Valentine’s Day
By Masahiro Ando

St. Valentine’s Day is observed on February 14th, and Japanese people also celebrate St. Valentine in a very unique way. In Japan girls can declare their love only on St. Valentine’s Day with a gift of heart-shaped chocolate. It is said that this custom was established in the late 70s.

When this custom started prevailing in the late 70s, teenagers and young people in their early twenties were the main participants. School girls would make a huge decision to give a piece of chocolate to a boy they liked secretly and boys were also secretly waiting for the gift, pretending not to be interested in this custom. To those young people, February 14th was a big day.

In the 80s when the Japanese economy expanded rapidly, this custom was also changed. The Chocolates were divided mainly into three groups. One of them is Real Bullet Chocolate, which a girl gives to a boy she really likes. Another one is Obligatory Chocolate, which a girl gives to her classmates or co-workers only to be nice to them. The other one is Friend Chocolate, which is exchanged just like Valentine’s Cards. These three main types seem to be still good now in 2012.

When a boy gets a Real Bullet chocolate, he is put in a position of giving a sincere response to the girl, Yes or No. When a boy gets one of the other two kinds, he is expected to re-turn something on March 14th, called “White Day,” which is about a few times more ex-pensive than the chocolate he received. It is true that some girls think chocolates are only up-front investments.

Where does this strange custom from? Yes, of course, chocolate makers. They carry out big ads around St. Valentine’s day and White Day a month later, and that is probably why St. Valentine’s Day in Japan is quite unique.

Oshogatsu

Starting off the spring semester we held our Annual Oshogatsu party here at JCC. We had a wonderful turn out of staff and local guests.

We could not pull off our Oshogatsu without help from our own staff at MFWI and to our local volunteers. Some of our volunteers have helped support us for many years by helping make some wonderful dishes! We would like to personally thank Dick & Misako Egner, Peggy & George Heyamoto, Katsuji Hoki, Noriko Masugata, Yusuke Tamura, Hide Tsutakawa, and Hirohito Yoko-ichi. Our Tea Ceremony, which was led by Hiroko Nagayama Hill, was also successful due to our volunteers Aya Inotani and Ritsuko Stain-kamp.

MFWI Campus News

All spring semester students have arrived at MFWI. We have 208 students from the English department that were escorted by Professor Yuko Igarashi and Professor Hidematsu Miura. In its second year, we have 27 students from the Pharmacy Program accompanied by Professor Kenji Kinoshita and his assistant, Mariko Hayashida. Our newest program is the Japanese Language and Literature program with 24 students escorted by Professor Kazuko Ueda. Welcome all!