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JPNT177

10 May 2012

Japanese American Things

Splendid Things

One is walking after a rain storm and sees the reflection of a eucalyptus in a puddle at the same moment as smelling the scent of damp soil.

A dog prancing in joy after its bath.

A new dress that fits as if it had been tailored.

Reading a novel and eating a cookie at the same time.

Floating on your back over the top of a swell of a wave. The sun in your eyes makes the world seem red through your eyelids, and the salt water sparkles around you.

A new tube of lipstick.

Wishing on an eyelash.

Reading a book so engaging that one is sad when it's over, and the only consolation is reading it again.

Warm sand on cold feet.

Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet overture.

Reading a good book in a hot bath.

Playing the violin after has cut one's nails. One's hands suddenly seem to move with twice the ease and efficiency up and down the fingerboard.

Any candy that is cherry flavored.

One runs across the train station, and makes it to the train in record time. One is able to jump onto the train, the doors closing directly behind them. One feels a sense of accomplishment and pride.

A joyful baby that grins and giggles at one.

Feeling the breeze on one's skin on a warm summer night.

One's friend who used to delight in bragging about her svelte figure, has gained upwards of twenty pounds and now looks a bit puffy.

Tea with the perfect balance of milk and sugar.

The smell of dew on jasmine, either in the night or early morning.

A wedding so beautiful it brings tears to one's eyes. The groom is grinning and blinking back tears, and the bride holds a handkerchief to her eyes, and everything is surrounded by orchids.

Annoying Things

One is working on a group presentation and one person does not do any work, leaving the rest of the group floundering to pick up the slack.

When one goes to the dining hall and there are no cookies left.

Someone is carrying on a loud conversation right outside your door, laughing raucously at regular intervals.

One doing a science project monitoring bird feeding, and one's group makes one refill the bird feeders during a thunderstorm and one almost gets struck by lightning.

When one has forgotten to return a library book and has built up \$15 in fines.

Someone who merges lanes on the freeway without using their turn signal. One is rather inexperienced in driving, and feels rather shaken by the situation.

Someone who talks at a maddeningly slow pace, with pauses just long enough to be irksome, but too short to allow one to get a word in edgewise.

At classical music concerts, when the conductor (clad in a tuxedo complete with tails, a cummerbund and cuff links) has already taken his bows twice, comes to bow a *third* time, regardless of the dwindling applause of the weary audience.

One buys a new shade of red lipstick online only to find out that the color does not complement one's skin tone.

One's friend is telling one the same lengthy story for the third time. One politely protests, "Oh, I think you may have told me! That's so funny," but one's friend is unrelenting and tells the story again in its entirety.

A homeless man tries to help one buy a ticket from the machine, even though one is quite experienced in the arts of ticket-purchasing. He pushes the wrong buttons, and as a result, one has to run to the train platform, only to arrive as the train is pulling away.

Someone who attempts to use artifice to mask their boasts with complaint. One can always see right through their act. For example, one's friend whines, "I'm so sad I can't

make it to the party. I'm starring in a play right now, and we're in tech," or, "I hate how long my legs are. They make me look like a frog."

A baby crying on a train or bus. Its cries are shrill, piercing and incessant. One feels a little pity for the poor thing, but mostly one hopes that one's ears sustain no permanent damage. Even worse is when one can hear the poor baby's parents shouting at it to "shut the fuck up."

Conceited people. I was once at a play, and the woman sitting next to me was convinced that she was better at acting than the star of the show. She spent the majority of the show rather loudly whispering the lines along with the actor.

Someone who walks slowly. This is especially bad if one happens to be running late, or if one has a friend who is a chronically slow walker. One friend of mine often whines, "Slow down! I can't keep up." If one complains, the friend retorts, "When you walk so quickly, you don't enjoy life." One argues back that if one walks faster, one has more time to enjoy more things. One tends to hide when one sees this friend to avoid her excruciatingly slow pace.

One is waiting in line with one's mother at Costco. We wait in separate lines, to see which one is moving faster. When it is clear that one's mother's line is more efficient, one switches lines. A man wearing an American flag kerchief around his neck says indignantly, "You can't do that. That's not how it works in America."

People tend to make assumptions

I had an American history teacher who often emphasized how un-prejudiced he was. One day, when I stayed after to talk to him after class, he asked me, "Where are you from?" When I rather glibly told him, "I've grown up here in Santa Monica, but I was born in San Francisco," he replied, "Okay, but where are your *parents* from?" I told him my father was from Seattle and my mother was from San Francisco, but I relented and told him what I knew he actually wanted to know: "I'm Japanese American," I said. "But it was my great and great-great grandparents who immigrated here." We talked for a while longer, and then he asked me conspiratorily, "What's your real name?" Slightly confused, I told him, "Well, I go by Rosie, but my real name is Roxanne." Still, he persisted. "No, no," he told me. "Your *real* name." Beginning to see his true meaning, I told him, "That *is* my 'real' name."

"Really?" he asked. "Are you sure?" He didn't believe me! At this point I realized that he had confused me with the other Asian girl in the class, Eun Jae, who went by the name Jane.

After dinner one night, my family expressed their woes about the prejudices that Asian Americans sometimes face. My aunt was complaining that she got up to go to the restroom at a Thai restaurant, when she heard someone calling, "Excuse me. Excuse me?" Thinking it was a friend, she went over to the table with a smile. The woman smiled back and asked, "Can you get me some more water, please?"

People often assume that I am intelligent, and particularly gifted in the math and science areas. I had been struggling in a class, attending tutoring after school, and staying late after class to ask the teacher questions. After doing well on a test, the student seated behind me says, "Of course *you* would do well on a math test."

If I am ever seen with a middle-aged Asian/Asian American woman, it is immediately assumed that that woman is my mother. This happened to me once around a year ago. My parents' friend was in the area and decided to take me out to lunch. No sooner did the waiter come up to take our order did he say, "Mother and daughter lunch, eh?" I laughed

and said “No,” but my friend was quite offended. Perhaps the slight prejudice combined with the fact that she is a good decade or so younger than my actual mother really stung her. “No, we’re not,” she said stoutly. “You think just because we’re both Asian, it automatically means we’re mother and daughter? Huh?” She said this all in a quite belligerent tone. The waiter looked positively frightened, raising his eyebrows in alarm, and shaking his open palms in front of him as a signal of surrender. “That’s not what I meant at all! I just thought – no, it wasn’t because you’re both Asian – I mean...You just look like you could be – I meant no offense...” After watching him splutter and flounder for an extended period of time, my friend finally relented and laughed the whole thing off.

This happened most recently the other day at the department store. I was attempting to buy some new cosmetics to wear to a wedding. I was in line when some other Asian American ladies came up to the counter. I knew the assumption the saleswoman would have, so I stood a few yards away from them, hoping the physical distance would quell her notions. However, she saw us all standing there, and asked sweetly, “Are you all together?”

“No,” we told her as a collective.

“Well then, who was here first?” she said, not missing a beat.

“We were,” said one of the other women. Although this was untrue, I let it slide.

Disagreeable things

When one has to walk to class in the rain without an umbrella.

One is supposed to edit a classmate’s story before class, and they don’t email it to you until 11:00 PM the night before.

When one emails someone and they never email you back.

When one’s computer is broken and it costs \$99 to fix it.

One practicing for a recital, and you realize that everything is out of tune, that you have horrible intonation, and your tone quality is harsh and scratchy. The recital is tomorrow evening.

When you twist your ankle tripping on stairs in high heels.

One is too lazy to do laundry, and must resort to wearing tights instead of socks on a hot day.

One has recently developed an intolerance to lactose, and can no longer eat the large quantities of ice cream that one tends to favor.

A baby crow screeching for food at dawn, waking one from slumber prematurely.

Non-stereotypical things

My family does not fit the stereotypes. For example, my parents are quite foul-mouthed. I think this is generally not in the stereotype for respectable Japanese American adults.

When I told my grandfather I was thinking of being pre-med, he wasn't proud of me like I expected. He didn't congratulate me for my ambition; he just told me that I couldn't do something for the money. He told me that I had to do something I loved. He gave me a half-hour long speech about how I should be doing something creative with my life. "What happened to wanting to be a fashion designer?" he asked me. When I told him that I wasn't really interested in that anymore (that was something I was more interested in when I was twelve), he recalled how I had always been visual and observant as a child. "You would always notice the strangest things – like the fish. You were the only one who noticed that I bought new fish. You need to be doing something where you can use your observations." He then went on to suggest that I become a journalist. "You're a strong writer," he told me, "I was surprised when I read your college essays – you really have something there. That's what you *should* be doing." So there you have it – an Asian American patriarch encouraging me to pursue letters and arts – forget science and medicine.

On a subway in Japan, my mother and I laughed at how different my father was from the Japanese men he sat next to. Slightly paunchy, shirt untucked from khaki shorts, plastic-rimmed glasses askew, dark skin, wild, mad scientist hair, and a wide grin on his face. When he saw us laughing he said, "What?" When we didn't answer, he kept loudly demanding, "What? Tell me! What?" causing people to shoot him looks of distaste, and making the difference even more pronounced.

People often assume that I eat a lot of Japanese food. Sometimes, my mother will use the recipe on the soy sauce bottle to marinate the salmon, but that is about the extent of our endeavors to eat Asian food. Even my grandmother only makes Japanese food on special occasions. She makes sushi on New Years, and sometimes anmitsu if she's feeling especially generous with her time. More often she makes us beef stew or barbecued chicken. Her turkey and mayo sandwiches are to die for, and I'm sure she makes some of the best pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving. Whenever we go on a picnic, I cross my fingers and hope she's going to make spam musubi, but usually she makes chicken salad sandwiches.

Inner racists are revealed when college is involved

On my track team, one girl took it upon herself to write all of the senior's names on the whiteboard, next to all of the schools we had been accepted to. I was changing after practice behind a row of lockers, when my friend Julia came in. She didn't see me, so she began loudly complaining to her friend, "Look at Rosie. Fuckin' Rosie, man. It's like, so not fair."

"Yeah," replied her friend,

"You know it's because she's Asian. Look – UCLA – all Asian. UC Irvine – *really* all Asian – Julia had wanted to go to UCLA, and probably had sour grapes.

"I guess I can see what you're saying..."

“Cal – all Asian!”

“Um,” said her friend, sounding slightly uncomfortable, “USC doesn’t have that many Asians. And neither does Scripps, right?”

“Exactly! That’s why they want her! They need more Asians!”

“Oh, I guess that makes sense.”

“Yeah! It’s so *unfair*.”

At this point, the conversation began to dwindle. I didn’t know what to do. Should I rather passive-aggressively alert them to my presence? Or just stay behind the lockers until they left? It didn’t take long for me to decide – passive aggression is my forte.

“Um, hi!” I chirped.

“Rosie??”

“Hey Julia!”

“Oh. My. God. I am so sorry – “

“It’s fine.”

“No, seriously, you don’t understand. I *love* Asians.”

“Um, good.”

“No, like, Asians are my favorite! I have Japanese cousins!”

“It’s really fine.”

It wasn’t fine, but I couldn’t work up the courage to tell her until two weeks later. I pored over the statistics of UC admissions, finding that Asian people were never favored; in some cases (for example, UC San Diego), they were even selected against. Finally, as we were rounding the 300 m line during our track workout, I explained my findings to her. She seemed skeptical, but I felt better for telling her.

Recently, I was talking to one of my friends, and I casually let slip that I was attending Scripps on a merit scholarship. My boasts were not true to etiquette, but her response was unmerited.

“Yeah, well when you’re blonde and half-German, half-Swedish, you don’t have opportunities like that.” Aghast, I told her that she was wrong. “Really?” she asked me. “Well I guess that might be true for Asians. But in Washington, there are so many more scholarships available for African Americans and Native Americans. It’s really unfair.”

Things that are hard to say

It is very difficult to send a rejection letter to someone– almost as hard as receiving one. When I was denying people admission into the Asian American Sponsor Program, cheesy as it sounds, I actually covered my eyes as I pressed “send” on the rejection emails.

When you are making a presentation, and someone asks a question one had not considered. One repeats their question to stall for time, then change the word order of something said earlier in the presentation, skilllessly avoiding their question.

One is in a job interview and the interviewer asks what sets you above all of their other applicants. One is not accustomed to singing one's own praises and stutter for an embarrassing length of time.

Anemone.

Churlish.

Depressing things

A dead squirrel in the road.

A homeless man on a cold night.

I once saw a play where a group of men stoned a baby to death. They threw its carriage around the stage, urinated on it, rubbed its own waste in its face, attempted to catch it on fire, and finally hurled stones at it. My friend was so overtaken she ran from the theatre in tears.

When one is about to throw away the last bite of a sandwich, and one sees someone digging through the trash.

I speak English

I speak English. I may carry on a perfectly coherent, conversation with someone, only to have them ask me, "What language did you want your audioguide in?" All of my Caucasian friends were wordlessly handed one in English.

"Is English your first language?" Is it not clear from my completely accent-free (though admittedly, ineloquent) English?

"Oh, I see why you're taking into Japanese. Easy A, right?"

"Didn't you grow up speaking Japanese?"

"Don't you know any Japanese at all?"

Outsider things

I felt different when my third grade teacher lectured the class about Socrates. She explained that, although he was a great philosopher, he was very ugly with a flat nose. I didn't understand why at that time, but vehemence that flat noses were ugly made me deeply sad. I told her so at recess, and she was horrified by her misstep. She tried to console me, telling me that her nose was flatter than mine. I was eight years old, but not simple. I knew she had a perfect, Anglo, ski-jump nose.

In elementary school, I always had to share a desk with the one other Asian boy in the class. I don't know why the teacher always assigned us to sit next to one another. I was very prim and proper as a child, and was scandalized at his propensity to change the lyrics of the songs we sang during music class. He inserted the words "butt" and "fart" into the songs at every possible opportunity.

People have asked me flat-out how it's possible for an Asian girl to have curly hair. "Are you sure you aren't mixed?" they ask me. Not as far as I know. Whenever I try to go to Asian salons, they always suggest that I chemically straighten it.

Whenever I played "Harry Potter" with my friends, I always had to be Cho Chang. At the time, I didn't mind much – she is described as pretty and athletic. But when I got older, it started to bother me. When I dressed up as Luna Lovegood for Halloween in high school, a few people asked me, "why didn't you dress up as Cho Chang?" Why should I be pigeon-holed on Halloween of all days? The 31st day of the tenth month is one of the best in the entire year! It bothered me even more when Cho Chang turned out to be rather shallow and unpleasant.

Things that happened in Japan

In Japan, I was teased about all aspects of my appearance. I have always thought I looked Japanese, but I must have been mistaken. I am too large, my hair is too curly, my feet are too big, my skin is too dark, and my hair and eyes are too light. I was even once teased that my eyelashes were too long! I tried to use Japanese mascara, and my host family laughed and laughed. They told me again and again, "You look like a Kewpie doll!"

By Japanese standards, I looked old for my age. While here, people still card me for R-rate movies, people would offer me beer at restaurants even though I was only fifteen at the time. When I commented on this, I was told, "Americans eat too much meat growing up."

One day, the conversation took a dark turn. My limited Japanese prevented me from understanding the bulk of the conversation, but I was able to pick out words here and there. Suddenly, I could hear everyone saying words like "A-bomb" and "Hiroshima." My eyes were wide with surprise, as everyone looked at me accusingly. "I wasn't born yet," I tried to say in broken Japanese. I remember feeling a sense of guilt, but also slight indignation. How could they blame me for this?

For some reason, my host family delighted in making fun of my flat chest. With delighted broken English, they told me, "Back and front is same!" We went shopping with an Italian friend who was quite curvaceous. They told her that it would be difficult for her to wear a yukata. But then they turned to me and said, "No bust; okay!"

I told my host family that I enjoyed Miyazaki's movies. I told them I had even dressed as Sen from *Spirited Away* for Halloween one year when I was a little girl. "How funny," my host mother told me, "That an American girl would dress up as a Japanese girl."

Flowers

Fuchsias – they are very pleasing because they resemble ballerinas in voluminous skirts.

Irises.

Mallows – as a child, I had one planted outside my house. When my father attempted to move it, however, it died.

Heather.

Lavender.

Daisies.

Azaleas – my grandfather bought me one, and attempted to teach me how to train it into a bonsai. Unfortunately, it died after two years, and my grandfather gave up on passing on his knowledge of bonsai to me.

Lilies.

Roses – the best flower. As a child, I was always proud that I was named after them. They are more beautiful than lilies (though perhaps not as elegant), more refined than daisies (though one wonders if there is anything *less* refined than a daisy), more fragrant than the iris, and right now I cannot think of any other flowers that girls are named for.

Snapdragons – these should have been included on my list of splendid things. When one pinches the bloom, it looks like a dragon in miniature baring its teeth. How delightful!

Baby's breath.

Orchids – perhaps the most elegant flower.

Chrysanthemums.

Geraniums – horridly brash in color. Hateful!

Pansies.

Buttercups – the richest shade of yellow, with the appearance of being glazed.

Tulips.

Petunias – I wonder what they are? There is another flower that girls are named after. I do not know the qualities of a petunia, but I know that the name itself is harsh on the ears and distasteful. I pity any girl named Petunia.

Foxgloves.

Camp things

I learned about the relocation camps when I was five years old. It was Martin Luther King day, and we had spent all day learning about the civil rights movement and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. I remember feeling quite confused; I didn't know which side of the fight we fit in on. Were we the white people who oppressed the black people? Or were we the black people who were treated so badly? Neither option sounded good to me. When I came home from class, I asked my father a question that was really bothering me:

"Are we black or are we white?"

He told me, "We're neither. We're Japanese-American."

I was slightly relieved, but I still had one more concern. I didn't want my ancestors to have been oppressed like the African Americans we had learned about in school that day.

"But Dad, nothing bad ever happened to us, right?"

"Well..." He paused to think. "Actually, yes."

"But only to great-great-great-greatgreatgreat – " I paused to take a breath, "great-great-great grandma and grandpa, right?"

"No." He seemed to choose his words carefully. "Actually, to your grandma and grandpa."

My father decided to tell me about camp at whatever age I happened to ask, because he didn't find out until he was twelve. He was reading the WWII chapter in his seventh grade history textbook, when he came across a single paragraph informing him of the relocation of the Japanese and Japanese Americans. He went straight home and asked his parents if it was true. Completely unruffled and non-plussed, they replied in the affirmative.

He was completely shocked. He had always heard his parents talk about Camp, but he had always just assumed summer camp was a bigger deal during their generation. He couldn't believe that no one, not his parents or any of his teachers had bothered to tell him.

When I was a little girl, my aunt bought me a picture book by Yoshiko Uchida entitled, "The Bracelet." It was a story about a young girl arriving at the internment camps. She has just received a bracelet from her best friend, as a memento for their separation. In the bustle of getting off the bus and into their barracks, she loses the bracelet, and frantically searches the whole camp looking for it, but all to no avail. This story stood in stark contrast to the other storybooks I had, the majority of which had a happy ending. In the world of my other books, she would have found her bracelet and been allowed to go home to her friend and everything that was familiar to her. As a child, this story made me feel so sad that I used to dread my parents reading it to me. They also bought me *Sadako and the Thousand Cranes*, but I refused to read it for the same reason.

When I was twelve years old, I sang in the Manzanar Youth Choir, as part of the Manzanar Project. I only remember a handful of the lyrics now, "*Have you seen this place? Do you know its name?*" and "*Know our human...tears.*" I remember feeling slightly disturbed. They had created the Manzanar Project to honor the Japanese Americans interned during the war, but the music we were singing was composed by a Japanese woman. Did they think it was the same thing?

As part of the choir, we went on a pilgrimage to Manzanar. When we arrived on the school bus, I was struck by the beauty. Growing up, one hears so many stories of the

horrific conditions; the biting cold, the dust storms, the searing heat. But on a balmy spring day, Manzanar had some of the bluest skies I had ever seen, striking against monolithic black mountains dusted in snow. I also was in awe of the sense of community. That day, everyone joined together and danced obon together; in a huge circle in the dust.

I also visited Tule Lake. Unlike the balmy spring day at Manzanar, this spring day was gloomy, overcast, and biting cold. What stood out to me first was the closeness of the toilets. Nearly seventy years later, the toilets themselves were no longer standing, but the pipes remain. One could tell from the pipes that each toilet had had less than a mere two feet separating it from its neighbor, and the bathroom has dozens of these toilets in rows.

The jail at Tule Lake was horrific in its own way. When one walks into the jail, the temperature is a full ten degrees below the already chilly temperatures outside. The walls are cement, and if one looks closely, one can see graphite markings, some short poems in Japanese, some tick marks marking the passing days. The jail consists of about six small cells, each no larger ten by ten feet, each holding three cement bunks, stacked on top of one another. The jail was made to hold a maximum of twenty people, but at its highest occupancy, it held hundreds of people. One shudders to think of hundreds of people in this tiny, cement enclosure.

I went to the Japanese American memorial in Washington D.C. I went with a large group of Japanese Americans, and we took a panoramic picture of each of us standing under a different camp's name. We had representatives from nearly every camp; my father stood under Minidoka for his mother, my mother stood under Rohwer for her father, and I stood under Topaz for my grandmother. One man in the group had been born in Tule Lake. In the center of us all was the statue of a crane, struggling to break free of barbed wire.

When I was six years old

When I was six years old, I was so excited that I was Japanese American, that I told all of my friends. When one friend asked me what it meant, I told him it meant that my ancestors came from Japan. After that, he told everyone he was San Franciscan-American.

Ever proud of my heritage, I rode on the *It's a Small World* ride at Disneyland, and shouted and pointed at the bowing Japanese dolls, "Those are my people!"

My best friend was Chinese American, and for some incomprehensible reason, we used to sing with each other each day at recess, "Chinese, Japanese –" pulling our eyes up and down – "My shoes, your shoes –" pointing at each others' feet – "...Look at their shoes!" We would crinkle our noses and giggle. Maybe this little ritual came as a result of being some of the only Asian American girls in the class, but looking back, I feel perplexed and slightly ashamed of myself.

Stores

Trader Joes, Urban Outfitters, Nordstrom, CVS, Barnes and Noble, Restoration Hardware, J. Crew, Old Navy, Banana Republic, Sephora, MAC, Boots, Superdrug, Primark, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Albertson's, Lucky's, Tesco, Bloomingdales, Happy Six.

Agreeable things

Hot chocolate with extra chocolate.

Cookies with ice cream. Even better is a freshly baked, still warm cookie with .
Viola in *Twelfth Night*.

Pride and Prejudice.

75 degrees with a slight breeze and sparse cloud cover.

Learning a new song on the violin.

Reuniting with old friends.

Catching a wave after sitting in the ocean for what seems like eternity.

Reading in bed on a Sunday morning.

The feeling of accomplishment one gets from filling up an entire journal.

Sweetened ice tea during a long car ride.

Painting one's nails with a new shade of lacquer.

Hateful things

One goes to the movie theater to see a film, and the film is incomparably boring. Not only are two hours wasted, but twelve dollars too. How hateful!

One has a friend who constantly "complains" about being too thin. She casually drops it into the conversation at every opportunity – "My feet are the only part of me that's larger than average," "I can't wear that brand, the extra-small is too big on me," "All of my jeans keep falling down." Her extra small clothes were not too big on her. They were actually on the snug side.

Physics. The things that can be learned from physics are splendid indeed, but the actual practice of it makes one's mind ill.

Airplanes. One is sitting in the middle seat of a completely full plane on an 11-hour flight. One is sitting between an obese husband and wife (this is no hyperbole or libel. They were truly obese), and one's seat refuses to recline. A baby is crying in the row in front, and a man with a contagious-sounding hacking cough sits in the row directly behind. One fiddles with the seatbelt to discover that it is covered in dried vomit. Hateful indeed!

Waiting in line for nearly two hours for the new ride at Six Flags. When one gets to the front of the line, one is told that because of an oncoming electrical storm, the ride is to be shut down for the remainder of the evening.

It is a hateful thing indeed when one is stuck in traffic for extended periods of time. A six-hour drive becomes a ten-hour drive, and one becomes afflicted with car sickness from the repeated starts and stops of the car.

Once, when my mother was driving me home from track practice, a car cut her off, then honked. I could hear him through the open windows, muttering, "Fucking chinks can't drive."

Similarly, I was running the 3200 m run at a track meet. As some boys passed me at about the 100 meter mark, one of them laughed and said, "Fucking Asians can't run." Hateful!

Foods that should be eaten on the 24th day of the twelfth month

Won tons, jello, turkey tetrazzini, enchilada casserole, spam musubi, sashimi, ambrosia, See's candy, honey baked ham on a roll, roast beef, mazogohan and spanicopita.

Embarrassing things

One is auditioning for the orchestra, and the notes become so out of tune, that one no longer recognizes what part in the music one is playing. One breaks into slightly hysterical laughter, and doesn't stop laughing for almost a minute.

When one introduces themselves with someone they are already acquainted with.

One's father asks a friend why he is wearing a fake mustache, while it's clearly real. Why would someone wear a fake mustache to a fourth of July barbecue?

Skipping down the aisle of the biology classroom, one trips over a backpack and falls on their face.

A person who prizes their intellect at more than its actual value.

One breaks one's arm shaving in the shower. When anyone asks what happened, one is tempted to fabricate a more majestic story – a glamorous ski accident, a well-delivered blow to an attacker's face, but one is confined by the truth.

An annoying man complains about his position as a "nice guy," whining that "good guys never win." Really, everyone considers him rather rude and condescending, not a "good guy" as he clearly views himself.

Things that should and should not be worn

Bridesmaids should not wear yellow. If one is fortunate, it is passable, but for most it is very unflattering. Women in yellow often look sickly and sallow.

Men in formal wear should never wear seafoam green ties or vests. It appears very effeminate, and besides is not flattering.

Most ladies should not wear empire waists. It tends to make one look bloated and heavier than one actually is. For evidence, watch any Regency era period drama.

Men's pants should not be worn so low. What is the point? It makes one's legs look disproportionately short, and is besides very indecent.

Cufflinks are very elegant and visually appealing.

Skirts that cut off mid calf are often very unflattering, especially if one is cursed with short legs.

People should wear clothes that fit. It is painful to see one in jeans so tight that the excess skin spills over the top. Loose clothes are more forgiving than clothes that are too small.

A young lady should not confine herself to the wardrobe of a middle-aged woman. A friend of mine routinely dresses in rather unattractive sweater vests and ill-fitting pencil skirts.

Women in orchestra concerts should wear either long skirts or slacks. Short skirts are informal and unprofessional. Men, of course, should wear tuxedos.

One should never pair a baggy top with a flared skirt. It gives one the appearance of a ship set to sail.

Sequins are acceptable if used in moderation, but never on something that is also form-fitting and short.

What fun

What fun it was to write this piece. Attempting to imitate the style of Sei Shonagon was truly delightful. At times, it was easy to get carried away – I wrote whatever suited my fancy, and I fear that some of the subject matter is rather boring and prosaic. As Shonagon writes, “It is written entirely for my own amusement and I put things down exactly as they came to me” (268).

Through writing this, I had intended to share my experience of growing up Japanese American, and all of the feelings that come with it. *The Pillow Book* seemed to supply the perfect format, as I wanted to paint a picture using short vignettes. I had also hoped to relay my experiences in a way that was potentially humorous, though whether that is true or not is up to the reader.