

Final hitchhike adventure of 2011



Shuhei and Natsumi, (both 27) who took me to Kamisato Service area near Takasaki

December 22, 2011: I was invited to attend a meeting in Tokyo of the NPO Leap High, 300 kilometers from home. It had been raining all day yesterday and today the weather forecast predicted the same, but by 10AM it stopped raining to the point I ventured outside and walked to the highway.

Within 10 minutes I caught a ride from a man going all the way to Nagaoka city! This meant he could take me close enough to walk to Sakae Parking area on the Hokuriku expressway. This saves me the 180 bus ride from Sanjo city.

The driver, Mr. Sodeyama, is involved in a humanitarian aid project to help poor children in Nepal get an education. He goes to Nepal yearly and said he visited Mt. Everest South Base camp, elevation of 5,364 meters.

At Sakae parking area, an expressway patrolman saw me hitchhiking and warned me not to do anything that would cause somebody to phone the police. He said this was the *second time* to warn me! The first time some driver did phone the police thinking I was doing something illegal. I wasn't, but my days hitchhiking via expressway may be numbered if the highway commission decides to forbid hitchhiking at parking areas.

I waited over an hour and a half for the next ride, but it was worth the wait. The driver was on his way to Yokohama which meant he would be going right to my *very destination* of Yoga Station on the Denentoshi Line! I hoped to be there by 5PM and arrived just after 4PM.

On Christmas Eve I hitchhiked in 2 vehicles back to Niigata. The first car, young lovers, Shuhei and Natsumi, took me to Kamisato Service area. The second car was a lady, Mrs. Itou, going to Tokamachi in Niigata and would therefore be getting off the expressway at Muika Machi. I asked Mrs. Itou if

she knows my Tokamachi friends, Keiji and Miyoko and their family, and she said that she was one of the caretakers of their youngest daughter, Marin, at the Hokuetsu Preschool! I immediately phoned Keiji and told him Mrs. Itou had picked me up. He was really glad to say the least. I would have gone with Mrs. Itou to Tokamachi and visited Keiji, but he said he wouldn't be home then. Instead Mrs. Itou took me to the Muika Machi train station from where I took a train the rest of the way home. It was past 5PM and too dark to hitchhike.