

***** ***** ***** Merry Christmas 2001 ***** ***** *****

Dear friends and colleagues,

The time has come again to review yet another year.

This year marks as a year of travel. We first went to Cancun, Mexico in January. The water was beautiful and Mayan ruins were impressive. (Kazumi, of course, went for scuba diving.) Sales people from tourism industry started working on us even before we passed through the customs. Although we were aware that Cancun is the city of tourism, it was still surprising.

Our travel schedule for the rest of the year was kept us moving. Yukiko went to LA twice in January, St. Louis in February, Chicago in March and again in April, Colorado in September, Hawaii in October, DC in November, and New Orleans in December. Kazumi went to St. Louis in February, Florida and Chicago in March, Princeton in May, Hawaii in October, DC in November. (These are all business-related trips, but we were able to squeeze out some private time. Due to reduced flight schedule, Washington National Airport was very quiet in November.) We both went back to Japan for a month in the summer. Yukiko gave a lecture at Ochanomizu University, and Kazumi gave another computer workshop. (The summer in Tokyo was ridiculously hot.) During that time, we went back to Uwajima (Yukiko's home) with Kazumi's father, and joined by Yukiko's mother, four of us went to *Yuhuin* (hot springs) in Kyusyu. The Inn we stayed served wonderful means. We, of course, enjoyed wonderful *onsen*. (The whole process became somewhat confusing because we were making a trip inside another trip.) After this trip, Yukiko and Kazumi made yet another trip. It is their first trip to Okinawa. Okinawa was pretty, food was interesting, and we met some wonderful people there. (We certainly traveled a lot, but please do not hate us for that.) Back in Tokyo, Kazumi had another reunion with his elementary school classmates.

As for serious side of our life, Yukiko was promoted to the rank of associate professor and Kazumi to the rank of professor at respective institutions. This means that Yukiko is now tenured at University of Iowa. She organized a Japanese speech contest. The textbooks "Nakama" is doing fine and it has made the publisher happy. Kazumi continues computer-related projects. He will have his first book published at the beginning of next year. The title is "IT Literacy for Japanese Language Instructors."

In September, after the terrorist incident in New York, University of Iowa took a leadership to start a project to make *senbazuru* to send them to New York. More than a dozen of schools participated in the project and over 10,000 origami cranes were sent to the Red Cross in New York. (We all hope that the cranes would encourage people there even a little bit.)

This year, we lost three of our dearest friends. Walter & Edna Weck took care of us as our host family while we were graduate students in Illinois. They also came to our wedding in Tokyo. We lost Masumi Hotta who was our long-time friend since our Illinois days. (Our first cat "mi-chan" who was cared by our friend Kaga-san also departed. Kaga-san, thank you very much for taking care of her.)

This year's Thanks Giving was a quiet one. But Kazumi's right ankle was swollen after playing basketball. The doctor suspected a stress fracture. (We don't know for sure yet, but my basketball days are nearing an end...) Kazumi has improved his golf skills. He shot 80's a few times. (The best score is 84.)

We counted the number of years we spent in the US, and realized that a half of our life was spent in Japan and the other half in the US. We no longer can tell which is "living abroad." We are either bi-cultural or culture-less.

Kazumi recently realized that he feels more comfortable when he reads books. (He needs glasses when he drives at night and watches movies.) Is this a symptom of?

Our dog, Chibitan, is a healthy twelve-year-old, but she appears to have a bit of trouble in the dark. (Chibitan: I don't seem to see well at night when I try to go to the bathroom.) Mi-taro, the young cat, is having a carefree happy life. (Mi-taro: I have no complaint.)

Kazumi & Yukiko

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