

# IOC NEWSLETTER

## February 2005

Hello everyone, this month's newsletter is brief but contains a lot of important information about the club so please ensure you read on.

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### Greeting

It's finally March! I've been eagerly anticipating this for a long time. What wonderful festival takes place in March? Saint Patrick's Day – the day everyone gets to be Irish! It's also means a new committee will be voted in to oversee the running of the club for the next year. A momentous occasion, so be sure and come to the meeting and exercise your right to vote!

### New Website Address: [www.iockansai.com](http://www.iockansai.com) or [IOCKansai.com](http://IOCKansai.com)

As you know, the website is now being hosted on a Japanese web server. From now on, whenever you want to view the website, please use [www.iockansai.com](http://www.iockansai.com). When you visit the site, you may notice that some of the links are not yet working. Please be patient, our web team is working hard to get everything up and running as quickly as possible. We apologize for the inconvenience, but things will back to normal very soon.

The contact email addresses of the committee have changed in accordance with the new URL. From now on, committee members can be reached at the following addresses:

[president@iockansai.com](mailto:president@iockansai.com),  
[specialevent@iockansai.com](mailto:specialevent@iockansai.com),  
[activities@iockansai.com](mailto:activities@iockansai.com),

[treasurer@iockansai.com](mailto:treasurer@iockansai.com),  
[secretary@iockansai.com](mailto:secretary@iockansai.com),  
[newsletter@iockansai.com](mailto:newsletter@iockansai.com).

That last email address is particularly important – it's where you sent articles and photos for the newsletter! ☺

### **Elections for the New Committee**

As mentioned previously and in last month's newsletter, the March meeting (on Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup>) is quite possibly the most important meeting of the entire year. Why? Because it's time to vote in a whole new committee!

Have someone in mind you'd like to nominate? Then please let us know ahead of time, and we can put them on the ballot. Also, if you'd like to be on the committee this year, by all means, please volunteer! Remember, the club can't run itself! WE NEED YOU TO VOLUNTEER TO BE ON THE COMMITTEE!

Please email [president@iockansai.com](mailto:president@iockansai.com) with any nominations you would like to make.

Once again, here are the positions available.

- **President** - You get to boss people around
- **Activities Coordinator** - You get to know about the new events and sign up for them before anyone else can! Ha, ha!
- **Special Events Coordinator** - Like to party? Then why not throw a party!
- **Treasurer** - Hey! You get to go shopping with our money!
- **Secretary** - You can keep track of all of our members and sign up new ones! Now that sounds exciting, doesn't it?
- **Newsletter Editor** - Write your own newsletter, or get others to do it for you, it's all up to you!
- **Webmaster** – Win the respect and adoration of your peers simply by using internet super powers to keep the website up and running!

The IOC committee is a great way to meet new people, have fun organizing events, and give back to a club that has given so much to you.

## **February Events**

February was a sad month for the IOC, as we said our goodbyes to Ivan Breen. He was the clubs resident superman, juggling not one but two committee positions (president and activities coordinator) this year, along with a full time job. How he found time to attend and lead so many events is beyond me, but he did and we are all very grateful. His sayonara party was held after the February members meeting and a great time was had by all.

Koji organized a jam-packed weekend of snow activities in Nozawa Onsen, and he has written an account of the hair-raising adventures that occurred over the weekend. Thanks Koji. It's definitely a trip the participants won't forget in a hurry!

Chris led a snow-shoe hike and Dean also held an event, but unfortunately there is no information on the webpage about these, so I'll say no more. Would anyone like to write about these for the next issue?

And now, without future ado, its time for Koji's report, complete with photos. Yay!

**What:** Winter Snowshoe Trekking and Ski/SnowBoard event

**Where:** Nozawa Onsen

**When:** February 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

**Who:** Yuka, Esther, Fumie, Dean, Minhao, Dan, Keiko, Koji

### ***Submitted by Koji Otani***

On February 10th, eight IOC members, led by Koji Otani, boarded a night bus in Osaka and began what would become another of the exciting and spectacular IOC hikes.

We were conveniently dropped off by the minimal-sleep night bus in the center of Nozawa the next morning, in the midst of a spectacular mountain wonderland. We quickly checked in at our place of accommodation and immediately set off on the Gondola.

After the Gondola rides up the mountain we put on our SnowShoes and took pictures with a huge snowman. In this playful atmosphere nobody could imagine the adventure and difficulty we would later encounter as we trekked off. Around noon, we arrived at a wide open, nearly treeless area called Uenodaira and had lunch among some white birches. By 2:00 PM we reached the summit of Kenashi-yama (elev.1600m). There we enjoyed a beautiful 360-degree panoramic view of the area. However the winds were so strong we stayed only about 30 minutes.





Let's head down to Nozawa and enjoy the free Onsen baths.

We started to descend the mountain hopping down like rabbits. But the descent gradually became as steep as 45 degrees and then the real "fun" began. Koji leading the way suddenly slipped into a gorge and disappeared from view. "It was like a steep 50m curving sliding board. I could only stop myself by getting down on all fours. During my uncontrollable slide I lost one pole. Next, Keiko slid down the slope the same way and slid by me also leaving a pole behind. I managed to rescue Keiko's pole and then Esther grabbed my pole and thrust it at me as she also wildly slid past. Next, Dan went into his slide as I shouted, "go slowly".

After that we waited for two hours at the bottom for the others and as it was becoming dark Dean and I decided to climb up to assist and encourage the stragglers Yuka, Fumie and Minhao. Looking up the slope it doesn't seem so bad.



But from the top down it looks quite scary. Thankfully all made it to the bottom in one piece.

We finally arrived at our accommodation at 7:30 PM. But the Minshuku OBASAN was not amused that we were late despite our challenge to get there. She was steaming hot but our Nabe was already very cold....

After dinner, clad in our traditional yukata from the Minshuku, we cruised the famous Onsen Street (tasting the free samples of food and wine and fresh apple) and experienced Onsen at three different bathhouses.

The next day, we enjoyed skiing and snowboarding in Nozawa powder snow until dark and then ate Soba.

Soba restaurant:



After dinner we got back on our bus and arrived in Osaka on time Monday morning.

I don't think any of us will quickly forget this trip of fun and adventure!

### **Upcoming Events in March**

This month kicks off with a hike in the Suma Alps, west of Kobe. Yoshimi is organizing this event, and meeting time is at 11am at the JR Shioya station. More details at [http://www.iockansai.com/event/month/2005\\_3/](http://www.iockansai.com/event/month/2005_3/) so check it out!

The all-important members meeting takes place on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at the usual place. Please be there, it's very important that everyone attends! It starts at 6pm, and followed by the usual food and drinks afterwards.

Saint Patrick's Day! Do you secretly wish you were Irish? Well now you can be! Yuka is leading us to Kyoto to partake in the festivities. There will be a parade, Irish food, dancing and songs, along with the prerequisite green beer. Don't miss out! It's on Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> and more details can be found on the webpage.

Ruth has put together a day of adrenalin-filled excitement for us on Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>. Paintballing! Not to be missed. Check the website for more details. I believe she's also organizing a ski/snowboarding trip to Hakodateyama. It is not listed in the 'March Events' section as yet, but hopefully that will be rectified very soon.

So there you have it. It looks like March is shaping up to be a pretty fantastic month. Don't miss the opportunity to see Spring up close, it's so easy to miss when living in the city. See you at the meeting!

### **Saint Patricks Day – March 17<sup>th</sup>**

St. Patrick's Day, celebrated every year on March 17, is a holiday honoring Saint Patrick, the missionary credited with converting the Irish to Christianity around 400 A.D. Saint Patrick's real name was Maewyn Succat. For his first 16 years, Maewyn lived a normal life as the son of a wealthy landowner and magistrate in Britain.

At 16, Maewyn was captured and sold into slavery by a group of pirates who raided his village. After six years of herding sheep, Maewyn escaped, went to France and became a priest, adopting the name Patrick.

During his training, Patrick discovered that his calling was to convert Irish pagans to Christianity. He returned to Ireland, established monasteries across the country, set up schools and churches, and converted many with his winning personality. Patrick carried on a very successful mission for thirty years. When he died on March 17, that day was commemorated as St. Patrick's Day.

Originally a Catholic holy day, St. Patrick's Day has evolved into more of a secular holiday. Nowadays, St. Patrick's Day is basically a time when everyone becomes Irish, wears green and goes out to party.

The shamrock is a traditional symbol of St Patrick's Day because Saint Patrick used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity to the Irish people. He explained that it represented how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit could exist as separate elements in the same entity.

The most famous legend about St. Patrick is that he miraculously drove snakes from Ireland by banging a drum. To this day, there are no snakes in Ireland!



The man himself.