

KIRITAKA English Journal Vol.18

~Stay Independent, Stay as ONE TEAM~ February 17th, 2023

You will get power from his new challenges!

On January 4th, 2023, I got a LINE message from a man who used to be a student in my HR class. He was in my class for three years, so we shared a lot of good memories and have gotten closer since then.



I recalled some memories of him. After he graduated from high school, he entered **Tokyo Gakugei University** to become a PE teacher. When he was in his fourth year, I got a phone call from him.

He said, "I have to say sorry, because I can't keep a promise I made to you."

I asked him, "What promise are you talking about?" I couldn't remember the promise he was referring to.

He said, "I promised you that I would become a teacher, but I cannot do it."

I remembered he wanted to be a teacher, but I did not realize it was a promise.

I said, "Never mind! You don't have to keep that promise. You can change your mind freely!"

and then asked him, "What are you going to do instead?"

He replied, "I got an offer from **F.C. Tokyo**, so I'll be a professional soccer player."

I was very surprised to hear this, and said, "Are you saying you will be a professional soccer player? You got an offer from a professional soccer team, right? That's unbelievable! Even the people who practice really hard cannot become professionals! Congratulations!"



He has been a professional soccer player for thirteen years; seven years for **F.C. Tokyo**, one year for **Vissel Kobe**, three years for **Sagantosu** and two years for **Yokohama FC**. Also, he was selected as a member of the National Team of Japan under the direction of the manager **Alberto Zaccheroni** from 2012 to 2014.



Furthermore, he had been the President of **JPFA**, the Japan Pro-Footballers Association, for several years; Maya Yoshida is in the position now. He has achieved a lot of things, not only as a professional soccer player, but also as a leader of this association.

After the last game of the 2022 season, **Yokohama FC** got promoted from J2 to J1, but he was told that **Yokohama FC** would not offer an extension of his contract for the next season. Since I read an article that he would leave **Yokohama FC**, I had been worried that he might retire, considering his age.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, I got a LINE message from him on January 4th. He told me he is going to start a new challenge. He is going to leave Japan for **New Zealand** to become a member of "**Auckland United F.C.**". This is his first time being a member of a foreign soccer club, but he is already 35 years old. This was not an easy decision, and he has only just started to study English despite his age!



In addition, he signed a contract making him a coach of the soccer club's academy class. This means that he would be both a professional soccer player and a coach for a kids' soccer team. He told me that his next dream is to be a manager or a president of a professional soccer team. To achieve this, he needs a lot of experience both to coach a lot of young soccer players and to communicate in English with players who come from all over the world. What a challenging job ahead!

I have not mentioned his name, but you can find it easily if you follow his career. I will give you one more piece of information about him; he graduated from **Iseaki Daisan Junior High School**. He was just an ordinary student, just like you! He has been motivating me for a long time, so I swear that I will never give up whatever happens! I hope you will also get motivation from his new challenges. You too can be whatever you want to be!

I hope the KIRITAKA English Journal will be accepted by students and their parents, and become a regular issue. (Toru Hoshino)

★ T's Power Song ★

Let me introduce a song created by a young man, who was once forced to give up his dream. He majored in design in college and got an employment offer from a designers' office in Italy in April 2020. However, he gave up on going and taking that job due to COVID-19. Triggered by giving up his job, he took on the challenge of making music, which he had been interested in for a long time. He did not give up, and he got a chance to sing the theme song for one of the "Getsuku" TV series. <https://youtu.be/z-bRjeAc-ic>



Kiwi Corner



Hi everyone! The other day, I got to experience another aspect of Japanese culture. My friend invited me over, and suggested we eat massive rolls of sushi, while facing south-south-east. **"How peculiar!"** I thought, while eating in **complete silence**. This delicious food is, as you all probably know, called 恵方巻 or a **"fortune sushi roll."** Of course, we ate them

because it was **Setsubun**, a holiday to celebrate the end of winter in the lunar calendar (the calendar based on the moon, and not on the sun.) Did you know, however, that Japan isn't the only country to celebrate using the lunar calendar?

In the last edition of Kiwi Corner, I wrote about how the **New Year** is celebrated around the world. However, in many countries in East Asia, the new year is celebrated following the lunar calendar, which means the new year happens in late January or February. This time, it was celebrated on **January 22nd**.

My friend is from Singapore, so we ate a traditional lunar new year dish called **Yusheng**. It is made up of shredded carrot, cucumber, daikon, salmon, crab meat, peanuts, deep fried dumpling skin, plum sauce and spices. These foods have special meanings, and you wish for luck each time



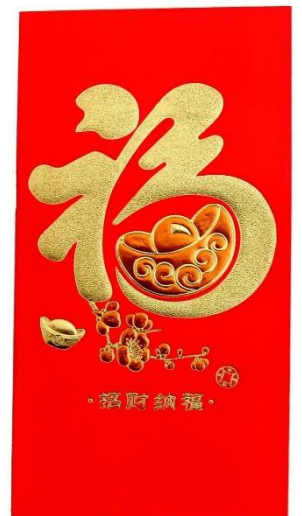
you add them to the dish. Once everything is assembled, everyone yells **"Happy new year!"** and makes wishes for the coming twelve months, while tossing the food up in the air. **How exciting!**



The Dragon Dance

Another lunar new year activity is the traditional Dragon Dance, performed by an experienced team who move a giant dragon puppet using poles. Dragons are believed to bring good luck, so the idea is that the longer the dragon dance, the more luck it will bring.

Something that is very similar to how new year is celebrated in Japan, however, is that the Lunar New Year is usually celebrated with family. Also, people give out **hongbao** or "red packets" with money to their younger relatives. This is very similar to the custom of giving お年玉 here in Japan, right?



Hongbao, red packets of money

For this month's article, I'd like to introduce a traditional Lunar New Year song. It is in Chinese, but there are English lyrics so you can understand the meaning. You can listen to it here: <https://youtu.be/SQBCzGNolZY> (Liam Campbell)



Lauren's Newsletter



Love is in the Air!

All around the world, people buy gifts to give on February 14th to celebrate Valentine's Day, the holiday of love and romance. Here in Kiryu, Valentine's chocolates were being sold in stores like Yaoko and 7-Eleven, and some people might have made chocolate for their friends. In the U.S., people also buy chocolate to give to friends, however, we also give other gifts too!



Valentine's Day plush



Romantic gifts for Valentine's Day (heart necklace, flowers, and chocolates)

Many people in the United States give gifts not only to romantic partners, but also to classmates, friends, teachers, and family. However, some gifts are more romantic than others. Boys may give girls roses or jewelry, or they may go to a nice restaurant. Red roses are one of the most popular flowers to give because they represent love, romance, and passion. Earrings and necklaces are also great gifts that people give to their romantic partners.



Valentine's Day balloons

Some people also give other gifts such as balloons. When I was a high school student, I would see classmates carrying large balloons and **plushies** (縫いぐるみ) around school every year on Valentine's Day!



Snoopy Valentine's Day cards

There are also many gift options that are not romantic! It is very common in school to give Valentine's Day cards to your classmates, close friends, and favorite teachers. Many people who work also buy chocolate or other sweets to give to their coworkers or boss. Some people make chocolate for Valentine's Day too, but it is not very common in the United States.

Valentine's Day is a special day to show **appreciation** (感謝) to the people we love or the people who are important to us. How did you celebrate Valentine's Day this year?

Your Friendly Neighborhood ALT,
(Lauren Taylor)

For Valentine's Day, I'd like to introduce a song about the joy of falling in love. Please enjoy!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_HmF84G7ZY

