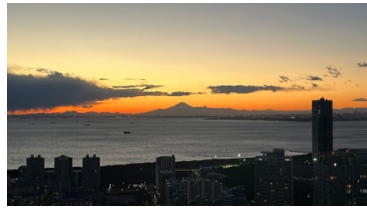


Dear All,

It was another extremely hot summer. Kazumi's leave of absence was extended from six months to a year, so we have been living in Japan together throughout year. The big change was that we moved to Kaihin-Makuhari in Chiba Prefecture in March and started living in a condo.



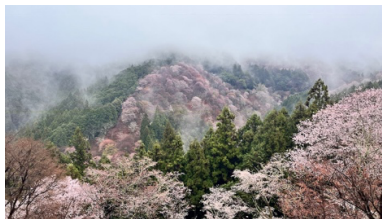
Fuji seen from Kaihin-Makuhari

<Kazumi and Yukiko's travel diary for 2024>

This year's travel diary begins with Kyushu at the end of December 2023. We visited the Yoshinogari Ruins, Hirado, Karatsu, and Moji. At the beginning of the year, we visited Inuyama Castle and Meiji Village. In April, we started the first part of our cherry-blossom-chasing trip. As expected, Kyoto and Nara were beautiful, and cherries in Yoshinoyama was magnificent. In May, the second part of the trip took us north to Kakunodate, Goshogawara, Hirosaki, and finally Hakodate. Sometimes we were behind the front line, sometimes ahead of it, but we hit the jackpot at Goryōkaku in Hakodate at the end of the tour. This was a spectacular finale. As new Chiba residents, we also explored Chiba, Ibaraki, and Tochigi. (Hondoji temple, hydrangea, nemophila, Kashima Shrine, Nikkō, iris gardens, kochia, etc.) In December, we drove to Aizu-Wakamatsu in Fukushima and was surprised to learn that in addition to Nijima Jō and Yae, there were many educators from the Aizu clan.



Tōji Temple



Yoshinoyama



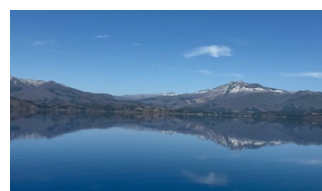
Goryōkaku



Hondoji Temple (Matsudo)



HitachiKaihin Park



Lake Tazawa



Sazae-dō (Aizuwakamatsu)

<Yukiko in 2024>

This year started with preparations for moving. Although I had started preparing for the move in 2023, actual moving was more complicated than I expected. I played a role of an interior designer. Starting in March, I did some traveling along the cherry blossom front, which was impossible during my tenure.

From the latter half of March, at the request of Kurosio Publishing, I gave a seminar on curriculum development based on the Japanese Language Education Reference Framework once a month for about 8 months. Most of the participants were teachers at Japanese language schools, but their knowledge, experiences, and beliefs about Japanese language education were more diverse than I had imagined, and I thought it would be very difficult to cover such diversities in the reference framework.

After that, I had planned to come to the U.S. with Kazumi in August, but due to the discovery of cancer in June, I had to change my plans and am currently undergoing treatment. Because of this, Kazumi has extended his leave of absence and he will retire at the end of the year. It has been 47 years since he and I met, but we have been separated for over 30 of those years, and while we were together, we lived in a shared house for 8 years, so it has been a very long time since we have lived alone together. Partly because of my illness, but also because it is the first time I have had someone take such good care of me, and I am living a very luxurious recuperation life. I am grateful and thankful.

< Kazumi in 2024 >

I was supposed to take a break only for the first half of the year, but I extended the break from the fall semester as well, and I ended up retiring from the program at the end of this year. My high school buddy, Mr. Sugawara, who I became his neighbor in Chiba, took me skiing and golfing. It was just like high school days.

I was asked to do Rakugo/Kobanashi activities in the summer. I was able to do so at three Japanese language programs in Japan: Princeton in Kanazawa, HIF in Hakodate, and JCMU in Hikone. Outside of Japan, I have been involved in activities in the Philippines (Cebu) and the UK (London and Oxford) in connection with the Japan Foundation. I was fortunate to be assisted by two rakugo masters, Yanagiya Sankyō (Kanazawa and Hakodate) and Ryuutei Saryū (UK). The kobanashi activities are likely to continue in several places in the world next year.



Participants in Cebu



Kobanashi in London



JF London team

Kazumi & Yukiko

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***** A Happy New Year, 2025 *****