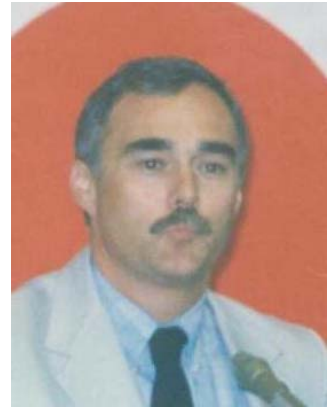


**Bill Harshbarger  
(1974~77)  
LIOJ Director, 1975~**

My involvement with LIOJ came about as a result of the first connection between LIOJ and the School for International Training (SIT) in Vermont. I was a student in the Master's degree program in Language Teaching at SIT in 1971 and 1972. Part of the program involves a student teaching assignment for a few months. Most of my class went to Mexico, but one classmate, Nancy Dodd, arranged to do her student teaching in Japan. While in Japan, she heard about and visited LIOJ. Some of the people who were teaching at LIOJ at that time were impressed by what Nancy told them about our graduate program at SIT, and some of them eventually came to get their own degrees after finishing their contracts at LIOJ. I was still at SIT in 1973, when Principal Roland Harker visited. He was looking for someone to teach at LIOJ who had more professional training than most of the teachers had at that time. Sully Taylor, one of the former LIOJ teachers who was at SIT, told me about Mr. Harker's visit and encouraged me to meet with him. I applied for and got a job that was somewhat loosely defined as a combination teacher and teacher trainer at LIOJ and started in the spring of 1974.



This was a somewhat pivotal time for LIOJ. In the earlier days of LIOJ, the emphasis was more on recruiting teachers who were interested in MRA ideals and who were willing to devote virtually their entire lives to the students and the school while they were at LIOJ than it was on recruiting English teachers. Prior to my arrival, teacher training had been handled by Liz Harmon, a trained ESL teacher experienced in teaching for the Peace Corps in Thailand. However, she was leaving LIOJ and Mr. Harker felt that it was important to continue moving LIOJ in a more professional direction. The teachers at LIOJ when I arrived were young, enthusiastic and came from several countries—the US, Canada and England—but none of them had any formal training in teaching English. Some of them had been there for a while—e.g., Toneko Kimura had been working with LIOJ since the traveling high school days of MRA's "Sing Out Asia" group. Many of the LIOJ staff were also people who had originally been part of the MRA activities prior to the formation of LIOJ within the MRA meeting facilities in Odawara: the Principal, Mr. Harker; his wife Terttu Harker, who oversaw the kitchen; Mr. Kuriyama, who drove the bus for field trips and who also worked in the maintenance of the building; Mr. Kehara, who handled much of the accounting and administration of LIOJ; and finally, Mr. Shibusawa, who provided overall supervision of the MRA Zaidan Hojin, or educational foundation, including LIOJ.

There were other strong connections to the original MRA activities that engendered LIOJ—the Mitsui's, who were instrumental in the founding of the Japanese branch of MRA, lived just below LIOJ, and there were occasional meetings of the remaining MRA members who gathered in Odawara to view films of their former activities. All in

all, there was still a very strong connection between the LIOJ of 1974 and its MRA origins. However, by this time the newer teachers had less connection to the ideals of MRA and were becoming more interested in experiencing Japan and viewing themselves as professional language teachers.

I introduced some newer teaching materials and shared ideas that I had learned in my Master's program and slowly we improved the curricula in the various programs offered at LIOJ.

Because of the intensity of the LIOJ experience, teacher "burn out" was a significant problem at this time. Just prior to my arrival in 1974, a teachers' house was built so that teachers no longer had to share the main living facilities with the students. However, we still ate three meals a day with students and worked with them in class for up to eight hours a day. On top of that, teachers often hung out with students in the students' lounge, talking or playing games. Some teachers got students to teach them *go*. I remember playing Risk with students and other teachers until 5:00 in the morning!

With all this intensity, we got to know many of the students very well, but with a program length of usually just four weeks we had to lose these new friends and prepare for a new group fairly frequently. The last Friday of each program was a party that lasted most of the night. Saturday morning there were sad farewells and the next day we greeted the new group with a cocktail party. This physical and emotional roller coaster effect drained teachers over the period of a year that they worked. In a few cases, teachers were unable to complete the year. Over the next few years several changes occurred which lessened this burn out somewhat, but teaching at LIOJ definitely remained more than a full-time job.

About a year after I started work at LIOJ, Mr. Harker decided that he and his wife wanted to see some more of the world and accepted a job in Iran. I was asked to take over as principal and did so with great trepidation. (The title of principal was left over from the traveling high school days of Sing Out Asia and was eventually changed to director.) My main objective, other than keeping the school operating, was to continue to enhance the professionalism of the instruction. As I took over the recruiting of new teachers, I started looking for people with ESL training. However, throughout my time at LIOJ, some of the most effective teachers that I worked with had no formal training in teaching English. We did gradually add trained teachers and this also tended to improve the nature of the curriculum and materials we used.

One of the most significant events during my time at LIOJ was our attempt to host a TESOL-like conference for English teachers in Japan. At that time, there were an estimated 10,000 foreign English teachers in Japan, but there was no way for them to effectively communicate with each other. I approached Mr. Shibusawa with the idea of holding a language teaching conference at LIOJ, advertising it in *The Japan Times* and other English language papers. He agreed and we proceeded to invite people to both submit presentations for the conference and to register. The response was an

underwhelming twelve responses. I was crestfallen and reported the bad news to Mr. Shibusawa. He suggested that we invite the twelve people who responded to come anyway at LIOJ expense for a couple days to see if we might do better at some future time. Most of them came and this meeting at LIOJ became the germ of what then formed into the Kansai Association of Language Teachers (KALT) because several of the people who came to our meeting were from the Kansai, including Sharon Bode and Tom Pendergast. KALT eventually became JALT and through additional machinations involving me trying to infiltrate another organization of mostly retired missionaries, JALT became the Japanese affiliate of TESOL.

I left LIOJ in 1977 to come back to the US and start a Ph.D. program. Roger Pehlke, a former LIOJ teacher agreed to come back and replace me as director. I will leave that story to him.