

Patrick Carmody - orangerangesyogyo {at} yahoo.com
Bloomington-Normal-Asahikawa Sister Cities Sr. High Exchange Student - 2004
January, 2008

My once in a lifetime experience in Asahikawa, Japan brought about change, experience and times that will stay with me forever. Growing up next to many Japanese families introduced me to this amazing and unfamiliar culture that has impacted me drastically.

After being accepted as an exchange student, my dream of journeying to Japan finally became a reality. Although I didn't speak much Japanese at the time, it wasn't long before I was able to join clubs, interact with friends and make small speeches in front of the Asahikawa Sister Cities Committee.

I traveled to exciting places such as Sapporo, Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Okinawa. I was able to see places many, like myself before, had only dreamed about.

I studied and worked extremely hard to improve my Japanese and within three months I passed a difficult examination that tested my comprehension of the language. After the test, other foreigners from all over the world met together downtown Sapporo and took a picture. I still have this picture on my wall to remind me that although we come from different global communities, we're more alike than different and share many of the same qualities as human beings.

I was also able to reunite with my long lost best friend, Yu Nakajima. Growing up next door, we were inseparable until his family moved back to Japan. It had been eleven years since we had seen one another and we caught up on the past, present and exchanged future plans. Both of my host families, the Sasakis and Itayas became family to me and helped me through any troubles or problems I had. I'm still in close contact with them and hope to see them soon.

My stay in Asahikawa was euphoric. Although there were many challenges that I had to overcome, it was truly an amazing experience that changed my life forever. I'm now attending UIUC and majoring in East Asian Languages and Cultures and plan to move back to Japan after graduation to resume my Japanese life. I hope future exchange students will develop, grow and learn to appreciate Japan like I did.

