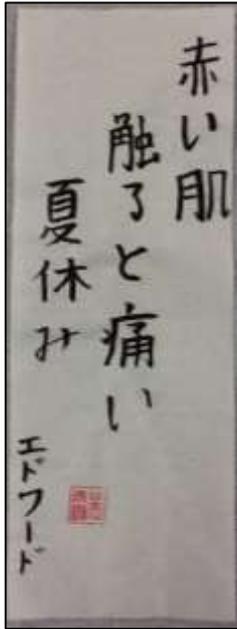


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I am Edward Popham, year 13, from Invercargill, Southland. Last year 2013 I won the New Zealand wide Shodo/Haiku competition run by the New Zealand Japanese Society of Auckland.

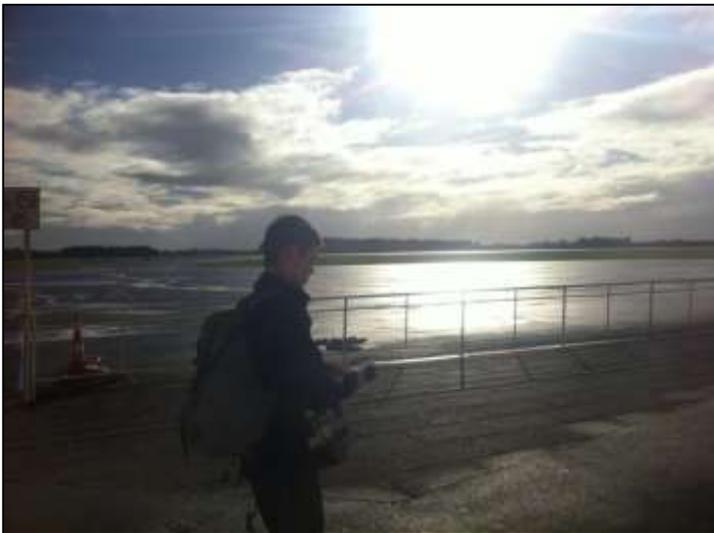
I translate my Haiku as: I have got red skin, It hurts a lot when I touch, Summer holiday.

My prize was a one week homestay experience in Chiba Prefecture, near Tokyo. I experienced Japanese lifestyle along with doing to some holiday activities and going to some hotspots in Tokyo.

You are reading my daily report.

Saturday the 5th

I left Invercargill after lunch, travelled to Auckland and stayed the night with my dad's cousins, Craig and Jessica.



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Sunday the 6th –plane, cloudy

I got dropped off early in the morning at Auckland Airport and had plenty of time to dawdle around and buy some more souvenirs. I found this really funny Japa-Kiwi HELLO TIKI.



I waited outside my gate, and just by the sound of some natural Japanese made me excited. Everything was all good on the flight. I had a chat with the mother of a family on my right and the eldest brother (12) of a family on my left. I watched a movie: Kiki's Delivery Service by real actors, and still did a bit of homework. My bottom was tingling a bit so I had a stretch. During the 11 or so hour flight, I pulled funny faces with the little 2 year old three seats right. Another highlight was the cookie time bikkie!



Finally, I got off the cool air conditioned plane and met Mr Kohara and Mr and Mrs Hayashi. I left the building with the Hayashis and I was smothered in a thick warmth. A typhoon was near so it was actually cooler than usual. On the car ride we had interesting conversations and I noticed every little thing from the roof tiles to rice fields to number plates and the fact that everything was in Japanese! Awesome!!!



They took me to a shabu-shabu restaurant for dinner. Shabu-shabu is meat put in hot juices for cooking, and then taken out, dipped into sauce then bam! YUMMY! My first taste of Japan!

After getting dropped off by the Hayashis to the Kato household, I had a chat with Baba (grandmother), Keiko (mother), Koushi (brother) and Komachi (2nd sister). Hinano (1st sister) was staying at a school hostel. I got to bed really late NZ time and slept in the tatami room, on a mattress kind of thing.



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Monday the 7th -humid rain drizzle

I woke at NZ 10am, JP 7am, heard Koushi and saw Komachi off to school, and prepared for my day. Today I hung out with Mrs Kotani and daughter, University student Hikari, because Keiko had work. Mrs Kotani set me up with a PASMO convenient travel card and we took a train to Shibuya. Trains are so convenient in Tokyo you can go anywhere in and around Tokyo by train.



First off we stopped and took a picture with Hachikou the dog statue.

Next was the Starbucks 2nd floor to watch Monday's action at Shibuya's Scramble Crossing. Then we walked to Harajuku, passing Yoyogi Park and Yoyogi Sports ground. We had lunch and I had prawns with spaghetti.



We then walked through Meiji jingu (shrine) and I did the traditional washing hands, (left, right, water in left hand for mouth, then empty the spoon). Then I did Omairi- shrine visit, (biff a coin in, clap twice, bow twice, clap once, bow once... something along those lines).



After that, we caught a train and a taxi to Kanto Kokusai Koutougakkou (Kanto International High School). Hikari went to this school and was the SCHOOL LEADER! We were toured around the tall, clean school buildings. IT WAS AWESOME! I wish I went there instead of my school.

Students studied in Japanese and could choose to study all sorts of languages other than English like Thai, Russian, Korean, Chinese and so on. There are many

Japanese students and also many halves. Very cool. I even made a couple of new friends. We took a train then waited at a cafe for Mrs Kato and Komachi. We farewelled Mrs Kotani and Hikari and went grocery shopping. Dinner that night was Temakizushi = self-made sushi roll.



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Tuesday the 8th -bright sun blue sky

It was already bright at 7am when I woke up. (because it was summer) The sun was high and the middle school students were doing sports practice.



This pool was pretty cool because the whole walls and roof slid across and opened up.

After breakfast, I was going to upload some photos to Mrs Kato's computer. The cords were all tangled and there was dust on the desk so I cleaned up the whole computer desk. Haha.

Then it was time to go visit the middle school that was just around the corner and Komachi goes to. I visited Komachi's class, science and maths. After we returned, we had a yummy lunch of sashimi, tofu, miso soup and melon. Later I did some shodo for about three hours with Calligraphy Sensei Baba and wrote Kokusai - International.



That night, Keiko, Komachi, and a few of her friends and I went out to take purikura photos and do Karaoke. After that we stopped at a raamen shop then returned home.



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Wednesday the 9th -cloudy

This morning I went to watch Komachi's tennis practice at around 7:30am. Keiko and I then went to the school to thank the principal for letting me visit the school.



Then I packed my bags, wrote in Keiko's host student memo book and went out for lunch with Mrs Kotani at a cafe that Mrs Hayashi works at. After curry and rice, we went to the sports centre where for 2 and a half hours I played table tennis with many fit elderly grandmas. They were all very fit and real good at table tennis. It was heaps of fun.



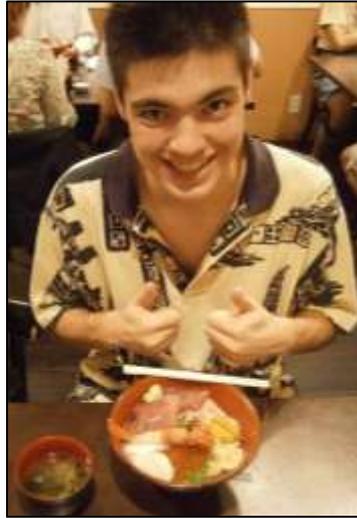
Then I went to Mrs Kotani's house, showered and got a tour of the house and her parents'. It was old style, been around for 30 or so years, and there were a few large cultivation areas where they grew grapes, nashi pear, pumpkin, tomato, mandarin and others. They don't sell them for the market, it is their private property. It was very impressive. Then Mrs Kotani dropped me off by train to Funabashi and meet Mr and Mrs Kohara. We had a yummy dinner of Yakitori (meat/all sorts on a skewer). We then took a taxi to Kohara's apartment.



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Thursday the 10th -windy light clouds, cloudy, typhoon coming

Woke at 8am. Mrs Kohara and I left and headed to Tukiji the fish market. We walked around and for lunch had donburi, sashimi-raw fish all sorts, uni-urchin and ikura-salmon eggs.



We took a train to Ueno Park. Nearby we saw Christ people singing and giving free food to homeless/poor people. We continued to Tokyo National Museum.

Typhoon No.8 was coming so we went home early. Trains may stop if winds get strong. Back at home, I showed and explained to Mr and Mrs Kohara about the school Māori Kapa Haka that I'm in and showed a few videos and pictures.



Later, I hung around and watched TV. Typhoon, Nagano Landslide, Law Evading Drugs/Herbs news, Netherlands vs Argentina game's goal shootout. Japanese TV is very interesting, so interesting that it's hard to leave the TV. Something I noticed about Japanese meals, is that the Japanese style creates many dishes. At my NZ house, we usually have one plate of food, so few dishes. Haha.



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Friday the 11th -no wind, sunny, hot

The plan was we go to the nearby mall in the morning because wind was meant to be strong. But instead we changed plans to go to Disneyland! We did the Pirates of the Caribbean cruise first, then Big Thunder Mountain and lunch at Lucky Nugget Cafe. Splash Mountain was next, followed by Haunted Mansion, an ice block and Grand Circuit Raceway. After that, we did Space Mountain, then Star Tours. Then we watched a Parade, did some shopping and headed home. Dinner was sukiyaki -all sorts



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Saturday the 12th -sunny, light winds, cloudy

We left the house at about 9:40am and had udon noodles for brunch. Mrs Kohara dropped me and Mr Kohara off at a high school's culture festival. We watched a shodo calligraphy performance. It was very interesting to watch everyone use big brushes in time with the music in the background.



After that we wandered around the festival and busy classes hosting a themed attraction and finally ended at the shodo classroom. Mr Kohara had once taught shodo at this school, that is the link. After chatting, I made a few new friends, then we departed for a UNIQLO clothes shop. I got some clothes there. The last dinner with Mr and Mrs Kohara was at a Hotel's Buffet dinner.



This was the first time I saw a car park like this. It is two storeys underground.



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Sunday the 13th -sunny, cloudy

We left late morning and I farewelled Mr and Mrs Kohara that day.

A big thank you to the Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education, and New Zealand Japan Exchange Programme (NZJEP) for the sponsorship of my amazing experience.

Thank you very much to the New Zealand Japanese Society of Auckland and Michiyo Mori for organising my flights and host families. I am so glad that I was able to go to Japan even with some small problems at the start of the year and glad I was able to stay as long as I did.

A big thanks to my two host families: Kato family and Kohara family, and to the Kotani family and Hayashi family for looking after me on the other days.

Thanks to Craig and Jessica for having me on the way out of New Zealand.

Thanks to Ms Thomson my Japanese teacher for getting our class to do this competition!

This trip was a great opportunity to use my Japanese language skill. Even in this short time I still learnt heaps of new words, food, places, aspects of Japanese culture and I was reminded of a Japanese daily life. I made new friends and new families and we can meet again in the future. This trip has motivated me to return to Japan sooner and perhaps study in Japan later on. I hope that you too could have as much fun in Japan.

Thank you everybody!

