

MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter



My flooded hometown

For starters, the last major hurricane to hit my region of Texas was Hurricane Beryl. Despite technically being a hurricane, compared to the truly devastating storms I've experienced, it felt more like an unusually heavy rainstorm.

When it comes to the big ones, however, they're on a completely different level. Those from my hometown will instantly know what I'm talking about, but for those unfamiliar, Hurricane Harvey—a Category 4 hurricane (with Category 5 being the highest)—struck Southeast Texas and Louisiana in 2017. At the time, I was a high school student, and the last major hurricane I remembered was Hurricane Ike nearly ten years earlier.

Naturally, I was excited at first when schools announced closures, especially since the new school year had only just begun.

However, as the hurricane approached, the sky quickly turned gray, and the increasing wind and rain soon knocked out power not only in my neighborhood but throughout most of the city.

To make matters worse, I had broken my ankle in three places the month before. Not only was I stuck inside a sweltering, humid house without electricity in the middle of August, but I could barely move around. All I could do was wait and hope that our house wouldn't flood by what the forecasts called a "once-in-a-thousand-year" flood event.

Speaking of flooding, the sheer amount of rain quickly turned streets into rivers. People traveled between houses by motorboat and kayak. Thankfully, our home was spared, though just barely. The water came right up to our doorstep. Unfortunately, many of our neighbors weren't so lucky. As a rough estimate, I'd say one in every five houses suffered significant water damage. For some residents, the flooding was so severe that they had to be evacuated by boat or helicopter.

As the gray skies darkened into night, the pounding rain never seemed to stop. Although my house has two floors, my broken ankle made climbing the stairs difficult, so I reluctantly settled on the first floor. I went to sleep wondering whether I would wake up to find my home underwater.

These conditions lasted for around five days. When the storm finally passed, the town I knew had been completely transformed. Trees, garbage, couches—anything and everything had been swept through the streets by the floodwaters.

Howdy y'all!

I hope June is going great for everyone and that, after a few weeks of heat, you're enjoying a bit of cooler weather as we enter tsuyu season. A couple of weeks ago, we had a bit of a scare with Tropical Storm Jangmi approaching Japan. Thankfully, despite some concerning forecasts, Gunma was spared the worst of its impact. The storm got me reminiscing about my hometown, which has been affected by many hurricanes over the years. So, in this issue, I'd like to share some of those experiences.



My high school

Many homes were abandoned entirely. My high school was also severely flooded. The entire first floor had to be torn out and remained that way for months. I still remember my shoes sticking to the concrete because of the adhesive residue left behind after the flooring was removed.



Front yard beginning to flood

For the most part, people have recovered since then. However, neighboring towns such as Port Arthur were never quite the same. The town had already been struggling economically, and the flooding accelerated its decline. Many residents relocated to neighboring communities, including mine, and never returned. With all that being said, I think it's important to pay attention to weather reports and know whether your home is located in a flood zone or another disaster-prone area. Although Gunma is relatively free from major natural disasters, it's always better to be safe than sorry!