

Dear friends and colleagues,

It's been two years since our last letter to you all. As some of you may know, we had a death in our family last year, so we did not write our annual letter, following our custom in Japan.

We came back from Melbourne in early 1999. Shortly after we came back to our respective universities, Mamoru (Kazumi's brother) sent e-mail about their mother, Nao. She had been fighting against lymphoma since 1997. However, in spite of rigorous medical attempts, she ran out of treatment options in Japan. Mamoru asked us about other treatment options available in the US, which eventually brought her to the University of Iowa Hospital. It must have been a very difficult decision for her to come all the way to US under her physical condition. We deeply appreciated her decision to come. Building our lives in this country is important for us, but we do so at the expense of our parents and loved ones, and we feel bad about not being able to do much for them. She let us take care of her, probably because she knew how we felt. We cannot forget her forward-thinking words "Let's do it. If it does not work, so be it." Unfortunately the treatment did not work, and she passed away on December 12, a week after she returned to Tokyo. She fought well.

As the year 2000 started rather unsettlingly, both Yukiko and Kazumi had to catch up with work since we relied so much on our colleagues and friends during the difficult time. The spring semester was a busy one.

In June, as Yukiko had some business in Japan, we went back together. Kazumi's father was going through a very difficult time. Although we knew it would not be easy, we wished his heart would heal soon. Three of us went to Kazumi's parents' hometown in Gifu prefecture and visited the temple which looks after Nao. From there, we went to Yukiko's hometown in Shikoku to see Yukiko's mother. Having lost her husband to a cancer eleven years ago, she seemed to be able to understand Kazumi's father's agony. He loves fishing, but he had not had a chance for a while. We went to fishing in the sea and also tried fishing in famous Shimanto river. Kazumi managed to give himself a chance to dive for the first time in Japan. We visited Yukiko's father's grave. Then, we went back to Tokyo and visited Nao's grave.

On our way back to US from Tokyo, we stopped at Kauai in Hawaii. Kauai is the oldest main island among the Hawaiian islands. It is a green island rather than a volcanic one and has been used in such movies as Jurassic Park and King Kong. Needless to say, Kazumi went for diving. We both tried horse back riding. Kazumi stupidly wore short pants. Consequently, he ended up having very sore thighs. (I now understand why cowboys wear jeans.) Helicopter rides are usually expensive, but it is worth doing on this island. Sights were truly spectacular.

In July, Yukiko taught a short course for the MA Pedagogy Program at Columbia University, and Kazumi went back to Tokyo to give his two-week workshop hosted by the Society of Japanese Language Teaching. Meanwhile, our long-time friend, Yuki Johnson, visited Yukiko in Lafayette. Both of them are coordinators of Japanese language programs, and they are going through their tenure process this year, so they have a lot to talk about.

In August, Yukiko and Mi-taro went back to University of Iowa and Kazumi and Chibitan back at Purdue. All of us are healthy, but Chibitan has to have five teeth taken out, and Kazumi's teeth are so bad that the cost of treatment exceeded the insurance coverage this year. (Too much chocolate!) Yukiko's workload has been increasing steadily, but the resignation of her colleague seems to have made it even harder for her to come to Lafayette or do her own work as much as she wanted to do. She is counting on this winter break to get some of her work done. Kazumi is tackling (or more appropriately, playing with) computers. Since his summer workshop on computer literacy was well received, he is now writing a book about it in Japanese and in English.

The Sydney Olympics games showed us some of the scenery from Australia. Although it was not even remotely close to actually being there, it certainly brought back a lot of good memories. (We will go back there sometime.)

In November, we went an annual conference of ACTFL and were able to meet many of our mentors and professional friends such as Profs. Makino, Miura, Kakutani, Watt, and Kaga. Yukiko also met Ms. Soda, who was her college mate at Keiko University and now a Japanese teacher in California. We received various comments on our textbooks Nakama 1 and 2. These comments from users confirm that we have more work to do on the textbooks. We will start working on Web-based exercises for the books in spring.

We had a wonderful Thanksgiving. This year's guests included Yuki Johnson and her friend, Jeff, Sayuri Kubota (Purdue graduate now teaching at Rose-Hulman Institute in Indiana), Dan (Chinese colleague at Purdue), and Jiro Nishigori (visiting scholar from Tokyo Metropolitan University). Since Yumi, a teen-age daughter of our long-time friend Taiji and Masumi Hotta, will come to Lafayette in December, Yukiko wanted to have a full Christmas decoration inside and outside the house. Jeff and Kazumi did outside lights and others did inside decoration. (Our house now stands out on our street.)

Kazumi keeps up with golf, thanks to a great teacher, Mary. However, scores have not improved as much as he wanted. (I will shoot eighties constantly next season.) He also continues basketball, but it is physically getting tougher. (I will keep playing until my body gives up.) Yukiko uses various exercise machines to keep herself in shape.

At the beginning of December, we attended a wedding of Anthony, our former senior colleague in Florida. It was a wonderful wedding. (footnote: Kazumi arranged a surprise birthday party for Yukiko at Anthony's pre-wedding reception, but he completely forgot where the reception was to be held, which was at his home. Consequently, he could not take Yukiko to the reception. His stock price was supposed to go up sky high, but instead, it plunged. He was devastated and kept saying "I am stupid." in the hotel room.) Kazumi will spend two weeks in Japan to be with his father, and we will both go to Cancun, Mexico for the New Year. (Diving, again!) Well, that's all folks. Have a wonderful Christmas and a happy new century.

Seriously no worries,

Kazumi & Yukiko

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