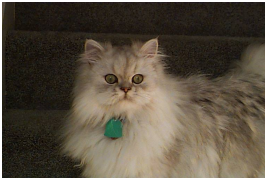


***** Merry Christmas 2019 *****

Dear friends,

Greetings. Here is our summary of 2019.



2019 was the year of departure for us. The first departure came in January. Miitaroo, our 19-year old cat, departed for Rainbow Bridge on Jan. 27. He was weak but had a good enough appetite, so I thought he would be OK for a while. He probably had a kind of stroke. He was a wonderful cat, people-friendly, not territorial, and with a good sense of distance. He was a nice companion for twenty years.



The second departure came on Feb. 28. Isao, Kazumi's father, passed at the age of eighty-eight. When Kazumi flew back to Tokyo, he was unable to communicate at all. Kazumi had long talks in December of 2018. Isao no longer had a grasp of present situation, but he talked a lot about his childhood memories. Kazumi thought that was the farewell. Isao had a kind of infection in January. That took much of his physical energy away, and he could not recover from it. His passing was peaceful, and made a soft landing to the final moment. Thank you, Dad. He is now with Naoko, his wife, who passed twenty years ago. At his funeral, Kazumi was informed that his nephew's wife was pregnant. It made wonderful news of new life.

<Yukiko in 2019>



Yukiko attended conferences in Atlanta (ILTA and AAAL) in March. In late March, She and Kazumi went to Malta for a presentation. We explored Maltese historical and prehistorical places including City of Valetta, huge stone structure (4500 B.C.), Gozo island, and Sovereign Military Order of Malta. New academic year started in April, but she managed to go to Istanbul in June for a conference. For a post-conference trip, she also visited Cappadocia and Pamukkare. Both were wonderous places. In July, we went to Ikaho hot springs together. It is a popular traditional onsen spot near Tokyo. In August, we went Los Cabos in Baha California in Mexico for a cruise and tequila tasting. (Kazumi did not break a toilet bowl.) October, Yukiko's former students took her to island tour of Inland Sea visiting old towns and historical sites. They of course enjoyed wonderful fish dishes. Then, the second semester began with busy schedule. In December, we are planning to visit Kagoshima and Kumamoto in Kyushu for hot spring hopping.



boat
In
Seto

< Kazumi in 2019 >



Due to cold weather in late spring, our cherry tree did not blossom at all this spring. Although this sometimes happens in Midwest, it was sad. (The photo shows a couple of determined flowers.) Since the work at Middlebury was over, I was able to substantial part of summer in Japan. In May, friends in Osaka (Ayaka, Yumiko, Keiko, Aki, Kaori, and Mika) took me a tour of deep side of Osaka. I was also able to attend a high school reunion as well as old basketball teammates. I ran a few workshops to train Japanese instructors for kobanashi activities (short comedic stories). As for rakugo related events, Master Sankyo and I went to Kanazawa for a performance at Princeton in Ishikawa program. Master Niraku and I went to Hakodate for a performance at Hokkaido International Foundation. In mid July, Kazumi flew back to Middlebury to attend its 50th anniversary of the School of Japanese.

In August, a new academic year started. Subaru Indiana Automotive (SIA) became a sponsor to bring Master Saryu from Japan for a rakugo activity. We managed to put up performances at University of Illinois, Purdue, a local Japanese restaurant, and SIA. In November, I went to Penn State to help Ms. Shigeko Sasamori (Hibakusya). She is as energetic as ever. I am determined to help her activities.

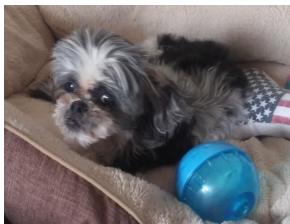


We wish you a very happy new year!

Kazumi & Yukiko

Miitaro (born in 1999): I have decided to wait for you guys at Rainbow Bridge.

Chibitan III (born in 2005): Although I lost my good half, I am healthy. I sleep more lately.



Chibitan & Miitaro

***** Happy New Year 2020 *****