**By Jan Rahn**
*Managing Editor*

An 8.9 magnitude earth quake triggered a chain of events that plunged Japan into unimaginable destruction when a tsunami hit the northeast side of the island in the Pacific Ocean.

Taking the brunt of the tsunami March 11 was the farming and fishing area of Sendai. The 33-foot high wall of water swept inland six miles, unleashing its fury on buildings and everything else in its path.

The shores of California braced for the deflective waves that were to come back across the ocean hours later.

Although occurring on the other side of the globe, the chaos affects even those in communities across Nebraska, some leading back to Perkins County and the surrounding area. Here are their stories:

**Jen Arbaugh**

Omaha native Jen Arbaugh is in her third semester living and studying in Tokyo. Her ties to Perkins County are through Grant resident Tara Nodlinski, whose cousin is her boyfriend.

Arbaugh lives just outside of Tokyo in Kawasaki City. The Creighton University School of Law student is studying international law at Temple University at their Tokyo campus.

Arbaugh was contacted Monday via Facebook, and relayed the following information:

Fortunately, when the primary and largest quake hit, Arbaugh was still in Seoul, South Korea visiting friends. She returned to Tokyo over the weekend and didn't experience any trouble flying back and getting home.

When she returned home, there was no structural damage to her home. However, a large mirror, lamp, and many bottles of lotion or makeup were on the floor and in disarray in her room when she got there. She felt fortunate that nothing was broken.

Tokyo, fortunately, escaped the quake with little to no damage, said Arbaugh. "Although that doesn't mean that we have not felt the effects of the quake in other ways. Since my return, there have been continuing aftershocks throughout the day and night—some strong enough to shake the things in my house and others that you really can hardly feel."

The Japanese Meterological Society continues to warn of the high chance of large aftershocks, so residents are taking the appropriate precautions.

"Upon my return this weekend, my Japanese 'parents' and I attempted to go grocery shopping, but even here in Tokyo the stores are empty and out of many basic foods—I am unable to buy bread, rice, ramen noodles and other convenience foods–milk, eggs, bottled water, etc.," she said.

"It is very spooky to go to the grocery store and see the empty shelves, and it is a strange feeling to be unable to buy things you want and need. Fortunately, my 'family' and I have food at home as well as supplies they keep for earthquakes, so we are pretty well set for the time

being."

Arbaugh said perhaps the most alarming issue right now is with the nuclear power plant north of Tokyo that is experiencing explosions and partial meltdowns—one as late as Monday (in Tokyo). They continue to battle the issues there in the hopes of containing the radiation.

"As a result of losing this plant, Tokyo is going to begin implementing blackouts starting this morning, and my home will be without power from 1:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m.," said Arbaugh.

The blackouts are staged in five different groups depending on where a person lives, and may continue throughout the coming months and even into the summer.

Trains also have operated in very limited capacities in order to conserve power. The government requested that residents avoid travel to work and school as a result.

"The trains aren't even running in my area at all, so my law school courses have been cancelled through at least Wednesday," she said.

Some of her classmates are leaving Japan currently, traveling to the U.S. and Asia for the next week as everyone waits to see what happens.

"I, myself, plan to weather the 'storm' here in Tokyo, hoping for the best," said Arbaugh. "I should add that being a resident of Tokyo, I really feel that I have no room to complain for these inconveniences, and I am extremely thankful for the situation as it stands here. Those living in the northern parts of Japan are experiencing unthinkable tragedy from the devastating earthquake and especially the tsunami."

"From what I've seen and heard on Japanese television, the residents of these coastal towns had little warning to try to flee, and the latest counts I've heard for fatalities this morning are at about 5,000 so far. Many are without food, water, electricity, plumbing or homes right now, and mass relief efforts are underway."

"I read an article here today that I found very interesting though, that talked about the ability of the Japanese people to survive and thrive in the face of disaster," said Arbaugh.

"One thing I love about the Japanese people is their culture and the respect they have for others. This is really exemplified by the fact that there is no looting occurring at the disaster areas, and many convenience store owners and vending machine owners are distributing free food and drinks to those in need. I really admire the Japanese for their response to this crisis, and I know they will overcome this tragedy."

**Emiko Thalken**

Relaying information from Tokyo through her husband, 68-year-old Emiko Thalken of Ogallala said everyone was finishing up their work week when the earthquake brought everything to a halt.

Emiko will be in her native country until May visiting cousins, but is eager to get back to Nebraska—to her husband, Charlie, and digging in the dirt. Charlie said her passion is being outdoors.

Emiko was out with a friend when the earthquake struck. She made her way home to her steel-reinforced, stable concrete apartment where she feels safe. Unlike other friends who have a terrible time sleeping because of aftershocks.

In place because of frequent earthquakes is a policy that all trains stop regardless of the magnitude so that tracks can be checked. Another precaution is that everyone has emergency

backpacks by the door ready to grab and head out of their home.

On Monday, Charlie relayed information he'd seen while watching the news: The death toll had risen to 1,568 in the area where the tsunami hit the hardest near the city of Sendai, (pop. 1 million). It was raining, with snow in the forecast, making conditions even more severe for the homeless.

The tsunami went across the runway at the airport in Sendai 231 miles away where it hit hardest. In Tokyo, 22 commercial planes sat on the closed airport's runway while incoming passengers were shuttled to a recreation center.

The couple met while Charlie was stationed in Japan between 1984-89. Fortunately, Emiko's apartment is one mile from the air base where she has access to gas and food, unlike others in Tokyo struggling to get supplies.

He described the island as 900 miles long, similar to California, mountainous, surrounded by water. Japan has population of 150 million, half that of the U.S. Those 150 million Japanese live on 20 percent of the land mass.

**Shelby Leyland**

Safe in the far southern region of Japan is 2005 Imperial graduate Shelby Leyland.

Her mother, Jo Leyland, said on Monday that it was hard to get through to her daughter the first day after the quake and tsunami, but she and her husband were relieved when they could contact her on Skype to be assured she was okay. They had seen her at Christmas time.

Shelby has taught music and English in the town of Ozu (50,000 pop.) for the past year-and-a-half.

The Leylands have reservations to go see their daughter March 25, flying into Tokyo. However, Jo said with the transportation system interrupted, they are uncertain of what they should do about making the trip.