

* * * * * Merry Christmas 2 0 0 6 * * * * *

The letter is in color this year!

Many things again happened this year. Fortunately, happy things dominated the events.

Kazumi hit 50 this year. (KH: The decimal system is just another arbitrary system, so it is not important.) In January, Kazumi and Yukiko went to a local shopping mall and ran into a new shihtzu puppy in a pet shop. This was a compulsive purchase since Kazumi was actually getting used to the life without a dog. Yukiko's persuasion was strong. His daily routine obviously changed drastically. The puppy was named "Chibitan III." (Actually, it is the same name.) She has a good personality, and is smaller than Chibitan II and heavily under-bite.



Kazumi had a surgery to fix meniscus damage on his left knee and he continues to play basketball. Recuperating from the surgery, he had a quiet spring break this year. In May, he went back to Japan, and on his way back, he stopped at Hawaii to dive with his diving teacher, Atsushi, who started his own dive operation a few years ago in Waikiki. While he was in Tokyo, he had meetings with rakugo players who were invited to Middlebury during



summer. (Rakugo is traditional story telling.) In June, he started his Middlebury job for the second time as the director. The work became a bit easier second time around, but the program was filled with interesting events. Teachers and students worked hard as usual. (Of course, the director worked hard, too.) The most notable event this summer was the visit by three professional performers of Japanese traditional art. Yanagiya Sankyo and Ryutei Saryu are rakugo performers who tell comedic stories, and Hayashiya Niraku is a paper-cutting performer. They are all top-level professionals who regularly perform at theatres in Tokyo. They stayed with the school for a week, visiting classes and giving a public performance. They gave all of us a valuable experience. It is very difficult to see this level of real professionals

this close even in Japan. (It is definitely impossible to interact with them this closely.) As Kazumi took care of them during their stay, he got to know them pretty well and was impressed with their manners and interpersonal skills. I am planning to bring them back next summer. The pictures are available at

<http://community.middlebury.edu/~khatasa/>

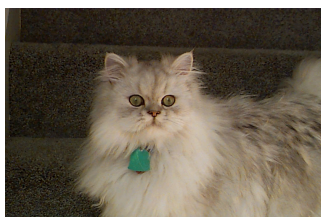
Chibitan III stayed with Kazumi at Middlebury. She became the school's mascot by providing relaxing calming effect to

everybody. In the middle of August, he came back to reality from the surreal world of Middlebury. Although he only taught one course in the fall semester, he attended various conferences in Vienna, Boston, LA and Nashville. (We went to a nice fondue restaurant in Nashville. It was a bit pricy, but a fun place.)



Yukiko had a busy year as usual. She attended conferences at various locations such as Virginia, Michigan, San Francisco, Hawaii, Mont Real, New York, Vienna, and Nashville. She also went back to Japan twice. The highlight was the trip to upper Michigan with her lady friends (Motoko, Sayuri, Yukari, and Mayumi). Five ladies spent a few days together, visiting a winery, singing Karaoke, doing water aerobics, etc. They certainly felt much younger than their real age. (KH: I am really glad that I was not invited.) After this fun trip, Yukiko visited Middlebury. She observed classes and spent time with the rakugo performers. She then spent a couple of weeks in Japan on business and flew back to US to attend a conference held at Columbia University in New York. The three amigos (Sayuri, Yukari, and Yukiko) got together in NY and wanted to visit various places. However, NY was hit by a heat wave. Walking in the Central Park was too hot, and the AC in the metro was not working, so they ended up visiting three museums. (Metropolitan, MOMA,...not a bad idea) In the evening, they went to see a musical "The Producers." (This is hilarious. Highly recommended) Kazumi came to NY from Middlebury for a day. We got together with our friends, the linos, went for a bit of driving, and had a dinner at NOBU. (yes, that NOBU)

In September, we went to Vienna to attend a conference of teachers of Japanese in Europe. We were planning to fly out together from Chicago to Vienna, stopping at London Heathrow. Unfortunately, we hit a bad weather. Yukiko's flight from Iowa was delayed by two hours, and she barely made to the connecting flight to London. Kazumi's flight was delayed even more. As soon as he got out at O'Hare, he heard his name in a public announcement of a last call to the London flight. He ran and ran, and made to the connecting flight. (KH: running was OK, but a cell phone really is a powerful device in this kind of situation.) Our adventure, however, did not end in Chicago. We arrived at London one hour late. Heathrow Airport just had Terrorist arrests, and its security was super tight. We stood in a line for a security check, and made it through five minute before the departure time of our Vienna flight. We again ran to the terminal and made it. But, our luggage did not make it. We reserved tickets for an opera performance at The National Opera House on that evening. We were in time for the performance and enjoyed it tremendously, but in casual clothes. (The performance was La bohème by Puccini.) Locals were not that dressed up, so we did not feel out of place. In fact, those who looked out of place were groups of over-dressed Japanese tourists. (When do we change this kind of behavior? sigh...) The world famous opera house was indeed very impressive. Vienna is a very pleasant place. In November, we went to Nashville for the second time. Yukiko gave two presentations and Kazumi was busy with PR activities for Middlebury. For this year's Thanks Giving, several guests came. (Noriko from South Bend, Sayuri and Yukari from Michigan, and the Sugiyama family) Kazumi made his famous cranberry raisin apple pie and beef stew. Yukiko cooked filets of sole with artichokes. We drank five bottles of wine and ate quite a bit of sushi. We also did a Christmas tree decoration. It was a very fun yet lazy weekend. (Addition: Yukiko got a new car, Camry Hybrid. It is quiet and gives a very good mileage.)



Miitaro (the cat) is healthy, but he is annoyed by continuous attacks by Chibitan when they get together.

The school is over in a couple of weeks. We will be spending the winter break in Japan. We might see some of you there. In any case, we wish you a merry Christmas and a very happy new year.

Kazumi & Yukiko

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