

Greetings from Tokyo! I arrived safely on July 2nd and had just a few days to rest before the Summer Course in Japanese Language began on the 6th. The course is an **intensive** six weeks comprised of morning classes for fours and various afternoon cultural activities. So far the first two weeks have been the most challenging. In addition to the classes, activities, and studying, we (Rotary Fellows) spent the first two weeks establishing our lives in Japan including alien registration, health care registration, opening bank accounts, and other tasks of the sort. Also during this time we met our Rotary Host Counselors here in Japan. My Host Counselor, Yoichiro Nakagawa, is of the Tokyo Rotary Club, which I was told was the first club established here in Japan. We discussed that the best time for me to visit the club and meet the other members would probably be after the language program, considering the length of travel time and time of day. Mitaka, the city that I am living in, is located on the western outskirts of the downtown Tokyo area and is not uncommon for travel to take between 45 minutes - 1½ hours. The transportation system is quite extensive and very convenient; however it still takes time.

I feel that I'm adjusting fairly well to my new environment. The most challenging aspect has been communication. I'm feeling a degree of disconnect to my environment since I am unable communicate, and it is a point of frustration that I did not prepare myself for adequately. The language classes are providing a good foundation for understanding the language, but it is still quite challenging for several reasons; 2 alphabets, kanji, different sentence structure, and similar words with the Philippine dialect I know all make the mental adjustment harder. Despite the challenges, I'm enjoying the opportunity to learn another new language and experience the culture. Some of the cultural activities that I've attended have included; tea ceremony, Japanese theater: kyogen, kabuki, and rokugo, traditional music, and an archeology lecture about the rich history of the campus. We have also attended one of the many summer firework festivals, and will be climbing Mt. Fuji this weekend.

The fellows from our class come from diverse work experiences and interests in the field of peace studies. We have had many good and interesting conversations about experiences, interests, opinions and global issues. We are all looking forward to the start of the term to further build upon these discussions.

Hope this finds you all well and surviving the summer heat! I have included my address and will later inform you of my cell phone number once I acquire one. If possible, could I be sent a few Sunrise Rotary Club flags as we had discussed so that I can provide them to the Rotary Center on campus, my Host Counselor and the Tokyo Rotary Club. Thank you again for the endorsement and sponsorship from the Club and District. It is greatly appreciated to have been granted this opportunity. I'm looking forward to the experience and sharing it with the club and the district.

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