

Adventure to Osaka and Nagoya



Nanami (9) and mother, Mrs. Kondo

January 29, 2009 Today I went to the city of Kashiwazaki to see my friends Nobuo and Miwako. Kashiwazaki is home to the largest nuclear powerplant in the world – built right smack dab on an earthquake fault! The area was hit by a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on July 16, 2007. The nuclear reactors immediately shut down and continue to remain down at the time of this post. It may be several more months before the inspectors are sure the reactors are safe enough to turn back on.

I left home around 9:15AM and walked 20 minutes to the main highway. While waiting at the usual traffic light, a Mrs. Kondo pulled up and asked my destination. Next to her sat her 9 year old daughter Nanami. She offered to take me all the way to the expressway IC in Sanjo – about 20 kilometers out of her way – if I wouldn't mind a slight detour so she could drop her daughter off at school first. I accepted. Mrs. Kondo told me that they returned to pick me up after passing me. Nanami told her, "Mama, there's a man who seems to be in trouble, we have to help him!"

After Mrs. Kondo dropped me off at Sanjo, I took two highway buses to get to the Hokuriku Expressway because I needed to gain some time to make my 2PM appointment with Nobuo. Two drivers took me the rest of the way. One of them was a life insurance salesman. I asked him how any life insurance company can make any money at all when people die and they have to pay out such hefty sums. He replied they invest money in stocks, etc.



Mr. Ohashi, Nobuo and Yuka

In Kashiwazaki I helped Nobuo teach English to his students from 2PM to 8:30PM. It was nice to see Mr. Ohashi again who I met at least 3 times

previously, and I got to meet Yuka for the first time. That evening I stayed at Nobuo's parents house.

The next morning after eating a great breakfast, Nobuo's mother took me to the Kashiwazaki expressway entrance. I still didn't know where I would wind up this evening but my general direction was south. The next day I had an appointment to visit friends in Ogaki City in Gifu Prefecture and I had 3 options where to go before that.

Only a few minutes after the first driver picked me up, Nobuo called my cell phone telling me I left my reading glasses! I just had to go back and pick them up. Nobuo's mother kindly went back to the expressway entrance and I got a quick ride back and met her.



Chieko, husband Jun and
baby Shishi

January 31, 2009: Today my destination is Ogaki City in Gifu to see Philip and Maria. I took a bus to the Suita Service area on the Meishi Expressway. The first car was a young couple with a one year old boy. They took me as far as Kyoto. The second driver, a software engineer, took me all the way to Ogaki city – a good 150 kilometers from Kyoto. But he could take me only as far as the expressway bus stop exit. I still had 10 more kilometers to go, a bit too far to walk and the city is not familiar. But I learned I learned I don't really need to learn the roads because the local people know them well. After a quick lunch, I just went to the road and started hitch-hiking again. A young man picked me up and took me right to my destination. □ He says he makes good money maintaining Bullet train tracks.

Feb. 1, 2009: I went to Nagoya and met my good friend Silvio from Brazil and his Japanese friend Junko. We had a good chat about their projects.

February 2-3, 2009: I visited my Brazilian friend Paulo and his school, 'Escola Sao Paulo' in Anjo City, Aichi Prefecture. He had lots of work for me making sure all the school computers were free of web-bugs, trojans and viruses. I looked at 7 PCs in all, all Notebook computers, and installed Avast Anti-virus on most of them.

Being in the Brazilian school is almost like being in Brazil itself. I had fun picking up Portuguese words and talking to the dear Brazilian people. Most of them cannot speak English, but they all do know some Japanese. Many of them are very good Japanese speakers.



Mrs. Iida

February 4, 2009: Because my business in the Osaka area was not finished, I

hitch-hiked from Kamigo Service area near Anjo City back to Osaka in 4 cars. The third car was Mr. and Mrs. Iida and their dog, Rimi. I love dogs and Rimi let me pet her, but she still didn't seem to trust me completely throughout the trip. The Iida family took me as far as Yoro Service Area on the Meishin Expressway. From there a man who works as postal carrier took me the rest of the way to Osaka. He happened to be going to the very area I needed to go, and took me right to my friend's house!

February 5, 2009: I went to Kyoto to help my friend Joseph teach English at his school. Spent all day with him from 10AM till 8:30PM.

Gathering in Shirone



The fruit of my hitch-hiking adventure on January 15th was being invited to a new year's party in Shirone, a town now incorporated into Niigata city, by the former deputy mayor of the town, Mr. Tsubokawa. I met his friends, mostly ladies, and one gentleman by the name of Mr. Makiguchi. Two of the ladies are Christians who attend the local Lutheran church. All were former English students who like foreigners and especially Americans. Mr. Tsubokawa invited me visit Poland with him and his friends after he learned that my grandparents are Polish! I told him I have no money whatsoever to travel. He said he and his friends would foot all expenses in return for being their interpreter! Let's see if it happens. ☐



Mr. Makiguchi

I also met Mr. Makiguchi who is the director of an agricultural firm that turns vegetables into bio-ethanol. He seemed quite interested in what I had to say about politics in the USA.

Meeting Yoko and Mariko



Yoko

January 20, 2009: **Yoko** and **Mariko**, two ladies in who appeared to be in their 20s, picked me up near downtown Niigata. Yoko lives in Toyosaka and so it was out of the way for her to take me to Akiha Ward, but she did so anyway. Yoko first took Mariko to where she parked her car, dropped her off and then took me home. They work at the Okura 5 star hotel next to Bandai Bridge in Niigata City. Business is much worse this year than it was last year they said. "But" I replied, "the year has just begun!"

Making new friends through hitchhiking



Making a new friend through hitchhiking.

Hitchhike to Tokyo, New Years Eve 2008



Hiromi

I hitch-hiked to Tokyo in 5 cars from Niigata. The third driver was Hiromi, 24 years old from Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture. She took me from Sakae Parking area just after Sanjo in Niigata, to Akagi Kougen in Gunma, a distance of about 150 kilometres. I told Hiromi the Good News of eternal salvation in Jesus and she prayed with me to receive Christ!

The next driver was a 25 year Takayuki from Oita city who took me all the way to Tokyo. I told him about Jesus as well and he also believed! I wanted to introduce Takayuki to Hiromi because they both work in the same city, but this is contingent on whether Hiromi contacts me first. She said she would write me after seeing her photos on my web page, but if she did I may have missed it. I get a lot of spam and a new Japanese address may have been filtered to the spam box by mistake. Maybe she'll still write me later.



Valentin and Yoshiko

In Tokyo I visited my friends Russian Valentin and Japanese Yoshiko. I first met Valentin in 1994 in Khabarovsk, Russia, and a second time in Aomori Japan in 2006. Valentin and Yoshiko work in the national Japanese travel agency.