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# Ready, Set, NihonGO!



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## なかみ INSIDE



### MT. FUJI UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

When the name of your hometown is "Fuji City," the connection with the mountain is sure to run deep. Kazumi Okubo takes us to her hometown. [Page 2](#)



### INTRODUCING...

The first in a series on the people of Nihongo-Pro, Michiko Lilly kicks us off with the man behind the curtains. [Page 5](#)



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わたし まち

# 私の町・私のふるさと

しずおかけん ふじし

## 静岡県富士市

わたし う しずおかけん ふじし なまえ とお ふじさん じょうだん  
私が生まれたのは、静岡県富士市。名前の通り、富士山があるところです。冗談  
こども かんが い  
みたいですが、子供のころからいつも富士山のことを考えて生きてきました。富士  
す ひと まいにち せいかつ はじ お  
市に住んでいる人の毎日の生活は富士山に始まり、富士山に終わります。

れい  
(例)

みち ある きょう み ほう む  
道を歩いているとき → 「今日は富士山きれいに見えるかな。」と富士山の方を向き  
ます。

てんき し うえ くも  
天気を知りたいとき → 「富士山の上に雲があるかな。」と富士山を見ます。

みず の ち か す い ひとこと  
水を飲んだら → 「う～ん、富士山の地下水、おいしい！」と言。

あ  
人に会ったときのあいさつ → 「こんにちは。今日の富士山、きれいですね。」 また  
てんき  
は、「今日は富士山が見えませんか。」天気よりも富士山です。

ないよう しゃしん  
富士市の人のメールの内容 → 「今日の富士山はとてもきれいです。」と写真を  
てんぶ はは おく ことし  
添付します。(写真は、母が送ってくれたもので、今年はじめて富士山の上に  
ゆき ふ  
雪が降ったときの写真です)

(Continued on page 3)



**OKUBO Kazumi**

Nihongo-Pro Teacher

Kazumi Okubo-sensei teaches private lessons at all levels except advanced, as well as JLPT N3 and N4 group classes.

As she writes here, Okubo-sensei is originally from [Shizuoka prefecture](#), but she and her husband now live in Berlin. She has also taught Japanese while staying in Russia (and speaks Russian), making her a leading member among Nihongo-Pro's international teachers.

Okubo-sensei is also a new mother, and spends much of her time caring for her one-year-old.



(Continued from page 2)

かよ ようちえん えんか ちゅう ことば は  
私の通った幼稚園の園歌(注1)のはじめの言葉 → 「ふじさんきれい。今日も晴れ」

ふ じ し みんけんしょう ちゅう さいしょ ふ じ さ ん ひろ おも ところ も  
富士市民憲章(注2)の最初のフレーズ → 「富士山のように広く思いやりの心を持ち」

ほか まち くに ちょうき い  
富士市から他の町や国に長期で行くとき → 「行ってきます！」と富士山にあいさつします。

かえ わたし きこく ひ こう き  
富士市に帰ってきたとき → 「ただいま！」と富士山にあいさつします。(私も帰国のとき、飛行機から富士  
山が見えると、とてもほっとします)

おお か く いちぶ  
他にもたくさんありますが、あまりにも多すぎて書ききれません。とにかく、富士山は暮らしの一部なので  
す。故郷でもあり、家族でもあります。

いま す しゃしん たてもん や ね かたち に  
今住んでいるベルリンには、「ソニーセンター(写真)」という建物があります。屋根の形が富士山に似てい  
ます。だから、「富士山シック」(私が作った言葉でホームシックのようなもの)になったら、そこに行けばいい  
なと思っています。



ソニーセンター (Sony Center in Berlin)



## My Hometown: Fuji City, Shizuoka

I was born in Fuji City in Shizuoka prefecture. As the name implies, this is where you'll find Mt. Fuji. It sounds like a joke, but I grew up always thinking about Mt. Fuji. For the people who live in Fuji City, daily life starts and ends with this mountain.

Here are some examples.

When walking down the street, you might say, "I wonder if we can see Fuji today," as you turn to face the mountain.

When you want to know what the weather's going to be, you look at Mt. Fuji and say, "Are there any clouds up on the mountain?"

After taking a drink of water, it's simply: "Yep, the ground water from Mt. Fuji tastes great!"

You can greet people by saying "Mt. Fuji really looks nice today," or "We can't see Mt. Fuji today, can we." When it comes to greetings, Mt. Fuji tops the weather.

Someone from Fuji City might write in an email, "Mt. Fuji looks very pretty today," and attach a photo. (I received the photo shown on the previous page from my mother, who took it when snow fell on the mountain peak for the first time this year.)

The school song at my kindergarten started with, "Pretty Mt. Fuji, sunny again today."

Fuji City's charter starts with the phrase "with kindness and a heart wide open like Mt. Fuji."

When leaving Fuji City for an extended stay in another city or country, we say "*Itte kimasu!*" as a

parting greeting to the mountain. (*Translator's note: "Itte kimasu" (literally, "I will go and then return") is commonly said to family members when leaving for work or school.*)

When returning to Fuji City, we again greet the mountain with "*Tadaima!*" (When I return to Japan and can see Mt. Fuji from the airplane, I feel a sense of relief.) (*Translator's note: "Tadaima" (literally, "Just now") is commonly said when returning home from work or school, and is therefore closely associated with coming home.*)

There are many other examples—so many that I can't mention them all. Let's just say that Mt. Fuji is a part of life in Fuji City. It's my hometown mountain and also a member of the family.

The Sony Center here in Berlin, where I live now, has a roofline similar to the shape of Mt. Fuji. When I long for Mt. Fuji—or "Fuji-sick" as I call it (meaning homesick for Mt. Fuji)—it's nice to go see the Sony Center.

(Note 1) Most kindergartens, schools, and colleges in Japan have their own school song. References to Mt. Fuji are not limited to kindergarten songs; school songs in Fuji City's elementary, middle, and high schools also mention Mt. Fuji. (*Translator's note: "eNka" refers to the school song of a kindergarten only. "kooka" is used for songs at other schools.*)

(Note 2) "*MiNkeNshoo*" (city charter) is a document created by the city or town listing the objectives for people living there.



# Nihongo-Proのスタッフ紹介

な な か お も おとこ

## 七つの顔を持つ男 Steve Cooper

あるときは某民間企業のコンピュータープログラマー、あるときはオンラインスクールの  
 経営者、あるときはどんなトラブルでも解決するサポート、あるときは講師の良きアドバイ  
 ザー、あるときは日本語をこよく愛する日本語学習者、あるときは日本人よりも正しい日本  
 語を使えるアメリカ人、あるときは一旦ツボにはまると笑いが止まらない笑い上戸、この七つ  
 の顔を持つ男こそがSteve Cooper。

獣医の父と高校教師の母の間に、姉2人、兄1人、双子の弟の5人兄弟の一人として生  
 を享け、前半世紀(おotto歳がばれちゃいましたね)。講師からも生徒からも「Steve」「Steve  
 さん」とときには「スチーブさん」と呼ばれ親しまれている。彼と話しているとアメリカ人だとい  
 うことをすっかり忘れてしまうほどで、結構早口で話していても完璧に理解できるのには驚く。  
 そもそも日本語学習のきっかけは高校生の時に奈良県に1年間留学してからだというから、  
 その学習歴は35年にも及ぶ。というよりも、もう日常語として日本語が定着しているのだ  
 ろう。こういうのを本当の意味で「バイリンガル」というんだろうな。



日本人同様の運用能力を持つSteveさんでも、ちょっと弱いのがカタカナ。ハンバーガー、  
 チョコレート、インターネットなどの言葉は日英  
 見事に使い分ける彼だが、耳慣れないカタカナ  
 に出くわすこともしばしばあるという。そんな言  
 葉の一つが「パネルシアター」だった。これは  
 英語ではflannel graphという。英語とは似ても似  
 つかぬこの言葉を目にしたSteveさん、パネル  
 はわかったものの、シアターがどうしてもわから  
 ない。もしかしたらワシントン州のSeattle(シア  
 トル)のことかもしれないと思ったり、sea otter(ラッコ)のことかもしれないと思ったり…これが  
 theaterだとわかったときのビックリ仰天振りと言ったら…

でも、こうして覚えた言葉は決して忘れないという。35年前に魅了された日本語を追い続け  
 て、とうとう日本語の学校までつくってしまったSteveさん、今日も飽くなき  
 日本語の追及を続けているのである。



**LILLY Michiko**

Nihongo-Pro Teacher

Lilly-sensei teaches private lessons at all levels, as well as JLPT N2 group classes.

Born and raised in [Shimane prefecture](#) in western Japan, Lilly-sensei now lives with her husband and much beloved cats in Minnesota.

Lilly-sensei has a very busy lesson schedule, with lessons starting each morning at 9 am and continuing some evenings until 9 pm.

She also maintains an [active blog](#) about life in Minnesota (and before that, Mississippi, and before that, California). She revels in language—Japanese in particular—and enjoys sharing that enthusiasm with her students.

## A man with seven hats—Steve Cooper

Sometimes a computer programmer, sometimes the proprietor of an online school, sometimes a support guy who solves any kind of trouble, sometimes a trusted advisor for a teacher, sometimes a student of his beloved Japanese language, sometimes an American using Japanese more correctly than Japanese themselves, and sometimes, once he gets started, a man who can't stop laughing at something he's amused by—the one who wears these seven hats is Steve Cooper.

His father was a veterinarian; his mother, a high school teacher. Steve was born into the family a half century ago, with an older brother, two older sisters, and a twin brother. (Oops, I just let out his age.) He is liked by teachers and students, whether they call him “Steve,” “Steve-san,” or, occasionally, “*Suchiibu-san*.” When I talk with him in Japanese, I am surprised—so much so that I forget he's an American (*translator's note: that is, not a native-speaking Japanese*)—at how well he understands what I'm saying, even when I speak at a fairly brisk clip. Steve's original interest in Japanese arose from a year he spent in Nara prefecture during high school, some 35 years ago. By this time, it's safe to say he has taken to Japanese in everyday conversation. I suppose that's the real meaning of being “bilingual.”

While he has practical ability in the language on a par with Japanese, one topic that gives Steve trouble is katakana. He can breeze through words like “*haNbaagaa*” (hamburger), “*iNtaanetto*” (the Internet), or “*chokoreeto*” (chocolate), but can stumble on unfamiliar katakana words. One such word is “*paneru shiataa*” (flannel graph, in English). When Steve saw this word that bore no resemblance to English, he understood “*paneru*” to mean “panel,” but couldn't figure out “*shiataa*.” Maybe Seattle (“*shiatoru*”) ? Sea otter? Upon learning it meant “theater,” he was surprised—to put it mildly.

But they say that words you learn this way you never forget. Starting with a fascination of the Japanese language 35 years ago and culminating with the opening of this Japanese language school, Steve continues to press forward in his pursuit of the Japanese language.



Thank you, Michiko!

I wish I could speak Japanese half as well as Lilly-sensei says in her article. I do love Japan and, like many of you, love to learn the language.

I'm really happy to be able to know so many exceptional people, including the teachers at Nihongo-Pro and my second-to-none host-family-turned-friends in Gojo, Nara.

By the way, we are planning to continue this series by introducing the Nihongo-Pro people who really matter: our teachers! Please watch for an upcoming article.

Steve