

SPOTLIGHT

Editor's postscript

Randoseru – The School Backpack

March is the month for graduation, while April marks the beginning of a new school year. In Japan, the school year starts just when the fresh leaves of plants and trees start to grow. The *sakura* cherry blossoms that bloom just around this time of the year add colorfulness to the season of parting and new encounters.

Japanese elementary school children, from the first to sixth grade, go to school wearing a traditional satchel called “*randoseru*.” It is shaped like a rectangular box, and has straps like those on a backpack. It is made from cow or synthetic leather.

This bag has its roots overseas, but underwent a unique development in Japan, becoming part of this country's culture. The school uniform of Japanese schools is based on the Western military clothing that was adopted in the Meiji era (1868-1912), and *randoseru* is said to have originated from the back sack used by the army, called *ransel* in Dutch. The back sack, first used to carry military goods, evolved to become a school bag, and eventually became a satchel used nationwide by elementary school children. The color of *randoseru* is usually red for girls and black for boys, but it is recently available in a variety of colors. Elementary schools do not require children to carry these satchels to school, and there are no rules that limit *randoseru* to elementary school children. However, there are no students other than elementary school pupils who actually wear them,

and so the association between *randoseru* and elementary school children is firmly linked in the minds of Japanese people.

Randoseru costs about ¥40,000. Some people might say the price is reasonable considering that they can be used for the six years at elementary school, but there are some children who stop wearing them as they get older, and so they are definitely not cheap. In Japan though, parents feel obliged to buy their children *randoseru* in much the same way that parents feel it their duty to prepare bridal trousseaus for their daughters getting wed.

When a child becomes a first grader and leaves home for school wearing *randoseru* still a little too large in proportion to his or her small frame, the parents watch it with deep feeling. They are filled with gladness that their child has grown to be of school age, and memories of their own childhood might flash back. For the Japanese public, *randoseru* is not merely a bag for practical use, but an item laden with sentimental value.

N. Toyoda



Visit Japan SPOTLIGHT website

JEF Japan Economic Foundation
財団法人 国際経済交流財団

Search: go

HOME >>> English >>>

Table of Contents
Search
Subscribe **Click!**
Back Numbers
Reader's Forum

LOG IN
Sign up now
E-mail:
Password:
Log IN

About The Magazine (Japanese/English)
Editorial Policy
Advertising (Japanese/English)
Contact US
JEF's HP

OTHER TOPICS

SPECIAL ARTICLES 1 By Guy de JONQUIERES (Senior Research Fellow, Chatham House)
Doha Round, Multilateralism & Future of WTO

SPECIAL ARTICLES 2 By T.J. PEMPEL (Professor, Political Science Dept., Univ. of California, Berkeley)
US-Japan Relations: Japan Should Re-balance Policy Priorities

ASIAN VIEW By KE Long (Senior research fellow, Economic Research Center, Fujitsu Research Institute)
Significance of China's FTAs/EPAs with Asian Neighbors

PROMENADE By Natsuko TOYODA (JEF)
Farmer Philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka: Humans Must Strive to Know the Unknown (3)
Greening Desserts by Clay-Ball Seeding **Click!**

Reader's Forum **Click!**
Welcome to the Japan SPOTLIGHT Reader's Forum. Discuss topics raised in the Articles.

Subscription Order **Click!**
Subscribe to Japan SPOTLIGHT and get unrestricted access to our online archive. Also, join the Reader's Forum to discuss a wide range of topics.

Next Issue
Global Aging
Global aging is a challenge for the world as well as Japan. However, we should look at its positive side as well. Academic experts and businesspeople introduce you to a wide range of aspects of the theme.

Previous Issue
[Cover Story]
Plus-sum game in innovative Asia

Archive Search
Subscribing readers can read the full text of all articles in PDF files. Please log in before starting your search. The archive contains back numbers of both Japan SPOTLIGHT and its predecessor, Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry, from 1982. Non-subscribers can access the limited HTML version.

Title >
BackNumber >
Author >
Keyword >
GO!! **Click!**

(C)Copyright 2000-2009 JAPAN ECONOMIC FOUNDATION. All Rights Reserved

<http://www.jef.or.jp/journal/index.html>

If you want to find an interesting *Japan SPOTLIGHT* article, please go to our website. It has an article search function and introduces content of back numbers. You can also order subscription over the Internet.

Click! Back Numbers

You can see the cover of each back number and content explanation. There are selected PDF articles from back numbers for free-of-charge reading.

Click! Subscription Order

You can order *Japan SPOTLIGHT* from anywhere in the world. If ordered from here, you can pay by credit card or bank transfer. And you can read articles dating back 28 years through our online archive, too.

Click! Archive Search

Please find useful stories from our online archive of articles in stock for 28 years. If you are a subscribing reader, you can log in and read the full text of each article in PDF form. Non-subscribers also can read halfway through each article.