



# ESL MiniConference

## Living Life to the Fullest A Tribute to Harold "Mel" Melville

This article is meant to reflect the memories and sentiments of people who knew Harold "Mel" Melville, an American-born long-time professor at Shiga University in Japan who passed away on January 15th, 2008.

Much of the information shared here was originally relayed via messages from Melville's friends and colleagues on the JALTTALK listserv. Harold Melville was involved with JALT--the Japanese Association of Language Teachers (Japan's affiliate of International TESOL)--since the very beginning of the organization. He taught at Shiga University, in Hikone, Japan, from 1975 until his death. According to one JALTTALK message, Melville lived through a "purge of non-tenured foreign teachers" at Shiga University in recent years and was nearing retirement.

A wake was held for Harold Melville in Hikone on January 17th, and one JALTTALK message reported that a copy of the International Herald Tribune newspaper was put into the coffin, noting that "he always loved doing that crossword."

Another posting recounted how friendly "Mel" was and how much he enjoyed conversation. "I hope his cowboy hat was in the coffin," expressed this message, "I'll pick him out when I get to heaven." One more individual remembered get-togethers at "Sugimoto's" in Hikone, where Americans and local Japanese engaged in "food and drink and interesting multi-lingual conversation" with Melville.

He was also interested in Apple Macintosh computers and involved in JALTCALL conferences. "He always had some [Mac] trick to do something I wanted to do," said one person who remembered Melville on the JALTTALK list.

Harold Melville's personal profile on Taiken Moodle, which he posted in 2005, was as follows:

I was born in Oklahoma, but raised in New York City. I attended Fordham College (BA in American History, 1970) and Fordham Graduate School (MA in American History, 1972). After that I attended the Cornell University FALCON (Full-Year Asian Language) Program for one year

Summer  
2007

The Nature of  
Learning

Tribute to  
Harold  
Melville,  
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(actually fourteen months, the last two in Japan), and the Japan Studies Center of the University of Michigan for two years in their Japan Studies program with an eye to get a PhD in Japanese Pre-Modern history. After finishing my course work, and with no jobs available in Pre-Modern Japanese history, I came to Japan to teach English at all levels at Shiga University, Faculty of Economics, and have been teaching here for more than 30 years.

Melville's old home page was at:

<http://www.biwako.shiga-u.ac.jp/sensei/melville/melpage.html>, but that account is no longer functioning.

That's unfortunate, because it was a really nice Web presence, and provided wonderful information and photos to express his obvious love of Hikone and Shiga Prefecture.

Here is his answer to the question "Why come to Hikone?"

Hikone is an old castle town with almost 400 years of history. One of the earliest mentions of Hikone as a place name is in the Manyoshu, a compilation of poetry from the 7th and 8th centuries AD. The castle town dates from the early 17th century. The Tenshukaku (Main Donjon or Keep) of Hikone Castle is a Japanese National Treasure. It is situated on a low hill surrounded by greenery and bordered, on one side, by one of the most beautiful gardens in Japan, Genkyu-en. At one time, it was encircled by a series of four moats, only two of which exist today, the others having been filled in. The castle sits on its hill overlooking the Nakasen-do, the main road running through the province of Omi to Kyoto, the Imperial Capital.



## Harold Melville's Page

*All Welcome*



All of the above images are from the old Harold Melville Web site and are used in accordance with the policy posted there, crediting him and his site as the source.

In his biographical statements on his old Web page, he listed his areas of interest as "Japanese History, the History of Shiga Prefecture and Hikone City; International Relations; Video and Manga in English Teaching" and his research interests as "History of Shiga Prefecture and Hikone City; International Relations; [and the] Use of Video, Music and Manga (cartoons/comics) in the teaching of American and Western culture and history to Japanese English Students."

Harold Melville is survived by his wife, Keiko, of the home.

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