

Adventure hitchhiking in Akita Prefecture



September 20, 2010: Today I was in Noshiro City, a town in northern Akita Prefecture, northern Honshu, the main island of Japan. My goal was to hitchhike as much as possible the 330 kilometers back home to Niigata. I ended up hitchhiking nearly a 1/3 of the distance, and this brought me [just over the 100,000 kilometer mark](#) since keeping statistics from August 2, 2003! I had hoped to hitchhike a million kilometers before I leave this world, but at the rate I'm doing it, I need 60 more years. ☐



Man who helped me
get to the road
leading out of
Noshiro

After some business in Noshiro city, a town in the northern part of Akita Prefecture, I walked toward what I thought was route 7 to head home to Niigata. I used to visit Noshiro often from 1976-77 but now it was an unfamiliar place. It turned out that my directions were totally mixed up and I was standing on the side of the street with traffic heading north, not the southern direction I needed to go. A kind man saw my Niigata sign and informed me of my mistake. He then circled around, picked me up, and took me to a good spot to hitchhike on route 7 which was a considerable distance from where I had been standing!

It's always amazing to me how God engineers the timing just right for me to meet special people. After waiting just a few minutes where the man dropped me off on Route 7, Akiko, a 32 year old dental clinic receptionist picked me up and took me as far as Iwakawa Sakura station, a distance about 30 kilometers.

Akiko is still single and likes to study and speak English. I told her that she might be happier to marry a Westerner some day, rather than a Japanese man. Because Christianity and principles of New Testament love has influenced Western culture a great deal, most Westerners are used to showing affection toward their spouses. This is something sadly lacking to a great degree in Japanese culture. Husbands and wives hardly hug each other in private, and

never in public. I explained to her that when in Russia, I frequently saw public displays of affection, and not only among lovers, but between older married couples.

Because Akiko had been to Hawaii before, I thought she might be interested to know my theory of the Hawaiian word "*aloha*" which is said in both greeting and parting. Most people don't know that *aloha* in the Hawaiian language means "[a way of living and treating each other with love and respect](#)." Before the Hawaiians became Christians after their Queen Kapi'olani, shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ to her people in the 19th century, I do not think they used this word in greetings. The Hawaiians used to be a barbaric savage and cannibalistic people. I believe that it was only after coming to know the love of God in Jesus Christ they started using the word *aloha* for greetings and partings.

An external website that I believe confirms my theory: [Queen Kapi'olani, the First Christian Convert in Hawaii](#).

After waiting nearly an hour in intermittent rain, a mother and daughter picked me up and took me as far as Akita City. The mother looks so young that at first I thought they were sisters! The daughter went to a Christian high school which is not common among the Japanese. The education is good but the tuition is 3 times more than a regular school.

From experience I knew the spot where the mother and daughter dropped me off in Akita city was not a very good one. I walk down the road to get to a better traffic light. At the third traffic light further down, a young man picked me up and took me to a truck parking stop on the other side of the city. The area was deserted with no trucks waiting, not a very desirable situation for me, but I was glad to be past Akita city because that greatly increased my chances of catching a ride.

Just a couple minutes after getting dropped off, a police car pulled up and two policemen walked up to me questioning me what I was doing and why I was there. I knew I wasn't doing anything wrong and it was OK for me to be standing where I was. The policeman said they just thought it was unusual to see somebody standing in the truck parking area without a car nearby. I smiled and answered their questions. They thanked me for my cooperation and left.

I also immediately left the parking area to walk to an intersection, but I knew there may not be one for a considerable distance in that country area. After walking some 30 minutes, a lady named Nanae picked me up. I asked her if she often picked up hitchhikers and she said it was her third time experience. Nanae operates a machine to demolish houses.

It was already 5PM and raining. Rather than hitchhike further I opted to take a train the rest of the way spending 4300 yen. I did save some 2000 yen by hitchhiking. But much more than saving a bit of money, I value the experience of meeting the kind people I met.

Akita Prefecture for some reason has the highest suicide rate among all the

prefectures in Japan. My prayer is they will come to know that God's love is the ultimate answer to their problems.