

***** ***** ***** Merry Christmas 2002 ***** ***** *****

Dear friends and colleagues,

Although events like UN inspection of Iraq, terrorist attacks in various regions of the world, abductions by North Korea seem to symbolize the current unsettling mood, we hope to find you are in good sprit.

As usual, This year started out with a trip to a warm place. This year, we visited Grand Cayman. But, as soon as we came back, Kazumi underwent an ankle surgery to tighten ligament. (It was a time to pay for middle age basketball.) Then came a sad news of Mr. Akatsuka's passing. He was Kazumi's basketball coach from the high school time and has known him over thirty years. Kazumi met him in Tokyo just two weeks prior to his death. Besides, it was right after the surgery, so he could not get back to Tokyo either for his funeral. It was very difficult to deal with.

In May, both of us went back to Japan. Yukiko's mother came to Tokyo, and with Kazumi's father, four of us went on a three-day trip to Kawaguchi Lake to see Mt. Fuji. This was promised a year ago when Yukiko's mother took all of us to Yufuin hot springs. At the beginning Mt. Fuji kept us worried by not showing its entire shape, but on the last day the weather cooperated with us. We were able to see the beautiful cone shape. During our stay in Japan, the World Cup was happening. The entire country (countries if you include Korea) was going nuts. It was a strange time when you could start friendly conversations with strangers by wearing the same t-shirts.

July was filled with activities. We went to San Diego and Seattle for business. After that, Kazumi went to Portland, and Yukiko flew to Honolulu to participate in a workshop at University of Hawaii. In Portland, Kazumi spent time with his host family (the Nielsens). They met each other when Kazumi came to the US first time twenty four years ago. One of their sons, Erling, was Kazumi's room mate at University of Oregon, and he later came to Japan, and eventually marries to Kazumi's maternal cousin, Satoko. (They has a daughter Monica. When Kazumi explained that he and she are blood-related, her reaction was mixed.) In Seattle, Sharon and Michio Tsutsui, who we spent time together at University of Illinois, took a GOOD care of Kazumi. He was able to go to a Mariners game to see Ichiro and Sasaki. (Kazumi: thank you, Sharon and Michio, really.) Kazumi joined Yukiko a week later in Honolulu. He underwent a rescue diver training which taught him skills necessary to rescue divers who are in trouble under water. (Yes, that is the original training, but it is a qualification for people not to do anything stupid since a rescue diver being rescued will be very embarrassed. (Kazumi: Atsushi, Hideki, Kyoko and all SSA staff, thank you.)

As for work, Kazumi published a new book entitled "IT Literacy for Japanese Language Instructors" (Kuroshio Pub.) in June. In August, he received an internal grant from Purdue University to study computer graphics animation to apply it in foreign language instruction. As a result, he has been taking CG courses with undergraduate students this semester, and it will continue next semester. Following his ankle surgery in January, he had to wear a cast for six weeks. Consequently, he gained some, but he is now back in basketball routine and getting back in shape.

As mentioned earlier, Yukiko participated the two-week workshop at University of Hawaii in July. The workshop was busier than she expected, and did not leave much time for playing. But, she met many new friends from different parts of the US who teach Japanese at junior high school, high school, community college, and university. Meeting these people was the best part of the workshop. In August, as a new semester starts, she gets busy as usual on campus as well as with business travels. She visited Baltimore, New York, Toronto, Tokyo, and Salt Lake City this semester. Among them, the trip to Tokyo was for an annual reunion of her major professor, Prof. Kurasawa, at Keio University. She never attended this before, so it has been twenty-four years since she met some of these people. She was placed in the seats for the most senior members, and it made her wonder how much time has passed. But at the same time, she was relieved when she found her old friends, Kurata-kun and Fujita-kun, not changed much. Since Prof. Kurasawa is specialized in commerce law, many of the graduates work in finance and securities sectors. Having talked with them, the serious picture of economic downtime in Japan was felt.

Yukiko's health was not 100% during winter of 2001-2002. In order to get back in shape, she started working out in spring. She lost some weight and is now in a good shape. (Kazumi: her arm mussels have clear definition. scary huh. But, seriously, she does look good.) As for work, she made three presentation at conferences in spring, and lately she finished writing two papers and finished editing a book to be dedicated to our professor, Prof. Seiichi Makino. The book's title is "Second Language Acquisition Studies....." Next year, she will start revising "Nakama." (Kazumi: Just in you are wondering, I am writing papers. But, creating eyeballs with CG, making them blink and following an object is fun, too.)

Chibitan is now thirteen years old and still active. But she is having difficulty in seeing in the dark. (Chibitan: During the night when I had to go downstairs to pee, I did it upstairs because it was dark. Now, the stairs are lit, so I am OK.) Mi-taro is behaving as if he is saying "I am a happy feline."

It looks winter has come to America and Japan a bit early. Please take care of your health and have a happy holiday season.

With plenty of love...

Kazumi & Yukiko

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