

# THE BREEZE

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No. 42

St. Michael's Association

November 2013

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## Letter from the Editor

A CV describes what we have achieved in life, which universities we went to, and what our strengths are. It typically describes which companies we worked for. What an average CV does *not* do is describe which primary school we went to, much less the values of the teachers who taught us at this level.

Yet it seems to me that it is during our primary education, in addition to learning how to read, write, and count, that we are instilled with the core values that we take with us in our journey through life.

As people sharing common values, it is not too surprising that we form the strongest bonds with our fellows from primary school. There almost seems to be an invisible string connecting all of us who otherwise blend in with the wider community and make our living in very different ways, so that we come together occasionally to share stories and refresh friendships.

You only need to come to the annual bazaar to understand the strength of this invisible string. There are people from different generations greeting and hugging each other, talking about the present and the days past. This year, we were graced with the presence of Ms Dolby who was celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of starting her job in what must have felt like a remote outpost of civilization back in 1973.

In addition to the annual bazaar, there were two events this year that reconfirmed the strength of the invisible string. The senior members of the School Alumni enjoyed the company of Ms Hirose in May, celebrating her birthday. Despite her age, Ms Hirose was graceful enough to attend the event, and as far as I could tell, the alumni were very happy to be in the company of each other.

And in June, we commemorated the work and life of Ms Brown, the second Head of School of St. Michael's, at a ceremony at St. Michael's Cathedral. There were about 30 of us who stayed on after the Sunday service. For me, the highlight of the service was Ms Konishi's speech which reconfirmed how much Ms Brown was loved by her colleagues. The speech is reproduced in this issue of *The Breeze*, providing us with an opportunity for renewed appreciation of the second Head of School.

As the School approaches the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016, the Board and the Council will be determining the content of the celebrations. *The Breeze* will update you with the specifics of the programme once they have been decided.

Keyji Johnsen, *Editor*

## **New Staff**

As we commenced our new school year at SMIS, we noticed that not too much had changed. It almost felt as though we began right where we had left off in June, except for two new additions to our SMIS family. This year, we welcomed Kazumi Koseko as our Finance Manager and Steven Moinester as the English Language School Coordinator.

### **Interview with Kazumi Koseko**

Q1. Did you know about Kobe before this job came up?

A. I am from Osaka so I know about Kobe.

Q2. Why were you interested in SMIS?

A. I came back from England last year and was trying to pursue my career in finance and the opportunity came up at SMIS.

Q3. How is Kobe treating you so far?

A. Very trendy.

Q4. Please highlight the differences you noticed between your previous jobs and at SMIS?

A. I have never worked in education before so it's very challenging.

Q5. What is your favourite destination in Japan?

A. I'm a keen diver so Kushimoto is my favourite place at the moment.

Q6. What is your favorite Japanese food?

A. Tofu

Q7. What is your favorite eatery in Kobe?

A. None so far.

Q8. What do you miss about the UK?

A. Friends

Q9. What about UK are you glad that you left behind?

A. The weather and the transport system.

Q10. Tell us a bit about your childhood?

A. I was a normal Japanese kid until I started listening to British music.

11. Q. Do you have a hobby? Do you play sports? Do you watch sports?

A. I love diving and I also like watching rugby and tennis.

12. Q. Where do you plan to be and what do you intend to do in 10 years' time?

A. Who knows!

13. Q. If you were given 2 months holiday to do whatever you wish, where would you go and what would you do?

A. Diving in Tahiti and Maldives.

### **Interview with Steven Moinester**

I was raised in New York and lived there until I finished University at the age of 21. I went to University in upstate New York in a city called Binghamton. Unfortunately, this city has the second most precipitation in America (Seattle is first), so I really wanted to go somewhere bright and cheerful for my next adventure. After University, I spent two years in paradise while studying in graduate school at the University of Hawaii.

My interest in Japan and Japanese culture compelled me to leave paradise and come to the land of the rising sun in 1993 as an English teacher on the JET Programme. I lived north of Himeji in the countryside in teachers' housing. My apartment cost 7,300 yen per month (that is not a typo), but had thin walls, no running hot water, and a pit for a toilet! Quite a change from the house I rented with three other graduate students in Hawaii. However, my fascination with Japan motivated me to stay in that apartment for three years. Since then, I have lived in a number places in Kansai over the last 20 years. I also returned to America and spent four years working in California and studying in the evenings for my MBA at UCLA.

I really enjoy living and working in the Kobe area. It has a good mix of nature and city convenience. My Japanese communicative ability has gradually improved over the years, so I can understand and function effectively in most Japanese contexts but I am still challenged by more difficult topics and my reading and writing skills are far below my verbal skills.

My previous position was as an Associate Lecturer of English at Kwansai Gakuin University. I coordinated courses and taught there for 6 years and I enjoyed the experience very much. What interested me about the ELS Coordinator position at SMIS is the wide variety of responsibilities. It is a good fit for me because I am able to combine my extensive experience in course coordination and teaching with my MBA skills and business background. It is proving to be very challenging...but I like a challenge! I am very excited to have joined the SMIS family and I am looking forward to working with and getting to know the entire SMIS community. Thank you for your warm welcome and please stop by to shoot the breeze.

### **Miss Dolby's Account of the 2013 SMIS Bazaar**

When I first entered St Michael's playground in September 1973, all was very new and strange. Little did I know then that, almost 40 years on, my husband and I would be walking through the gates to the sound of 'One Direction' blasting out from the roof!

The Bazaar of 2013 seemed to be busier and more lively than the six I attended during my teaching days. What a lot of planning and effort has to go into organizing such an event! The food stalls were plentiful and the deliciously tasty morsels kept us going back for more. There were so many activities going on in the school building too, with excited children running from one to another, having such fun.

Things have changed over the years. The building has been updated and the facilities improved but the 'feel' of the school struck me as being the same. Wandering around the corridor upstairs, we paused to read some of the children's work. The message of love is still prevalent and, dare I say, brought a tear to my eye.

Some very happy years of my life were spent at St Michael's. It was good to see a few familiar faces, relive those memories and take away some new ones.

## Ms Konishi's Speech at Ms Brown's Memorial Service

16<sup>th</sup> June 2013

Grace Michi Konishi

I have agreed to talk about Miss Brown because of my association with her as a student, an employee under her headship, a church friend, and a next-door neighbour of the school flat and, more than anything, in gratitude to her.

Ruth loved the Japanese and enjoyed her life in Japan so much that her brother said, "Ruth's family is in Japan." I heard that Ruth didn't have this love for Japan from the beginning. She had spent a number of years during her childhood and adolescence in China where her father worked as a missionary. Considering the situation at the time, it was natural that she had some uneasy feelings towards Japan.

This feeling toward Japan changed when she visited her brother after the War. He was stationed in Japan as a lawyer for the American occupation forces. One day she was riding an extremely crowded train when a Japanese woman offered her a place to sit which she had created on her luggage and this incident completely changed her mindset towards the Japanese and she became a great fan of the Japanese people.

I met Ruth in September 1970 when I became her student on the advice of Miss Lea. Around that time, Miss Lea escorted Ruth to the hospital where Bishop Hinsuke Yashiro was being treated as she wanted to introduce her to the Bishop. But unfortunately, the Bishop was not well enough to meet her and Ruth did not have another chance before the Bishop passed away in October, which was a great regret for her.

When Ruth travelled to Hokkaido with me during a summer holiday, she chose Kushiro as her first visit so that she could visit the Bishop's grave where, I think, she pledged her dedicated service to St. Michael's; the will of Miss Lea and Bishop Yashiro.

During my time at St. Michael's working under Ruth, I found her meticulous, very strict and non-compromising until she was convinced. However, she was caring, considerate and generous to people. She was innocent like a child and humorous. She preferred teaching to sitting in the Head's office. Some ELS students told me that they enjoyed talking to her as a teacher rather than the Head.

I learnt from Ruth the spirit of challenging something with courage. If I am demonstrating some positivity now, this is due to the influence of Ruth. It was Ruth who encouraged me to obtain a driving license. My lifestyle

became wider thanks to her advice. I would not be able to come to church in my car now without that license.

Ruth loved teaching and her favourite pastimes were mountain climbing, hiking, skiing and outings with school staff and students. I remember feeling sorry when she became too busy with the Head's commitments to continue all those activities to her content.

She also loved reading and music. She played the flute. She loved cooking as well and often invited people to meals. She looked almighty to me. She was adept in everything!

It is known to everybody that she used to collect abandoned cats and dogs and she always lived with five or six cats, showing her love for animals as well as people.

She thoroughly enjoyed her life. After she became Head of School, she always devoted herself to pursuing the purpose of the School's establishment.

Bishop Nakamura wrote in his memory of Miss Lea that he saw Ruth's determination about the School when he visited her as acting-Head in her office. Ruth said, "People who work at St. Michael's are expected to serve God and people through the education of children; and this is the will Miss Lea left to us". When she said this in a resolute manner, Bishop Nakamura thought he saw Miss Lea in Ruth, an illusion.

I believe it was not an illusion of Bishop Nakamura. Ruth's life in Japan started with one incident initiated by a Japanese person. When the two founders of School, Bishop Yashiro and Miss Lea passed away, there was Ruth. And this is what God conjured up.

Five years have passed since we sent Ruth back to God. Today her Japanese family members are gathering here sharing her memories and praying together, and I would like to give thanks for this opportunity.

May peace rest on Ruth's soul!

## **1<sup>st</sup> March 2014: AGM & Party of St. Michael's Association**

The preparation for the Annual General Meeting of St. Michael's Association is already underway! Come and join us on 1<sup>st</sup> March to mix with graduates from different generations! International School and English Language School graduates mingle on this special day, making this the social event of the year for St. Michael-ites! I have already started thinking questions for the quiz, and I promise to make it easier than last year (but not that easy!). So see you on the afternoon of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014, where young mixes with the old, and ELS mixes with the IS. More information to follow!

## **Fund Raising Updates**

As the School gets older, so do its facilities. This year's Annual Campaign is to update the hall facilities, such as the sound system and lighting and the air conditioning system etc. While the Parents of St. Michael's are very active on the fundraising front, St. Michael's Association will also be contributing to the Annual Campaign. If readers feel that they could contribute to the Annual Campaign, kindly send your donations to the following account, including the phrase "annual campaign". We thank you for your continued cooperation to make the school a special place for the students.

Bank: Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation  
Branch: Kobe Eigyou Bu (Branch No.500)  
Account Name: Sei MikaeruKokusaiGakko Dousoukai  
Account No. 8579576  
Swift Code: SMBCJPJT

## **Getting in touch with St. Michael's Association**

If you find the need to get in touch with St. Michael's Association, the best way to do this is through this email address. You are also very welcome to leave a message at the School office.

[alumni@smis-mail.org](mailto:alumni@smis-mail.org)

## **SMA Diary (& Key Dates from the School Calendar) (2013-2014)**

25 <sup>th</sup> August 2013 (Sun)	13 <sup>th</sup> meeting of SMA
20 <sup>th</sup> November 2013 (Wed)	14 <sup>th</sup> meeting of SMA
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2014 (Wed)	15 <sup>th</sup> meeting of SMA
1 <sup>st</sup> March 2014 (Sat)	SMA Annual General Meeting
10 <sup>th</sup> March 2014 (Mon)	Founders' Day Celebration
26 <sup>th</sup> April 2014 (Sat)	School Bazaar

Further SMA meetings will be added upon confirmation of the date.

Meetings of St. Michael's Association are open to anyone who has been involved in St. Michael's in any way – International School students, English Language School students, or teachers. We publish *The Breeze*, organize alumni events, and generally keep in regular touch with past students and teachers of St. Michael's.

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