

* * * * * Everybody has done their best in 2021 * * * * *

Dear friends

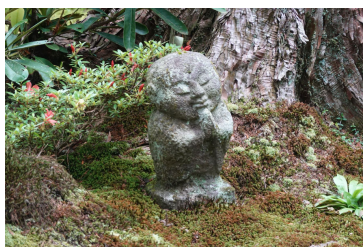
I hope you are not suffering from Covid-19 fatigue. The vaccine has started and the situation has changed from last year, but it seems that we have not yet escaped from the pandemic. Nevertheless, I believe that continuity is strength, so I would like to share our annual report with you. I hope that next year will be a peaceful one.

<Yukiko's Year 2021>

This year has been another year of being swamped by Covid-19. My classes were basically online, and I only went to the university once a week, the rest of the time I was at my desk. As for travel, we went to Akiu Onsen in Sendai and Matsushima in the New Year. I came to the U.S. in March, but the AAAL and AAS conferences were both online, so I did not go out. But I was glad to be in North America because when I attend from Japan, I have to stay up in the middle of the night due to the time difference. In June,



Kazumi returned to Japan, then we went to Kyoto and Tomonoura using the accommodation tickets that the



struggling hotels had sold through crowdfunding. At this point, everywhere was still deserted, but Kyoto, on the other hand, had the calmness of an ancient city. Before Kazumi returned to North America, we drove around Awaji Island, Oboke Koboke, Konpira Jingu, Takamatsu, Shodoshima, and Himeji Castle. I gave presentations at the AILA and EJAS online conferences in August as well, and then returned to my normal life. From September onward, the number of infections in Japan decreased due to progress in vaccination, and various restrictions were gradually lifted. So, in November, I went to Karuizawa with Eriko Takahashi, and after that, I traveled alone to Kyoto to enjoy the autumn leaves. The crowds were large, but the autumn leaves were very beautiful and everyone's spirits, which had been cloudy for a long time, seemed a little brighter. November and December is the time for domestic conferences, and although I participated in this one online, I didn't feel like actively participating online, so I'm hoping that it will soon be held in person.



Staying at home all the time is depressing, so this year I often went to museums and art galleries. Museums in Japan are always crowded, but I was very happy to be able to see the works without being blocked by people's heads because the number of

visitors was limited by Covid-19. I was able to take my time to see things that I don't often have time to see, such as the Ghibli Museum, Banksy's special exhibition, Team Lab, Prince Shotoku's special exhibition, and Hokusai and Utamaro's special exhibition.

Another thing I've started is decluttering; I'm planning to retire in March 2023, so I've started sorting out the things I don't need. After living in a small place for 14 years, I have accumulated a lot of stuff, so I have been sorting out the things I don't need little by little every season. We also started looking for a new place. At first, we were thinking of Kanagawa Prefecture, but it was too hilly, and although the scenery was beautiful, I felt it was inconvenient, so now we are looking at a place in Chiba Prefecture, which has a lot of flat land. We're still not sure where we'll end up, but we're hoping to find one soon.

<Kazumi's year 2021>

For the first time in 30 years, I spent a year without an animal in the house. Water, feeding, walking, cleaning toilets, etc. disappeared

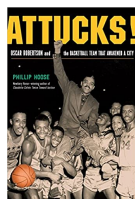


from my daily life. For New Year's (in Tokyo), we went to Akiu Hot Springs in Miyagi Prefecture. After returning to the U.S., I began to explore the application of immersive VR in language learning, which became the theme for this year. Mr. Shigeko Sasamori, who is 89 years old, and I did several online *hibakusya* presentations from February to April. I applauded her for managing to operate Zoom by herself. In March, there were several screenings of "Protect Today" (2011 Yuka Kano, director) on the 10th anniversary of the tsunami disaster. Subtitles in Indonesian and Czech have been

added. In April, the new cherry tree we planted last year blossomed a few flowers for the first time! The tree is now called Chibitan cherry. I came back to Japan in May with the intention of volunteering at JOC (Japan Olympic Committee), but unfortunately the job was cancelled. As a result, I ended up staying in Japan for three months, which was my longest stay in a long time. We enjoyed traveling around Japan. (Nara - Uji - Kyoto and Awaji Island - Konpira Shrine - Shodoshima - Himeji Castle) In May, "Meshiagare", which I had been writing for some time, was finally published. Please take a look at it if you like. This year's rakugo, paper-cutting, and kobanashi activities, while online, began in Indonesia and continued in Japan and Europe. A group of Japanese language teachers called the International Kobanashi Joint Presentation Group (KKGH), which was formed as a result of an activity organized by the Japan Foundation London, has been very active in teaching Kobanashi to Japanese language learners. I had a lively Thanksgiving weekend in November, with my colleagues from Middlebury (or rather, my daughters) visiting us two weeks in a row. I'm planning to go back to Japan in December.



In addition



I have finished translating the book "Attucks!" which I started to translate after hearing an interview with the author on the radio last February. It is the story of Oscar Robertson, an NBA player in the 1960s who played for a high school in Indianapolis. It's more about human rights than basketball, and I think it's an interesting story. Please contact me if you would like to read the Japanese manuscript.

From Mitaroo and Chibitan: We are doing just fine, here!

We wish the coming year to be a peaceful one...

Kazumi & Yukiko

Wishing for peaceful 2022
