and sometimes even shake hands with people sitting next to me, mostly in English. Whenever I took long-distance taxi rides to Hamburg, taxi drivers would ask me many things in German.

It was necessary for me to prepare some funny stories in both languages. I noticed that people would naturally start talking to each other even when they did not know each other's names and backgrounds. What a difference! I was beginning to enjoy different cultures. It did not take long before I would be acquainted with

some German families who would provide me with shortcuts to knowing the authentic Germany.



To Be Continued in September Issue (Volume 334)

Travel Album



Repairing excavated parts in Ephesus, Turkey (1990)

On the ancient streets,
Ephesus, Turkey (1990)



Bosphorus Strait,
Istanbul, Turkey (1990)

AIC BULLETIN BOARD



Need Assistance?

If you ever find yourself in need of assistance, know that the Hokkaido Foreign Resident Support Center is there for you! They are able to provide you with consultation services in various languages (Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Russian, Indonesian, Thai, Nepalese, Burmese) on residence procedures, employment, medical care, welfare, childbirth, childcare, education, and more for FREE! Call them at **011-200-9595** or go to: www.hiecc.or.jp/soudan



Interesting activities such as quizzes, discussions, songs, games, handicrafts and much more, all in English! Come meet new people, relax and relate on Fun Fridays!

Dates: July 12th & 26th, August 9th & 23rd, September 13th & 27th

Times: 13:00pm-14:00pm ~Afternoon~ 2nd and 4th Friday of the month
18:30-20:30pm ~Night~ 2nd Friday of the month

Location: Asahikawa International Center, Common Meeting Room (1)
(Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome)

Charge: ¥1,500 for 3 months (Free for volunteer leaders)

The AIC offers many services to make your life in Asahikawa more enjoyable. Here are just a few:

Volunteer Guide: Volunteers are registered to help translate and interpret.

Event Volunteer: The AIC plans many exciting events throughout the year, such as Friendship Parties.

Homestay: Families are registered to welcome you into their homes for an overnight stay or just an afternoon visit.

Why not become a volunteer and help plan these events?



The Asahikawa International Center (Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome) has free Wi-Fi available for public use. If you reside in Asahikawa, registration for a user card is required. Please feel free to come by anytime, as well as check out some of the other services and activities available at the Asahikawa International Center!

Spread the Word!

Contribute to the AIC newsletter and share any interesting information you may have with other readers. You may write on any topic including: items to buy/shell, offers for culture/language exchange, or write an essay about your life in Asahikawa or your hometown. The article should not be profit-related! Please send your submissions to us at the AIC.



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****The opinions expressed in the essays are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AIC or the City of Asahikawa.****