

***** ***** ***** Merry Christmas ***** ***** *****

Dear friends,

Greetings from West Lafayette. We hope you are getting ready for another wonderful holiday seasons. We are busy preparing for yet one of our most adventurous year to come!

This year has been a very interesting year for us both academically and privately. (That's for sure. This year's greeting will not fit in one page.) At the end of last year, Yukiko accepted a position at Monash University, Australia. Kazumi was also offered a position in the same university this summer. So Yukiko has taken a leave of absence from the University of Iowa for one and a half year starting August, 1997, in order to prepare for the big move. Kazumi will take one year leave of absence starting from January. We have reserved an option of coming back to our universities, because we are not sure whether we will stay in Australia permanently, yet. There are too many unknown factors to make such an important decision, so we will see what happens. (It all depends how kangaroos will like us. Or, how beautiful the Great Barrier Reef is. Don't forget about golf courses.) Monash university is located in the suburb of Melbourne, and we have heard nothing but good things about this city. (This part is true. It must be bloody good place to live.) We are moving in late January, and find a place to settle down after that. (Chibitan is coming with us, but not Mi-chan. Mi-chan's kidney is beginning to fail. So, she is going to stay with Kaga-san in Minnesota.) Our address at the university will be:

Department of Japanese Studies
Monash University
Clayton, Victoria 3168
Australia

During the summer, we taught at the summer institute of Columbia University Japanese Pedagogy Program. (I was able to have a glimpse of what city life is. It was very interesting.) Although it was rather short (two weeks) to cover all materials, we met a number of enthusiastic Japanese language teachers from all over the world. One of them was from Singapore and it took her twenty-four hours to come to the U.S. In August, Kazumi started a new academic year while Yukiko stayed at home. The first volume of the textbook that we have been working on with Professor Makino is in its final stage to be published shortly. (It now has a title. It's NAKAMA, which means *friend* or *companion*. Remember this name because it will become important as you read on.) We cannot wait to see the final product. At the same time, we are trying to finish the manuscripts for the second volume, which is to be published in the spring of 1999.

On the personal side, one of Kazumi's friends gave him a set of golf clubs, and this started his obsession to golf. (Luckily, I found an excellent teacher. Her name is Mary Murphy and she used to be a LPGA tour pro. She came in the 5th in US Lady's Open in 91! She helped me a great deal in launching my golf career.) Throughout this summer and fall, he practiced and played golf every day. (definitely more practice than playing) He finally joined the group of middle-age Japanese men who practice golf with an umbrella on a platform of a train station. (It does not bother me. I am still playing basketball.) The progress is ????? (Golf is very different from basketball. There is no opponent to beat or to be beaten. It is also a challenging sport.) Luckily, Kazumi went to see Western Open (Chicago). He saw the top pros including Tiger. (It was a wonderful experience. They are all so good!)

In August, we had another reunion with two of our dearest friends in the U.S., Mariko Kaga and Steve Simpson. We got together in Victoria, Canada, a lovely city with full of flowers and gardens. (It was fun. Victoria is pretty. It has nice gold courses.) We stayed in a small bed-and-breakfast inn, enjoyed wonderful seafood, and nice conversation and each other's company. We are not sure whether we can have a reunion next year, but we sure hope so. (We will have one in Australia.)

In September, Mariko came to visit us, and since then, she has been an important member of our household. She is on sabbatical and auditing Kazumi's course on computer use. She is now developing a computer lesson on Japanese counters, and it looks very useful for anyone struggling to learn Japanese number system. (She is a lot better with computer now.)

In September, Kimio Asai, another friend of ours and an excellent chef, quit his job at a local Japanese restaurant. We did not want him to move out because he serves excellent Japanese food, and food is very important to us! So we got together with Linda and Kenji Hasegawa, good friends and neighbors, to help him open a new restaurant. Linda and Kenji were great help. She runs her own business, and Kenji, an architect, knows a lot about restaurant business because his mother owned restaurants. In October and early November, we searched the location, and decided to buy a Korean restaurant in West Lafayette. Yukiko dealt with business matters, Kazumi made a menu (with some mistakes), and Mariko created a logo of the restaurant. (Opening the restaurant certainly required a lot of work, but I thought I felt why this country is the land of opportunity. The paperwork to start a new company was relatively easy. It would have been a lot more work in a country like Japan.) Kimio's family also joined from California in mid November. During Thanksgiving break, all of us were busy trying to prepare for the opening. Kenji, Kazumi, and Mariko worked on remodeling the building interior, and Yukiko and Fusae (Japanese instructor at Purdue) worked on interior design. Even Kazumi's golf coach and owner of a golf shop, Mary and Ann, came to clean up the restaurant. On November 30, a new Japanese restaurant, Nakama, opened in West Lafayette, Indiana. (What was the title of our textbook?) Nakama is a product of a lot of people's help. Even the former owner of the restaurant, Eddie, is helping Kimio and his wife in daily operation. So far the business is going smoothly. We are glad to have a chance to be involved in this project because we became friends with many nice people whom we would have never met if we had stayed only in academic environment.

So it has been a very eventful year, and a good year for both of us. We hope yours have been equally wonderful. Take care, and we wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year! (Did I reach the end? Please wish us a lot of luck. We sure can use it next year.)

With love,

Kazumi & Yukiko

PS to fellow golf players: Sorry, my golf season continues because I will be moving into the middle of summer. I managed to hit under 110 this year, and I will try to hit under 100 in 1998.

***** ***** ***** A Happy New Year ***** ***** *****

Designed by Mariko Kaga

