

Jason Brown

Japanese Education

Jason first studied Japanese in the 3rd form at New Plymouth Boys' High School in 1986. He was one of 45 students in the newly introduced subject. The period from the mid 1980s was one where there was much interest in the Japanese language, and New Plymouth Boys' High School was no exception. The newly appointed teacher of Japanese Ms Felicity Walker encouraged many boys to give this previously unheard of language a try.

Jason was a top student from the outset of his career at New Plymouth Boys' High School and Japanese for him came naturally. The many friends he had, also continued with Japanese through the years and made the largest 7th form class of students studying Japanese throughout the North Island at the time. Jason was awarded a scholarship in Japanese at Bursary and graduated the top student of Japanese in 1990 at the school.

On to Japan

Jason's education in Japanese did not stop there. In 1991 Jason, along with only two others from New Zealand were awarded the prestigious Monbusho Scholarship to study in Japan for five years. The other two students he travelled to Japan with were Jason Renau from the same New Plymouth Boys' High School and Jeremy Phillipps from Auckland Grammar School. Jason entered the Japanese Language School attached to the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in Fuchu, West Tokyo. After graduating from the language school with Level 1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, Jason continued his studies at Kobe University where he majored in Economics. He was in Kobe during the Great Hanshin Earthquake and survived to tell the story.

On to Business

Now, Jason works for Mitsui Bussan Trading Company. In the metals division, Jason was first placed in the Kobe office but after a short time his employers realized his potential and sent Jason to Hong Kong to be one of the managers for the Hong Kong office. Jason has lived in Hong Kong for 2 years with his Japanese wife and their son Joshua. He has no immediate plans to return to New Zealand.

A Family Affair

Jason's older brother, Peter, was also a student of Japanese. He now lives in Saitama, north of Tokyo with his wife and two children. Peter is a teacher of English at the local junior high school. Jason and Peter's parents, Ken and Vivian Brown still live in New Plymouth. Since their sons' journey to the world of sushi and the Hinomaru, Ken and Vivian have home hosted a large number of Japanese people. Family, close friends, exchange students in New Plymouth, visitors from the sister city connections with Mishima and guests to do with the Japan Society of Taranaki have brought more of Japan into their home than most Kiwi families see in a lifetime. When you realise how much the Brown family revolves around Japan, it makes you wonder if Jason ever realised at the beginning, how much studying a language at high school could change his life.

(compiled by Jason Renau, 2003)