

Adventure from Aomori to Niigata via Misawa and Fukushima



Yoko Kosaka

Sept. 22, 2009: This is a continuation of my previous post. The return to Niigata from Aomori took me via Misawa city, the location of a large USAF base close to where I visited a friend to help him with his Windows Vista PC problems. Yoko Kosaka took me on the first leg of my journey.

The next day it only took 4 cars to take me the 550 kilometers back home. I had to wait for just a little over two hours at the Adataru Service area on the Tohoku Expressway to catch the last ride. One of the reasons I had to wait so long at Adataru was because the preponderance of the traffic, over 95% of it, was heading toward Tokyo. I nearly accepted a ride from a young couple going to Tokyo, but the thought of aborting the last leg of only two hours traveling to hitchhike yet another 300 kilometers or a possible 6 more hours the next day was just so tiring, and I was tired enough already. Though it was already dark after 7 PM, I knew I was looking at only a couple more hours travel by catching a car going toward Niigata and it would be only a matter of time before I caught that ride. There were at least couple dozen cars with Niigata license plates that drove past me, but the drivers either ignored me or shook their heads no.

This season in Japan is during a special 5-day holiday which runs from Saturday to Wednesday. It was Tuesday evening and there was much traffic, so much that even the Ban'etsu expressway was jammed at certain points! A little after 7 PM an elderly couple with their 8-year-old grandson saw my Niigata sign and stopped for me. They were going exactly toward my town, and took me to a point only 5 minutes walk from the house!

Adventure from Niigata to Aomori via Fukushima



The Tohoku area of Northern Honshu, Japan. The red light shows my usual route to Aomori City, and the blue line shows the route I took on this trip.

The good Lord blessed my vision and faith by providing a sweet couple who took me all the way to Aizuwakamatsu in Fukushima the very first ride! They didn't want to take the Ban'etsu Expressway but rather took route 49 instead. It's a beautifully scenic route that runs through a pass in the mountains along the Agano river, one of the longest and cleanest rivers in Japan. I was so thankful to get this ride because I knew I would be arriving at Aizuwakatsu around 11 AM, which means I would be making good time.

After only a couple of minutes wait at the expressway entrance in Aizuwakamatsu, a man took me to a parking area on the Tohoku expressway that was just before Sendai, the largest city in the Tohoku region of Japan.



Mr. and Mrs. Abe who took me to Aomori City from just before Morioka

The last car was Mr. and Mrs. Abe with their lovely Border Collie named Hokuto. The Abes were on their way to Hokkaido, the north island, and would be spending the night in Aomori city. They took me to Aomori station from where I took a train two stations further. The total transportation cost of the 500-kilometer trip was 190 yen or about US \$2.10. I arrived at my destination around 6:30 PM. □

Inner Strength

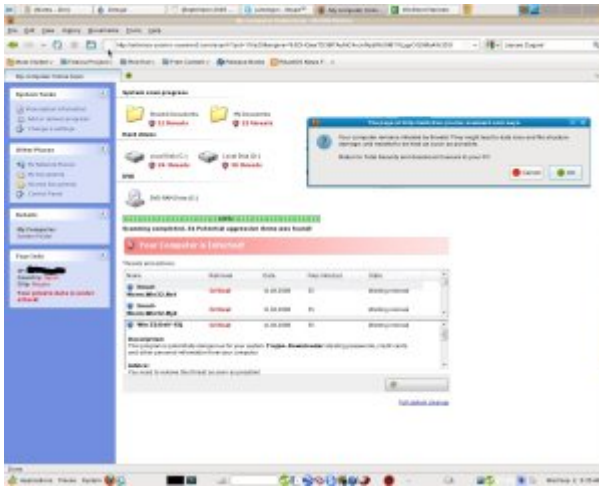


Somebody sent this to me long ago. I think it's too good to forget. ☐

If you can start the day without caffeine or pep pills,
If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,
If you can eat the same food everyday and be grateful for it,
If you can understand when loved ones are too busy to give you time,
If you can overlook when people take things out on you when, through no fault of yours, something goes wrong,
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,
If you can face the world without lies and deceit,
If you can conquer tension without medical help,
If you can relax without liquor,
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,
If you can do all these things
If you can do all these things

Congratulations! You have risen to the level of the family dog.

Beware of False Virus Popup Reports from Internet Pages



I clicked on a link to access a certain article when all of a sudden a window popped up saying that my hard disk was undergoing an online scan for viruses and trojans. It reported that my private data is under attack and my PC is infected with security threats. I was advised to download and install “Total Security” to remove the threats.

Notice the interface of the PC screen in the image is that of Microsoft Windows? I’m *not* running Windows on my PC! I’m running Fedora **Linux** with the Gnome desktop environment.

The scan reported C drive and D drive infected, but Linux has *no concept of drive letters* as in Windows. My Linux system *doesn’t have* a C drive or D drive. Neither do I have any folders named “My Documents” and “Shared Documents.” This proves without a doubt that such unsolicited online PC scans that report problems are really **scams** to try to rip us off!

Picked up by an 85 year old driver



An 85 year old man who picked me up.

Sept. 4, 2009: After waiting about 15 minutes for a ride to get to a friend's house on the other side of town, an elderly gentleman offered me a ride. I didn't want to ask him his age for he looked quite up in years. Instead, I asked what he does. The man said he has been retired for 30 years from working as a railroad engine repairman from age 55. This makes him 85 years old! I think to date this is the most elderly person to offer me a ride. The man seemed very healthy, drove his small car very well, and had a sharp mind. He wasn't going to any particular destination and so offered to take me to the very door of my friend's house. I asked him what the secret of his good health is and he replied, "Don't sit at home! Get out and get into some active work involved in helping others!" This was such an encouragement to me because now that I'm 59, I've often wondered how long I can continue my adventures throughout Japan by hitchhiking. Could it be that *through* the exercise I get by hitchhiking I will prolong my years on earth? □