

**Gil Whyman
(1977)**

Jane and I arrived at LIOJ in the summer of 1977 on a Thai International flight from London, staying overnight in Hong Kong where the Silver Jubilee trams were painted up for 25 years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. We had just got married in May 1977. Jane had taught at LIOJ for a year in 1973-74 and I had been on a two week youth hostelling tour round Japan in 1974 before we met, so when we did we had something to talk about.

I had a degree in architecture so when they asked Jane to come back to LIOJ for the summer she asked if she could bring me. I took a TEFL course in London and we set off.

We loved our time at LIOJ. The businessmen were so keen to learn and probably knew more English grammar than we did! It was fascinating to teach them pronunciation, ideas, how to shake hands, what to do when meeting English businessmen. They were particularly keen to know what was the correct thing to do with their coats when they arrived at an office.

We loved the contrasts in Japan: the politeness in the private home but being pushed out of the way on the subway. The bullet train arriving and departing exactly as the second hand on the station clock reached the top, the art appreciation everywhere, the person sweeping the gravel in the drive doing it in a pattern, the vase of flowers in the toilet of the most humble service station on the motorway.

We were fascinated by the slight differences in language and customs between we British and the American teachers. Some businessmen wanted to learn British English and some American English, which we had thought was all the same. It was interesting that the 3rd and 4th generation Japanese teachers there were as unused to and found the Japanese customs as interesting and foreign as we did.

We stayed in a wonderful little apartment with *tatami* matting floor and a wooden bath and walked up to LIOJ to teach each day.

Odawara was very interesting with its pachinko (pinball we would call them) parlours with rows of machines making the sound that inspired their name, and the wonderful restaurants. I acquired a taste for sushi and sashimi that I still have.

On our weekends off we travelled to Tokyo, Kyoto, Komatsu, and all the places we could. Once we hitchhiked and were give a lift by a couple who asked, "Were the buses not running?" When we explained this Western custom they insisted in flagging down another car to take us further on our journey, much to everyone's embarrassment.

We soon learned that Japanese people did not like to say "no" to you, so if you asked, "Is this was the right way to Kyoto?", some of them would say yes even if it wasn't rather than offend the *gaijin*. So we had to rephrase this question to "Which way is it to Kyoto?"

We had a wonderful summer in Odawara then reluctantly took our leave and flew to Bangkok, arriving at night in a tropical downpour. Someone described it as 'leaving the womb'. We travelled in Thailand then flew to Burma for two weeks, then to Calcutta, and by train across India to Darjeeling, and back to London overland through Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Greece and Europe. We got home to Jane's mother's house just before Christmas and she took one look at us and made us both have a bath!

We have spent many happy hours reminiscing about our time at LIOJ and we are looking forward to going back to Japan once our three children are through school.