

Dear friends,

This year is a year of monkey and Kazumi was born in one of them. (You can easily guess how old he is. huh.) His year began with a job interview for the directorship of the Japanese School at Middlebury College in Vermont, and in February he was selected to be the next director. His tour of duty will begin in summer 2005 and continue for three years. This is a summer appointment, so there will be no change in his Purdue job. However, he will suffer from reduced activity level in scuba and golf during summer months. (OK, OK, I am getting no sympathy.) Purdue successfully hosted a Midwestern regional conference for Japanese teachers in April with a big help of colleagues and graduate students. The work on computer graphics in foreign language instruction continues, but it is going somewhat slowly. (This one is tough.) The on-line IT course that Kazumi taught last year was held again from January to March with 30 participants from different parts of the world.

Yukiko went into a research leave, so she was officially relieved from U of Iowa in order to focus on writing, editing and researching. She spent much of her time in Indiana. (However, e-mail does not seem to release her. Receiving various chores keeps her in front of computer screen. sigh...) Her three-year-old computer broke down seven times recently, and in November, it had a fatal crash and was replaced with a new one.

In the bright side, both Kazumi and Yukiko went back to Australia in order to make their dream come true, which was a swim-with-whale-shark. Yukiko flew from Tokyo and Kazumi from US. They got together in Melbourne and spent a few pleasant days with a good friend, Hiroko. They, then, took off for Coral Bay, a small carefree resort three hours (by airplane) north of Perth. They visited Coral Bay in 1998 and it did not change much. The whale shark tour began with everybody getting on a boat and a small airplane took off to spot a shark from the sky. Once a shark were spotted, the boat would rush to the site to dumb guests in the water. On that day, the plane pilot had a difficult time finding one. The atmosphere on the boat became grim as the time passed. Finally, just fifteen minutes before the tour was called off, a radio signal came in with good news. We were able to swim with a relatively small fifteen-foot boy. (Yukiko jumped right in front of the shark and was able to see his big mouth. Kazumi was late in his action, so he had to swim hard to catch up with him. Picture are at <http://www.sla.purdue.edu/fll/personal/hatasa/hatasapersonal.html>)

Kazumi's summer was a bit busy as usual. Right after he came back to US, he spent two weeks at Middlebury as the director designate to learn his new job. After that, he flew to Tokyo and stayed there for three weeks, then back to Middlebury for another two weeks. (Kazumi managed to go back to Okinawa with Mr. Okano and Ms. Kawano for scuba.) Finally, he traveled to Lyon, France to give a talk at European Association of Teachers of Japanese Conference. (The food in Lyon was fabulous. Kazumi became foie gras.) In August, Yukiko and Kazumi attended a ceremony at Princeton University to present a book to commemorate Prof. Makino's 70th birthday. Both of them have chapters in the book, which will be published in next year. In Lyon and Princeton, Kazumi had an interesting experience of meeting in person for the first time some of the participants of his on-line IT course from this year or last year.

Yukiko started her six-month stay in Tokyo as a research fellow of the Japan Foundation in July. She has been enjoying a metropolitan life style in Japan. In October, she participated in a national conference of the Society for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language as one of the invited keynote speakers in Niigata city. (It was her debut in the Japanese academic scene, so she was nervous. But her performance was of course very solid and the audience was impressed.) Kazumi also presented a paper at the conference. A few weeks after our trip to Niigata, the region was hit hard by the earthquake. A series of earthquakes were felt in Tokyo. (We wish a speedy recovery in the region.)

As Kazumi began his one-year sabbatical leave in August, He spent five weeks in Tokyo to help Yukiko's video project for the second edition of Nakama. He performed various new tasks such as contacting people for permission to be filmed, working as a camera person and a sound guy with a microphone. As a result, over 12 hours of video materials were shot. (We sincerely thank for Kazumi's friends and people in the neighborhood who appeared in the video. We also thank Mr. Monjo for his technical assistance.) Besides, the autumn in Japan was very refreshing because Kazumi and Yukiko tend to be in Japan in summer months and in December.

Yukiko will be in Tokyo until Jan. 5, so she will enjoy all the festivities in the year end and new year. (Parties have already started, I heard.) She might as well have a good time now, for next year will be extremely busy since the revision of Nakama will go into another gear.

Chibi suffered from some kind of spasm, lost the sense of balance, and could not walk or eat for a few days. She was hospitalized, but fortunately she recovered from it. It all happened right after Kazumi left for Japan in September. Prof. Takagi, who was staying at our house, and Kazumi's graduate students devoted themselves to take care of her. Miitaro has had a calm year in spite of his continuous attempts to going outside of the house. (He succeeded once and stayed out there for thirty minutes.)

Footnote: Kazumi bought his first pair of reading glasses. (They are for computer screen!)

As always, we wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Kazumi & Yukiko