Halloween in Japan: Obon Festival

While many people in the United States are accustomed to celebrating Halloween, the Japanese celebrate Obon. Similar to Mexican observance “El Dia del Muertos” Obon is a Buddhist custom dedicated to the spirits of one’s ancestors. Originally celebrated around the 15th day of the seventh lunar month, this three-day festival is one of the most important traditions in Japan. Family members take vacations to return to their hometowns in honor of these relatives. Prayer is very important within the festival. Many people gather at altars and graves to pray for their ancestors and call their souls back home. Lanterns are hung and fires are lit at the entrance of houses to guide and welcome the spirits.

A common Buddhist folkdance performed at Obon is Bon odori. This dance serves as an appreciation of the ancestors and their sacrifices. Traditionally, people dance around a yagura stage to traditional folk music. Each dance varies from region to region. During this celebration, people wear yukata, a light cotton kimono, usually worn for summer festivals. Costume play has become a popular trend among Japanese youth. Young people dress in kimono, game characters costumes, uniforms, and samurai. Although not a Japanese national holiday, Japanese businesses close and people take trips during Obon.

Source: http://gojapan.about.com/cs/japanesefestivals/a/
http://www.jackolanterns.net/japaneseha

From Sri Lanka to UWG

International student Surangi Perera came to UWG in August 2008 from Sri Lanka to pursue a degree in Biology. “I applied to a lot of schools but UWG took a special interest in me. They accepted me and made me feel welcome,” said Perera. Drawn to the many research opportunities in the Biology department, Perera is proud to call UWG home.

Because Sri Lankan customs slightly differ from those of the United States, Perera does not celebrate Thanksgiving. “Instead, she celebrates Sinhala and Tamil New Year,” said Perera. Sinhala and Tamil New Year is a Buddhist celebration that takes place during the 13th and 14th of April signifying a “new beginning.” There are two popular languages spoken in Sri Lanka, Sinhala and Tamil. A member of the ethnic group, Sinhalese, Perera speaks both Sinhala and English.

Most Sri Lankan cities and towns have public transportation; therefore, adjusting to the lack of public transportation around Carrollton was a bit challenging for Perera. She deems that “what does not kill you makes you stronger...The obstacles that I have overcome being in the United States and the things that I have learned throughout the process are now irreplaceable.”

Aside from Biology, Perera has an interest in psychology but found it difficult to double major. In Sri Lanka, many institutions provide a more specialized education with less focus on other academic areas. “One attribute that UWG has given me is the opportunity to be a well-rounded individual. Here she also has the opportunity to serve as an UWG tour guide and MAP mentor, where she assists minority freshmen with making a successful transition to college life. Just as any other student, Perera enjoys shopping, watching TV, reading and listening to music. “Sometimes I find myself missing my family because I am not able to see them as much as I would like.” Perera is grateful to be a part of UWG. Upon graduation, she not only plans to continue her stay in the United States but pursue her passion in child psychology.

Written By: Cheri Fair–MAP Intern

“The most powerful tool we have to protect ourselves, both from the tyrants of the day and from our own traditions are our words…. Feminist poets of the last century who’ve challenged the culture’s perception of women through verse have for centuries relied on words to transform reality” ~ Shirin Ebadi (2003 Noble Peace Prize).
Dr. Danilo Baylen

Originally from the Philippines, Dr. Danilo Baylen serves as an associate professor in the Department of Media and Instructional Technology at UWG. Prior to this, Dr. Baylen spent five years working as an assistant professor at Florida Gulf Coast University. He has also had the opportunity to work in Southeast Asian refugee camps where he learned to speak more than 10 different languages.

Dr. Baylen takes pride in helping teachers become better teachers. For him, mediocrity is not an option. He strives to best represent himself and his group affiliations. His motto in life is “don’t be accepting of the minimum...Even though the top is crowded, there’s always a place for those who excel.”

Dr. Baylen has an avid passion for learning and in his free time can be found taking courses at the university. His favorite course to teach is Technology Integration. “I enjoy being able to pull in children’s literature and use different technologies available on the web.” His hobbies include watching Sci-Fi, reading children’s books and creating bonsai trees. In the future, Dr. Baylen hopes to one day write a children’s book and travel to Europe.

Joette Crews

Junior, Joette Crews, is currently a Sociology major with a minor in Marketing. A member of the Advanced Academy Program, Joette not only works hard academically but also is the former president of Venture Crew 6617, a co-ed upper level division of the Boy Scouts of America. Presently, Joette works as a resident assistant in Gunn Hall, where she takes pride in presenting opportunities to her residents just as they were presented to her. Joette says her former resident assistant inspired and coached her along the way to stand out and become a leader.

In her spare time, Joette traditionally participates in many community service organizations such as River’s Alive, Safe Treat, Boy Scout camp cleanups, and Relay for Life. Her hobbies include swimming, playing soccer, reading and listening to music.

“UWG has helped me to become more independent and see life for what it really is.” Throughout her tenure at UWG, Joette has maintained the HOPE scholarship and is a proud recipient of the MAP Academic Achievement Award.

“If I could give advice to other students, I would say get to know you professors because they can open doors to your future.”

**MAP Academic Sessions**

- **Note Taking Workshop**
  October 7th Campus Center 108.3 @ 6:30 pm.

- **Student Health 101**
  October 13th UCC 206 @ 6:30 pm.

- **Communicating with your professor**
  October 21st Campus Center 108.3 @ 6:30 pm.

**"Sophie Scholl: the Final Days" (2006) Germany**

**WEDNESDAY October 21  Director:** Marc Rothemund

The Final Days is the true story of Germany’s most famous anti-Nazi heroine brought to life. Sophie Scholl is the fearless activist of the underground student resistance group, The White Rose. Using historical records of her incarceration, the film re-creates the last six days of Sophie Scholl’s life: a journey from arrest to interrogation, trial and sentence in 1943 Munich.

**Understanding the Cultural Kaleidoscope Lecture**

- **Social Change in the Middle East**
  October 13 Calloway Annex Rm 145
  By Professor Neema Noori

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**Conversations about Culture Series**

- **October 14th Executive Dining Room (EDR) @ 11:30 am.-1:30 pm.**

**3rd Annual Multicultural Ball**

- **October 28th Campus Center Ballroom @ 7:00 pm**

**Havana Nights**

- **October 7th Campus Center Ballroom @ 7:00 pm**