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Teller

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Merry Christmas

Nengajo: A way to greet the New Year

There are a few customs that accompany the holiday season... customs that are not only recognized in Japan, but also in the United States. Besides the giving of gifts, this is the time of year when the postal service in both countries is flooded with greeting cards.

In the United States, shopping malls, drug stores and grocery stores provide a wide variety of Christmas cards. Christmas greetings are an important tradition for the Westerner, just as New Year's greetings are important for Japanese people. This annual exchange of New Year's cards is known to the Japanese as "Nengajo."

Unlike traditional American style Christmas Cards, Japan's Nengajo is a 4 x 6 postcard. There are two types of cards; one Nengajo is a government issued postcard which has lottery numbers printed on the bottom of the card.

Annually on Jan. 15, local newspapers publish the winning prize numbers. The winners can collect their prizes at any post office. The prizes range from a wrist watch to a television.

The other type of card is a private post card which boasts different kinds of drawings and designs.

The former can be purchased at any post office and the latter at any stationery or department store.

Besides the Nengajo, a more traditional greeting for Japanese people is the verbal New Year's greeting called "Nenshi." As with the Nengajo, Nenshi is an important ritual during Japan's New Year holiday season.

Before the Japanese mail system was developed, Nenshi was the traditional form of greeting for the family during the holidays. Usually each family member would pay a visit to the family's head (mom and dad) to wish happiness.

The Nenshi custom was later extended to include students visiting their teacher, or employees visiting their employers. Nenshi is still the customary greeting for most Japanese people during the holidays. However, with the birth of the postal system during the Meiji Era (1880), Nengajo has become more popular.

Nengajo's popularity increased because it was a more convenient way to offer a holiday greeting, since often, family and

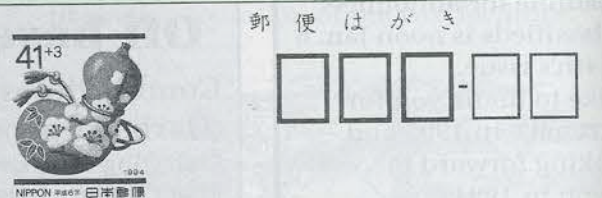
friends found themselves living miles apart.

Many Japanese people send out more than 50 Nengajo each year. Instead of writing on each card, some people turn to printing companies for help. Many school children are more creative in making their own wood block printing. Some families even put their family picture on the card.

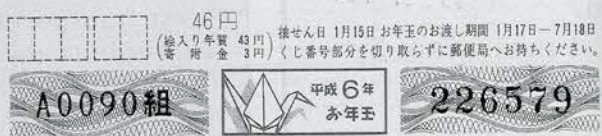
To add to the New Year's flavor, post offices provide different types of stamps with the following year's zodiac sign, which is the dog for 1994.

Iwakuni's Main Post Office expects 2,190,000 incoming Nengajo, and 2,170,000 outgoing Nengajo for the coming New Year. Post officials encourage customers to send their Nengajo by Dec. 24 in order for them to reach addresses on the morning of New Year's Day.

For many Japanese, the highlight of New Year's Day morning is getting up to see how many Nengajo are in their mail boxes.



Happy New Year to the Marines,
sailors and their families.



Deck the chow hall with boughs of Holly!!!



Isha Barnes brings holiday joy to the chow hall.

Two classes of kids from M.C. Perry recently decided to help make it look a little more like Christmas in the chow halls here.

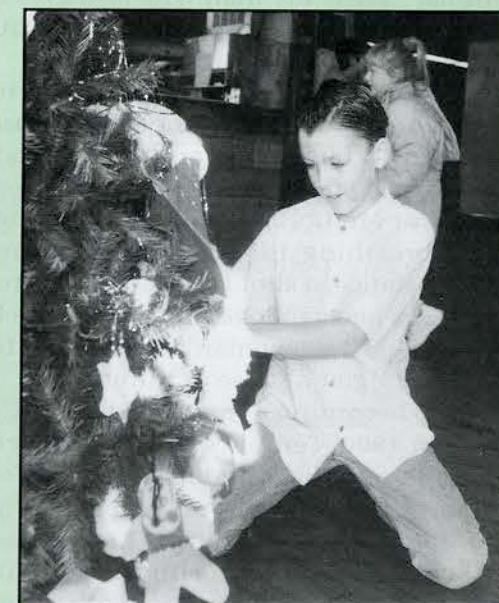
One kindergarden class and one sixth grade class visited the North Side Chow Hall with bunches of hand-made decorations.

After the task was completed, the kids enjoyed cookies and juice for their hard work.

Photos by
Sgt. Timothy D. Flack



All the kids who decorated the North Side Chow Hall.



Patrick Stickney hangs a decoration on a tree.

Singing for the love of music...

One would be surprised at the number of people who have joined the military, honed their musical talents or comedy skills in front of the rowdiest crowds you could imagine, and then gone onto the glitter and glitz of New York or the bright lights of Hollywood. The service has been a springboard to stardom for many individuals, Petty Officer Stanley Burrell (MC Hammer), Seaman William (Bill) Cosby, Colonel Ed McMahon, Cpl. Dan Rather and maybe one day Air Force Sergeant Otis Samuels.

Samuels, a Broadcast Engineer with Detachment Five-Air Force Public Broadcast System/FEN, recently returned from Panama City, Fla., finishing third in the ballad category in an Air Force's world-wide star search competition.

The Hampton, Va. native has participated in the star search competition since 1988, winning first place in 1991. "The very first time I made it to the finals, I was amazed at the number of talented musicians and entertainers who were in the military," stated the 27-year-old balladeer, "The majority could very easily be making alot of money entertaining professionally."

Samuels began singing in church when he was eight-years-old, and always knew that he had the talent to touch audiences. "I have always been musically inclined. I am proficient in the keyboard, piano, alto saxophone and guitar," explained 5'10" Samuels. "Besides being proficient I really enjoy music, which makes it a whole lot easier for me to

give a God-gifted talent back to those less fortunate."

Depending on the song, he may sound like Jeffrey Osborne, new comer Bryan McKnight, Lionel Richie or the musical genius Stevie Wonder. "To be compared with those great artists is an honor in itself. The music business is tough. Artists come and go like night and day and to be put in that class means alot to me."

Making the jump from the Battle Dress Utilities of the Air Force, to the bright lights of the stage is one that Samuels has some apprehensions about. "It feels good to get the celebrity treatment, but with the celebrity status comes a total lack of privacy," he said.

"I may one day sing professionally or produce," stated the FEN engineer who has produced several artists in the past, "I have a great fear that if my singing or playing turns into a job, I will lose interest."

"I am not in search of the fame, so singing professionally is not a big priority, producing is just as important to the music industry as performing," explained Samuels.

Whatever direction he decides to pursue, Samuels will join the ranks of former service members who have become well known in the entertainment industry. ¶

Story by Sgt. Damon E. Brooks, Sr.



Samuels doing what he loves...performing.



Samuels and Sinbad.

Crash, Fire and Rescue brings Christmas joy

For more than 30 years, CFR has made the children of Tsuda Children's Home in Hiroshima's Christmas a little brighter. This past Sunday they again provided a holiday meal as well as a visit from Santa himself.



(Clockwise from left) Santa hands out presents to good little boys and girls. SSgt. Martin Thomas helps his son, Adam with his present. A young girl holds her Christmas gift close.

*Photos by
GySgt. George D. Bieber*