



"I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." - Voltaire

## Gaijin License

(Continued from page 1)

students who knew some Japanese and had ridden their bicycles to the grocery store to collect food for dinner. They saw people parked right in front of the store next to a no parking sign, clearly labeled with a picture of a bicycle circled in red and crossed out, but they parked there since they saw Japanese people doing the same thing. They were slightly surprised to come out of the grocery store to see their bikes with little tickets stuck to the handle bars, like every other bike in the row before them. The policeman was still there, having just ticketed their bikes and moving down the row to the last few. As they approached their bikes the man looked at them for a moment, and snatched back their tickets, ripping them on the spot. They started to point to where the tickets had been, looking confused, but the officer just said "no" and wandered away. When something of this nature occurs - when a foreigner gets away with something that would, for any normal Japanese person, result in a reprimand if not a punishment, it is customary for those who have escaped punishment to say "gaijin smash" in the same tone as one would say cool. Gaijin Smash relates to the fact that we can break minor laws or social faux pas and not have to worry about punishment or ruderglares. Though there are vending machines everywhere in Japan it is customary to either stand at the machine and eat or drink whatever was purchased or to stow it away and eat it at home. When the Japanese see a gaijin walking and consuming something from a vending machine they usually shrug it off as - "oh, well, they're a foreigner" and go about their normal life.

Another case of the Gaijin License in Japan is the bus system. My friend Kim and I had gotten onto the bus heading downtown in order to apply for our Alien Registration Certificates. We had traveled the bus system before and knew that unlike in America one pays as you leave the bus instead of when you get on, but we had always had the correct change. Usually you drop your money in the top of a clear box, it drops to a conveyor belt, and the bus driver makes sure you have paid the right amount as you leave. There are also change machines on the buses, connected to the part with the conveyor belt. Kim only had a bill, so as we were leaving, she stuck her bill in, collected her change, and walked off the bus. I dropped my money in and was only a step behind her as we exited, but strangely the bus driver honked as Kim stepped off. We didn't think

much of it, and stood outside the bus trying to figure out which direction city hall was in. As we stood with our backs to the bus the bus driver suddenly stood beside us, looking very official in his dark blue suit and hat, his face covered with a white mask that many Japanese people wear to prevent sickness. His white gloved hand reached out palm up and with the index finger of his other hand he tapped his open palm. It clicked in Kim's head before mine that the change machine she had put her bill in was just a change machine, and did not take out the bus fare. She apologized profusely in Japanese as she followed him back to the bus and amended the situation, but spent a long moment afterwards feeling quite embarrassed and is now not very fond of bus drivers.

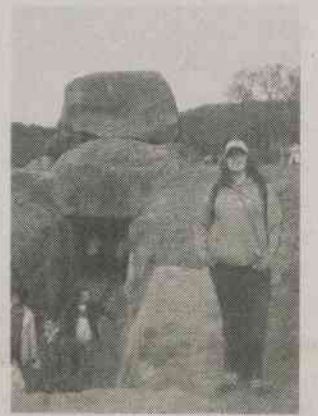
The last story I have to share is about my first trip to Kyoto. It was a guided tour provided by Japanese students from school during the first week of orientation, the main idea being to show us the train system, and some

culture. Our guides had taken us to the Kiyomizu Temple where there is a holy spring. For a small fee one is able to lean towards the spring and fill up a water bottle as it juts out in three arcs like rain water from a roof into a pool below with some stepping stones across it. The water, originally coming straight out of the rock, now comes through at the carved roof of a small shrine where three statues lurk beneath its haven watching the crowds. The last of our group had just arrived at this holy spring where two Japanese women stood at the edge of the pool trying to reach their water bottle far enough out to fill it, but were having some difficulty with the distance and one almost lost her balance. A boy from Kansas had just arrived with the last of the group, and, seeing these women "in distress" he immediately walked forward to help them, even though he didn't know any Japanese. For some reason, he decided that if he was on the far side of them he would be able to reach the

spring better, but the only way to get there was to step on the stepping stone in the pool to get around the women. As he did so there was an audible gasp from the Japanese who stood nearby watching with the gaijin college students, most of whom were flashing their cameras and talking in various languages as they watched Kansas and the Japanese women. Kansas, as he is now called, then tried to reach the water bottle out into the spring, but unable to reach it, he stepped again onto the stone in the pool, to an even louder audible gasp of the Japanese section of the crowd. It was about this point that a security officer working at the temple came over gesturing for him to get away from the shrine. Apparently one was only allowed to step on the stepping stones if ones shoes were removed, but being unable to speak Japanese he hadn't been able to understand this. The officer only ensured that Kansas left the pool and then retreated shaking his head. This offence would probably have resulted

in some sort of punishment if he had not been a foreigner.

So, does this mean that gaijin should use their upper hand advantage to see how far they can get with breaking customs and minor laws? I don't think so, because eventually the balance will tip, and someone will pull one too many Jenga blocks out of the tower. As far as I'm concerned I don't plan on poking sleeping dragons in Japan, but I will certainly use my Gaijin License to walk past them sipping Fanta Melon Sodas from the vending machines and when I return home I will have a bit more patience for foreigners.



Kime Neal sight seeing. Picture courtesy of Kime Neal.

## LECTURE BY FATHER BRACKEN PRESENTED AT RELIGION AND SCIENCE ROUNDTABLE

An ailment prevented guest speaker Father Joseph A. Bracken from delivering his address at this week's Religion and Science Roundtable at St. Andrews Presbyterian College, but his speech was ably presented by Dr. Dan Ott, assistant professor of religious studies at St. Andrews.

Bracken's presentation "Overcoming The Clash Of Two Cultures" explored the relationship between religion and natural science as described by natural scientists. Bracken advocates for the view that things only exist and flourish in mutual interdependence.

"One of the controversial issues between natural scientists and theologians is the relation between matter and spirit," said Bracken. "Natural scientists tend to distrust the notion of spirit as something introduced by God or by some other supernatural agency as an organizing principle for material components.

"But philosophers and theologians point out that, if scientists do not admit the invisible workings of spirit in this world, nature is nothing more than a 'cosmic machine.' Everything is programmed in terms of mathematically fixed laws and principles."

More than 60 people turned out for the first of two Religion and

Science roundtables this spring at St. Andrews. Bracken serves as the chair of the Theology Department at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has written or edited nine books and more than 75 scholarly articles. His latest book is *Christianity and Process Thought: Spirituality for a Changing World*.



Dan Ott and Alan Dotson at the Religion and Science Round Table. Picture courtesy

Bracken explained how natural scientists and theologians can agree upon the same basic terms - matter and spirit - with at least somewhat the same meaning within their respective disciplines.

"This may seem like a very modest gain in terms of sustaining the dialogue between the proponents of religion and science, but it is a necessary first step in constructing a mutually satisfactory world view," said

Bracken. "What is clearly needed is a new world view equally plausible to both scientists and religious believers.

"Such a new world view is slowly taking place and it will presumably be a relational ontology with heavy emphasis on the interconnectedness and interdependence of everything on everything else.

"Moreover, in the hands of Christian philosophers and theologians, this new world view could well be supported by a new understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, the so-called social model for the Trinity which emphasizes the interdependence of the divine persons both with one another and with all their creatures. But for the moment, we just have to wait and see."

The next Religion and Science Roundtable will be April 24 when Gary B. Ferngren, professor of ancient history at Oregon State University, presents "Science and Religion: Adversaries or Allies."

The Religion and Science roundtables are associated with the annual John Calvin McNair Lecture on Science and Theology. The McNair Lecture was established by his 1857 will that asked that "the object of which lecture(s) shall be to show the mutual bearing of Science and Theology upon each other ..."