



ESL MiniConference

A Note on the Passing of LIOJ Bill Gatton Remembers the Language Institute of Japan

The following remarks were posted in early May, 2006, on the JALTTALK listserv (JALTTALK is not affiliated with the JALT organization) by Bill Gatton, who served as Community Program Director for LIOJ from 1979 to 1982. Mr. Gatton gave permission for his words to be reprinted in the ESL MiniConference Online.

I have no official standing in making these remarks. Still, I feel that it would be disrespectful to fail to note the passing of the Language Institute of Japan.

LIOJ, as it has been most commonly known, was an out growth of the MRA foundation. It was founded in the mid '60's to assist in the upgrading of language skills for Japanese industry just as industry launched upon intensive internationalization. LIOJ served as an often frenzied and creative workplace, setting the benchmark for ESP and business English in Japan for many years.

LIOJ also published a seminal quarterly journal, Cross Currents, that, upon reflection, offered a substantial benefit in both knowledge and opportunity to the profession in Japan and achieved world-wide recognition.

Of course, many teachers passed through LIOJ and many are still in the profession, some being quite well-known for their continuing contributions. Many unsung teachers also contributed to the school's success over the years. Among the services provided by LIOJ, the summer workshop for high school teachers figured highly. This summer will be bereft of opportunities to visit Odawara when the cicadas are at their peak and I shall miss it.

LIOJ comprised both a residential intensive program for businessmen and an active community program. As economics changed, the business program became less viable. As competition grew, the community program soldiered on. In the past few years, LIOJ has been more involved with area secondary schools, tracking one of the outsourcing trends of the industry.

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LIOJ was where I got my start in Japan and I am very grateful indeed. Certainly I vividly recall my first day in country, in June, the heat, the trudge up the hill, the immediate intensity of the professional focus. The colleagues and students made the experience. The administration was wise and progressive. We knew it was a golden age.

Officially, LIOJ is closing because the building requires costly earthquake re-mediation. Unofficially, all things must pass.

JALT, for those who do not know, has a particular link or indebtedness to LIOJ if I recall. Perhaps someone who can tell the tale in full can add to my message.

The Language Institute of Japan, closing. May I thank all who made it a wonderful experience for so many.

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