

***** Merry Christmas 2003 *****

Dear friends and colleagues,

We started our last year's greetings by saying "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...". Yet, this year does not show significant improvement in these areas: the word "inspection" became "war", Terrorism continues to happen, and the abduction case remains unchanged. Sorry about this rather dark remarks, but we sincerely hope this year has been a good year for you.

This year's beginning trip was to Bonaire (Dutch Antilles just north of Venezuela). Although we started off by missing our flight off Indianapolis, the island was very beautiful. (In addition, another mishap. Our return flight was cancelled, so we ended up staying an extra night. Do not use American Airline when you go there.)

As for work, Kazumi continued to stay on the grant to study computer graphics animation until May. He learned a lot. (so, he claims) In February, he ran a two-month on-line IT training course for Japanese language instruction with 20 participants living in six different countries. The course was sponsored by the Society for Japanese Language Teaching as a Foreign Language. It was a very interesting experience. Yukiko published a new book entitled "An Invitation to Second Language Acquisition Research" from Kurosio Publisher in February. This is a bilingual edition in Japanese and in English. Yukiko is the editor and authored a chapter. Kazumi also wrote a chapter. The book is apparently selling well. (at least, better than expected.) In March, we went to NY for a conference for the first time after the 911. The size of void at the ground zero was appalling. (While in NY, we went to see the musical "Mamma Mia". It was wonderful. Highly recommended.) Finally, in May, we went to Boston to have a kick-off meeting with Houghton Mifflin Company (publisher) for the second edition of "Nakama" (Japanese textbook published in 1998 and 2000).

In late June, we went back to Japan. We visited Kanazawa for the first time since three of our graduate students were teaching at Princeton-in-Kanazawa program. Yukiko went back to Uwajima while Kazumi stayed in Tokyo. But, Kazumi made a one-week trip to Brisbane, Australia as he was invited to speak at another conference. Yukiko attended the 2003 Linguistics Society of America Institute as a paid auditor, and she seems to have enjoyed being a student. According to her, she would rather be a student than a professor if she can afford to do so. In August, we got together with our old friend Steve in Honolulu. Yukiko participated in part 2 of the same workshop she attended at University of Hawaii last year. Kazumi had no business on his agenda, so he decided to go for diver master which is the entry level professional qualification in scuba diving. He went back to Atsushi of SSA and five days later a middle-age entry-level professional was born. As an additional fun, Yukiko's nephew, Yoshikatsu, flew from Japan to joined Kazumi for open-water scuba certification. He is a college freshman majoring in marine biology, so scuba certification was essential. Yoshikatsu spent five days with Kazumi in water, so he missed everything in Hawaii that normal tourists would see. After a week in Honolulu, Yukiko and Kazumi flew to Maui for a few day. In Maui, we drove on Hana Coast Highway which is a long narrow meandering road to see the Black Sand Beach. Of course, Kazumi was the driver. If it had been Yukiko, we would be writing this letter.

We went back in the regular routine in August. Kazumi has an undergraduate course this semester along with the usual IT course for graduate students. Yukiko is unusually busy this semester with work. She makes business trips once or twice every month, she accumulated enough miles for three free companion tickets. She will be on a research leave for a year starting in January so that she can concentrate on revising Nakama and writing a book and articles. Kazumi will go on his research leave six months later.

Chibitan is getting old but very healthy and active for her age. But she is still having difficulty in seeing in the dark, and her toilet accident happens a bit more often. Mi-taro is himself as a laid-back happy cat except for the time that Chibitan is around.

We are planning to spend both Christmas and new year in Japan this year. We wish you a very merry Christmas and truly Happy New Year for you.

With plenty of love...

Kazumi & Yukiko

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