



## Urasoe City English Newsletter March 2009



In like a lamb, out like a...*shisa*? That's right folks, somehow March has rolled around, and soon it will be time to get your *kariyushi* out of mothballs for another fun-filled Okinawan summer. In the meantime, I hope you are enjoying the moderate temperatures and reduced humidity level.

During March and April several amazing natural events occur in the Ryukyu Archipelago. Through the end of March, it is possible to see humpback whales off the western side of the Kerama Islands. The whales come to this area in the winter in order to breed and care for their young. If you are interested in observing the whales up close, the best thing to do might be to contact one of the dive shops in the Keramas to arrange a boat tour. There is some debate as to whether the whales are particularly fond of humans hovering around them in motor boats, so if you're worried about this there is always the option of trying to spot whales from observatory points on the various islands.

Another spectacular spring event is the emergence of the Yabiji reef from the sea off the northern tip of Miyako Island. This happens several times a year due to tide changes, with the largest area of the reef being exposed on the third day of the third month by the lunar calendar (March 29th this year). Coral reef is exposed for a short period of time as the water level falls, giving the impression of a 'phantom island' appearing out of the ocean. This must be quite a treat to see – if you have the chance to go to Miyako Island and experience this, please make sure to be careful around all the fragile living coral.

Though it's perhaps not as exciting as mysterious natural phenomena, I am here for you in the International Relations Section at Urasoe City Hall should you need help with anything. Feel free to drop in! - Patrick

**If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact us at:**

International Relations Section, Urasoe City Hall

Ahacha 1-1-1, Urasoe 901-2501 (098)876-1234 (ext. 2612) [urasoe.ir@gmail.com](mailto:urasoe.ir@gmail.com)

### **Urasoe City has a new Japanese homepage!**

<http://www.city.urasoe.lg.jp/>

All the computer masters at City Hall have been working to get the new server and city homepage up for months. The new system is not only sleek but also much more secure. Unfortunately I won't be able to update information on the English section of the site for a few months as they work out kinks, but we'll get there...

### **A small request**

Last time I mailed out newsletters in December, a fair number of them came back with big red 'Addressee Unknown' stamps on them. If you plan to move or leave the country, I would appreciate it if you could please notify me by e-mail or telephone so that I can make a corresponding change to the mailing list. It will save us a lot of paper, stamps, and tears here in the IR section! Many thanks☆

### **Uchinaguchi Corner**

Lately I've been trying to pick up some phrases in Okinawan by participating in a club for speakers of the Okinawan language. The club meets at Urasoe's Central Community Center several times a month. If you would be interested in participating, please contact me and I'll happily give you more details.

### ***Shiran sēkō michibatān dīshi***

知らん大工道端んでいーし

しらんせーこーみちばたんでいーし

### **Better to ask the way than go astray.**

Literally "A carpenter who knows nothing would be wise to work alongside a road." People who come along on the road will see the carpenter making all sorts of mistakes and take the occasion to teach him the proper building method. If you want to learn something, the easiest way to do it is probably to ask someone else for help.



## FEATURE

### What's Going On Over There?

You may or may not be aware of the plans for the coast off Camp Kinser, so if I'm repeating information you've already heard you might want to skip over to the events section of the newsletter.

Urasoe has been planning to reclaim the public waters near the Makiminato Service Area of Camp Kinser for quite a while now. Negotiations for the return of this area from the U.S. military have been going smoothly and the first phase of the project is already in motion. So what exactly are they going to do over there, and why?

There are several parts to the project. One is to create an alternate road running from Naha to Ginowan. If you use the highway system in this area, you have probably noticed that it has a tendency to get rather jammed up at times. By adding a new route along the coast, city and prefectural developers are hoping to improve north/south traffic flow. The northern section of the new road will be built as a bridge anchored by pillars on the seabed – it is believed that this will have less impact on the natural environment than reclaiming land for the entire length of the road.

Another goal of the project is to create a coastline area for Urasoe, creating space for the construction of hotels and other businesses which should stimulate the economy of Urasoe and Okinawa Prefecture in general. Land will be reclaimed from the sea to build these areas, and a manmade beach will run along the edge of the reclaimed area, parallel to the new road mentioned previously.

There is no denying that this project will dramatically alter the natural coastline in this area, but developers are doing their best to find a way to preserve as much of the original beach as possible. Urasoe is cooperating with the Naha Port Authority as well as the national government to realize the new road and coast area, thus showing that the project is expected to bring significant infrastructural improvement to both Urasoe and Okinawa in general.



Artist's rendering of the new coastal area

## March/April Events & Holidays

### March 4<sup>th</sup> – Sanshin Day

March 4<sup>th</sup> = 3/4 = *san shi* ≈ *sanshin* Pretty clever huh!

People will be trying to play like Noborikawa Seijin and relishing in Okinawa's characteristic folk instrument all day long. Special events are planned in towns such as Yomitan and Ginozamura, and some radio stations will limit their selection to Okinawan folk music for the entire day. *Iyasasa!*

### March 14<sup>th</sup> – White Day!

Time to take your chocolate revenge boys.

### March 20<sup>th</sup> – Vernal Equinox Day

A national holiday

### March 22<sup>nd</sup> – UIRA Family Circle

*JICA Okinawa International Center, 10a.m. – noon*

A great opportunity to make friends with Okinawan families and/or play with lots of ultra-cute kids. Usually the club meetings involve games, songs, and a liberal dose of chat. Participation is FREE. You may want to verify the meeting date by calling the UIRA at 879-3010.

### April 18<sup>th</sup> – Worldwide CHANPURŪ Cook Fest

*Urasoe Central Community Center, 2-5p.m.*

Sponsored by the Urasoe International Relations Association, this event aims to introduce dishes from around the globe at an affordable price (¥500 single entry/¥1000 per family). Food will be prepared by participants from Korea, Peru, Canada, Okinawa, the U.S., and possibly France. Call 867-1234 (extension 2612) for details in English or reservations. The event is limited to 50 participants so please reserve early.

### April 25<sup>th</sup> – Japan Reggae Festa in Okinawa

*Ginowan Beach Park, Outdoor Theater (near the Convention Center)*

Wow, what a complex collision of island cultures and international music marketing. Tickets ¥6000 ahead of time, ¥7000 day of the event. Details in Japanese @ <http://jrf098.com/>

### April 29<sup>th</sup> – Showa Day

The first sweet taste of Golden Week.