



Martha Ogasawara

Life in Japan is not as relaxing as you may think. Martha Ogasawara tells us all about long days of teaching, e mails and tons of dancing!

JapaneseStyle

I get up around eight, and the first thing I do is check my e-mail. I'm a total e-mail junkie, and living in Japan means that I'm on a different time zone from many parts of the world, so there is usually mail that has come in during the night. I enjoy corresponding with people, and to me one of the most amazing things about Line dancing is the way that it has given me friends all over the world. Because I tend to get caught up on the computer, breakfast is mid-morning. For lunch and dinner, I usually make/eat Japanese food, but for breakfast I prefer American-style. My husband, Takashi, is a traditional Japanese, and he would rather have rice and miso soup for breakfast, so we each have breakfast on our own.

My schedule is varied each day, depending on what classes I have. I'm an English conversation teacher. I teach various ages from ten year olds to 70 year olds. I teach privately (not through a school system) and enjoy my work very much, even though I just happened to start doing it when I first came to Japan 30 years ago. I enjoy being a teacher and interacting with people, and because each of the classes only meets once a week, it means that I get to see a lot of people.

Takashi is a potter and works at home. Since I'm gone much of the time, he tends to do most of the things around the house. We share laundry duties, I cook, and he cleans up.

We don't have any kids, which is one of the reasons that I have so much time for other things. I'm a cat-lover, and we currently have one black cat named Kiki.

Takashi is the homebody, and he encourages me to get out and do all the things I do, even though it means that I'm not home a lot. I joke that being a "housewife" is something that I only do in my spare time, of which there isn't much. My family are all in the U.S., and I only get to see them once a year or so when I go to visit. So my network of friends here is very important to me, as they are like an extended family

Dancing is my life and I am also taking a funk dance class. I enjoy funky music, but have trouble getting my body to move the way I'd like it to. I'm not sure how good I've gotten, but at least I'm trying!

How do you keep in touch with what is happening with Line dance in the world?

I read Carol Craven's World Line Dance Newsletter and Linedancer Magazine faithfully to keep up on what dances are popular. I probably spend more time "networking" than I do actually dancing, as for me Line dancing is an all-encompassing passion. I also do square and round dancing, and am a round dance cuer/instructor as well, so that is another area I need to keep up in.

What kind of Line dance activities do you have?

I have two Line dance classes that I teach each week, plus our main club in Nagoya which meets one Sunday a month. Pretty much every weekend is taken up with some kind of dance event. I'm a member of the JLDA (Japan Line Dance Association) and go up to Tokyo fairly regularly to instruct at workshops. I've also started emceeing events, and am often the interpreter when guest instructors are brought in from overseas. Being bilingual is very useful. I also take groups of Japanese dancers to some overseas dance event once a year. In February, I'll be taking a group on a Mexican Riviera line dance cruise with Scott Blevins and Rachael McEnaney, and hope to visit Korea and check out their line dance scene as well soon.

Has Line dance changed your life?

I've been line dancing for about 15 years, and square and round dancing for about 25 years. Dance is definitely the focus in my life, and it seems that most of my energies are directed at something that has to do with dance. Before I started dancing, I was a handicraft-type person who enjoyed sewing, weaving and dyeing, embroidery etc., but I don't have time for any of that anymore.

Do you have any other passions or hobbies?

I'm learning the koto and shamisen, two traditional Japanese musical instruments. I've been studying them for as long as I've lived in Japan. I learn ikebana, Japanese flower arranging. Our house is a traditional Japanese style house with tatami mats and no chairs or beds, and there is always an arrangement of flowers in our front hall. I also take a yoga class once a week to help keep me limber and centered. I enjoy reading, mostly novels, and go through a couple of books a week.