

Nakasu!

Pleasure Island...



by Eric M. Olson

Nakasu. It's one of the most famous and notorious entertainment areas in all of Japan. The neon-dominated view of the Naka river is one of Fukuoka's most beautiful postcard shots. Nowhere else in the city will you find packs of middle-aged men with cutting loose so obviously on their minds; young Japanese and foreign women dressed to kill (well, some of them) as they make their way to work in the clubs; host-



Busker on the Deai bridge

area is still bustling with activity and hopes are high that the Canal-City project in Sumiyoshi will help return the area to its former entertainment and shopping glory.

The Nakasu area is actually a giant sandbank. Until 1888, the Naka river (which flows to the west of Nakasu) marked the border of the town called Fukuoka and the Hakata river (which flows to the east) marked the border of the town of Hakata. Nakasu belonged to neither side and for many years was just a little-used field. Fukuoka was a center for samurai, housing the castle of the Kuroda clan, while Hakata was a merchant town. When a city administration was finally implemented to rule over all of Fukuoka and Hakata, a poll was taken to determine the name of the new city and Fukuoka won by a single vote.

Bridges were first built into Nakasu in 1601 and the island's economic activity gradually increased. In the early 1900's, many scientific facilities were constructed in Nakasu and places like Kyushu University and Hospital, Kyushu Electric, the meteorological observatory and the telephone company all emerged from this development.

The beginning of Nakasu as an entertainment center was sparked by a Kyushu/Okinawa exposition in 1910. Streetcars began to run and the number of geisha

houses, movie theaters, cafes, bars and restaurants rapidly increased. Nakasu was booming, offering the best shopping in the city and the most varied entertainment at night. World War II brought it all to a sudden end, however, as Fukuoka was hit by a serious air raid and fire destroyed the entire Nakasu area. After the war, Nakasu was quickly reconstructed and neon began to dot the Naka riverside.

Immediately after the war, Nakasu remained the center of shopping in Fukuoka, with the Kawabata Shopping Arcade its centerpiece. In the mid-1960's however,



More ways to spend money... shopping!

(water business) and a hit the streets to party

The recent economic crisis have severely affected Nakasu as the economy began to recover. The number of clubs and bars is in a steep decline. Hope has arrived with the new Canal-City in Sumiyoshi. Planned as a Hotel, a business hotel, shopping complexes, dozens of shops and an entertainment center are offering tickets priced

Canal-City may well give an economic boost it has been our story on it in RADA. bat-time, same bat-time



"Now showing in Nakasu..."

shops began to slowly shift towards the Tenjin area. In 1974, Daimaru moved to Tenjin from Gofuku-machi and in 1976 Tenjin Core was built, ending Nakasu's shopping reign.

Nakasu remains a formidable entertainment center, however. Its total area is only 0.19 km², stretching 1500m from north to south and 205m from west to east, yet it supports thousands of bars, snacks, clubs and cabarets. Only 600 people live in Nakasu proper, yet 15,000 people work in the *mizu shoubai*



Riverside taxi



Information tabehodai!

esses, karaoke and regular bars; Soapland; strip clubs; movie theaters; restaurants; and even regular shopping. The development of Tenjin and the bursting of Japan's economic bubble may have landed a right cross to the economic chin of Nakasu, but the



Drink and let a professional drive

Nakasu Words of Wisdom

3. South of Nakasu and Kokutai-doro is the infamous Soapland neighborhood. The name sounds innocent enough, like some theme park devoted to Coast and Tide, but what really goes on starts with naked

5. If it's 02:00 and you're drunk, Lawson on Nakasu Odori has a dispenser (for credit cards only)

6. When the year-end party is