

## Some Memories of my trip to Japan, 3-17 June 2002

We went to Japan to visit Zachary who is living in Umaji, a small village in the mountains of Shikoku. Shikoku is the smallest of Japan's four major islands, lying across the Seto Inland Sea to the south of the main island, Honshu. He is somewhat inland from Yasuda, which is southeasterly down the coast from Aki, and by extension from Kōchi, the main city in Kōchi Prefecture (Kōchi city population is about 320,000). The population of Umaji is something like 1500 people, i.e. less than a tenth the size of Reading and an hour's drive from anything larger.

We began our journey on Monday, June 3, 2002. I set my clock for 4:48 a.m. so I could get up dress and be ready for a taxi to Logan airport at 6:00 a.m. In recent years, getting up that early has become a problem for me, but I managed it. I set the coffee to start automatically the night before, showered, was all packed up, etc. So all I had to do was dress, walk Brewster, and have a bit of coffee and an English muffin. The taxi showed up at 6 as he had said he would. The traffic into Boston and through the tunnel to the airport was picking up already, but we made it close to 6:45 a.m., almost two hours before our flight was due to depart.

We flew out of Boston at 8:40 a.m., bound for Detroit. We landed there around 10:50 a.m. and then hung around for a while until our flight to Osaka was ready to leave at 12:30 p.m. The flight to Osaka seemed long. Well, it was something like 13 hours in the air. I think when we went to Japan in March 2000, I found it easier to breath away the time than I did this time. I suppose I'm out of practice. Anyway, I breathed, dozed and read from the book on which I was working, *The Silent Cry* by Kenzaburo Ōe. He grew up in Ehime Prefecture in northwestern Shikoku. The book was pretty weird, but once I got into it, it became engrossing. This seems typical of the three books I've now read by Ōe, a bit difficult to start, but once begun, the book draws you in. There was even a tie-in with Kōchi in this book. There was a legend about someone who, after failing to foment an insurrection, escaped his village in Ehime and headed over the mountains to Kōchi.

Anyway, we arrived in Osaka the next day, that is Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, at about 2:30 p.m., about a half hour early. After clearing

customs, Hazel and I made it to the Japan Railroad station and took the train from the Kansai airport into Osaka. Although it was a relatively straightforward operation, some nice person whom I don't really remember any more, I think it was a 40-ish man, got us pointed in the right direction with our train tickets.

Basically, to ride the train, one looks over a route map to figure out the cost of going to one's destination. This isn't too bad provided the destinations are written in romanji or hiragana. When they're written in kanji, people like me are in trouble (we hunt for a different route map then). Then you pump money into a vending machine until you get to the right amount and a ticket pops out. You have to put the ticket through a reader attached to turnstile when you get off and it lets you through if you've paid enough. If not, I think you have to go find a machine and get another ticket. Fortunately, we always made it through ok.

Our hotel was called the Rihga Royal Hotel, and Hazel's guidebook said it was right near the Osaka train station. So when we got to the station, we hopped a taxi for the Rihga Royal Hotel. No problem, we were there in no time. Unfortunately, they didn't seem able to find us in their computer. Eventually, I showed them the piece of paper with our reservation number and they discovered that we had been booked at the Rihga Royal Hotel in Sakai. The guy at the hotel was going to send us to Sakai on the train, but eventually they hustled us out of the place and into a taxi for a moderately expensive ride (actually not too bad, ¥4,700 or about \$43 based on the exchange rate at the airport) to the hotel in Sakai. It's sort of like thinking you've booked a hotel in Boston, but find out that your travel agent actually stuck you in Brockton or

Woburn. Whatever, they were expecting us at the Rihga Royal Hotel in Sakai, so we could check in, head off to the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor and flop on our bed.

Actually, we began our interest in World Cup that night. I sort of dozed through a first-round game between Japan and Belgium.

At half time, with the score tied at nil-nil (not untypical of World Cup games it turns out), we headed downstairs for some dinner. We weren't up to figuring out how to find a nice place in Osaka proper, and probably couldn't have afforded such a place anyway. So we ate at the Rihga Royal Hotel's cafe on the ground floor.

We had some nice Korean dishes that we liked quite a bit. I had some veggies and beef strips and Hazel had some kind of noodle dish (Raimen? -- it wasn't the ubiquitous Ramen). By the time we got back from dinner, the game was pretty much over. I believe that Japan and Belgium played to a 2-2 tie, so the half we missed due to dinner (as opposed to the half through which I dozed) must have been exciting.

Oh well, we got to see lots more World Cup during our stay. Japan, after all was co-hosting the event along with Korea. It was clearly a big deal for both.

We went to bed around 9:30 and then spent much of the night waking up and trying to get back to sleep. Eventually we got up around 7:30 and had breakfast at the buffet in the cafe on the ground floor. It was mostly Japanese style, i.e. with lots of little bits of omelet, fish cakes, pickled things, etc., and, of course, rice.

Our plane out of Osaka to Kōchi wasn't due to take off until the afternoon, so we decided to park our bags at the hotel bell-hop station (that's not what they called it, but that's essentially what it was) and headed off to the JR station to see about taking a train into town to see the sights. We decided to head for the Osaka Jo (or castle). It was an important fortification that kept the Tokugawas in check until they eventually managed to breach it and fully bring all of Japan under their influence. I read all about it in *Shōgun*, so was, of course, interested.

Our hotel was next to the JR station in Sakai. We caught a train there bound for Osaka and then transferred to what was called the Osaka Loop Line and got off at the Osaka Jo Koen

(Osaka castle park) station. I believe we had a bit of help on this effort as well, but perhaps we just got pointed in the right direction at the front desk of the hotel. Whatever, we made it ok and walked around in the park and eventually made it up to the castle itself. We didn't actually go into the castle, just took a couple of pictures, got a couple of drinks (coke or in Japan, コーカークーラー, i.e. coh-kah coh-rah, or "coka cola"). We were already hot and tired, and weren't sure we had time to go inside. We needed to be sure not to be late for our plane to Kōchi.

Somehow, the trip back seemed more of an effort than the trip into Osaka. For one thing, we didn't manage to get a single ticket that we could use for the transfer of lines. Then, I think we had some kind of express train on the way in to town, but most definitely didn't have an express going back to Sakai. Anyway, we managed to buy the tickets to the transfer station and then from the transfer station to Sakai without mishap. Then we snagged our bags and got back on the train for the airport in Kansai. This time we did get an express train. I'd begun to figure out the different trains and how their stops correlated with the dots on the maps and so forth.

We got to the airport around 1:30 p.m., in plenty of time for our 3 p.m. flight. We checked in, then had a bunch of time, so decided to have a spot of lunch. Hazel had a "fruit" sandwich, which was bits of fruit embedded in something akin to Cool Whip. I had what was billed as a bacon and lettuce sandwich. It was actually a BLT, albeit with Canadian bacon.

Our plane for Kōchi took off at 3:00 p.m. and we arrived in Kōchi at 3:40 p.m. Zachary's plane from his JET conference in Tokyo was due about 10 minutes later. The airport at Kōchi is even smaller than the one in Manchester, NH, so there was no problem figuring out where to wait for Zach. Sure enough, he showed up more-or-less on time. He had a JET friend named Paul (from Australia) with him and we all tried to stuff ourselves and our suitcases into Zach's little car. Zach had to take Paul home. He lived in Nahari, which is a bit further down the coast road from the Umaji turn off. So after we dropped Paul off, we had to backtrack a bit to

get to the road into Umaji (look for the sign with the big fish).

Just as Zachary advertized, the road was narrow and windy and scary. Actually I think we were too tired to be much scared. The road wound along side a river, and in the small river plain to each side of the road, were a bunch of rice paddies. They were just beginning to plant, so in some paddies the plants were quite small and in others no more than 6 inches tall. We did see some actual planting as well, some by hand and some by machine. Anyway, on either side of the road, just past the rice paddies, the mountains rose up. They were covered with cedars mostly, or at least I think that's what they had. Certainly that was the case further up the road past Umaji. There were also little bamboo groves. I'm not sure I ever saw such large bamboo trees before. Lots were 4 to 6 inches in diameter.

We arrived at the local inn/hotel/whatever in Umaji around 6 p.m. For some reason the place calls itself the "community center" (コミュニティ・センター [coh-myu-nee-tee se-n-tah]). This place had an *onsen*, or hot mineral bath in it and is set along side a little river or stream. It was quite nice. To the left of the main lobby was the dining room, to the right the baths proper. On past the baths was another lounge area with a second entrance from the outside, and further along from that were the rooms. The rooms were laid out a bit like a motel, which is they were along a row. One side of each room opened onto a common, raised walkway or veranda that overlooked the parking lot, and which led between the guest area and the baths and dining room. The other side of each of the rooms opened onto a little deck. That is each room had a little private deck that looked out toward the river.

Our room, and I'm guessing most of the others as well, had a loft. We used the stairs up to the loft to stack things like photo albums and *ukatas* (our cotton, around-the-*onsen* robes) and the like. We had our own private bathroom, complete with a little tub and shower. For some reason, one was supposed to use different slippers in the bathroom than in the rest of the room (and of course, our outside shoes were only for outside. We ditched them when we

came in the door and stashed them in a cupboard next to the entryway. There was a bin of ugly, uncomfortable, ill-fitting red slippers for everyone to wear in the *onsen* and their rooms).

There was a little table on the deck and two chairs, so we could sit outside and listen to the stream, feel the breeze, etc. There was a kite (some kind of a hawk-like bird) or perhaps a pair of kites that lived nearby, and they would soar around, screech and so forth, and, from time to time, perch on one of the telephone poles just upstream and across the river from our deck (Hazel got a picture of him up there). It was really quite lovely, all made from wood. While we waited for Zach, we drank some Gokkun that we could get in the vending machines. Gokkun is the local Umaji delicacy, made from the locally grown yuzu, a kind of citrus tree.

Zachary showed up at 7:30 p.m. to take us to dinner. There aren't a lot of choices for dining out in Umaji. One either eats at the コミュニティー・センター or one eats at the one "restaurant" in town. It's a small place that has, perhaps 6 tables. Since Zachary hadn't signed us up for dinner at the コミュニティー・センター, we went to this restaurant. It's where he usually has his lunch. We had a nice dinner there, although I embarrassed myself by spilling my *miso* soup in my lap. I'm not sure anyone else actually noticed. Fortunately, although the Japanese don't seem to offer napkins at meals, they do offer a hot towel before dinner so one can clean off one's hands. I still had my towel, so used it to sop up the mess I had made. In addition to the *miso* soup I had some kind of ??-*don*, which was a bowl of rice with steak bits on top. I know *katsudon* is with pork, but since this had beef, it was something else. Perhaps it was just *nikudon*, *niku* meaning meat (mystery meat?). Whatever, it was delicious, or as one would say in Japan, "*oishii desu*" (well, I would say it at least and people seemed to think that was quite fun).

#### Thursday, June 6, 2002

We went to bed around 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday evening, and managed to stay in bed until around 6:30 a.m. We had quick baths and then headed off for breakfast. This turned out not to be trivial at first. The tables in the dining

room of the コミュニティー・センター had signs on them, but we couldn't read any of them. They were all in kanji. Perhaps if they'd said パイパー [pah-ee-pah], I'd have been able to figure out my name in katakana (thanks actually to Phil Noro, the AFS student from Japan who lived with us when I was 11), but none of the signs did. So we stood around until a nice woman showed up and pointed at a table for us. Zachary later told us that the sign said something like "board of education" on it (in kanji, of course). How was I to figure that one out? Anyway, Zachary made me a crib sheet for the next time so I could compare what he had written with what was on the signs, although I don't think it mattered later, because there were fewer tables set up on other days, and it was pretty easy to figure out which one was empty and set up for only two people.

Breakfast at the コミュニティー・センター was basically the same each day, although there were variations on a theme. The trays would already be set out with things on them, and then after we showed up, the nice woman would pop out with things that needed to be warm, a small bowl of *miso* soup, tea, and, of course, rice. The stuff already on the tray included a little salad (shredded cabbage, something like a bit of sea anemone or crab, a few bits of corn, and other things with a dab of ginger (or yuzu ?) relish and a glob of mayonnaise. I tried to eat around the glob and the rest was fine, although eating shredded cabbage with chopsticks isn't trivial. Then there was a small dish with two slices of yellow, pickled *daikon* (Japanese radish), around 2 mm thick and 1 cm diameter, along with a red thing about the size of a cherry (and with a pit inside like a cherry pit) which was pickled and foul tasting and was something like a mountain plum or *umeboshi*. I figured it was my Christian duty to eat it each day, and it got less disgusting as time went on, but I'm not exactly looking forward to my next meeting with *umeboshi*. Then there was a dish with a half cooked egg (poached?) sitting in a pool of some kind of liquid. It wasn't so hot, but I coped. Sometimes we got a bit of omelet or a fried egg instead. Then we had a rectangular box on the tray, about 2"x6"x1" inside of which was a little

package of seaweed. I guess we were supposed to wrap our rice in it or something. I just saved mine for souvenirs, although I almost ate some on the way back when I'd gone quite long without food before our flight took off. The seaweed packages were saved from consumption when I found an *udon* place instead and had a bowl of *udon* with beef bits floating in the broth.

There was also a small round dish with some pickled green beans and mushrooms in it. Finally, we had a little flat dish about 6"x2" on which rested a piece of fish and a glob of condiment (I think it was yuzu based -- good anyway). Sometimes the fish was a slice of salmon, about 1 cm thick, and at least once, there was a whole fish, eyes and all. It was smoked or something, and I decided that I was supposed to pull off the head and just eat the rest. It wasn't all that bad all things considered. It had a firm texture and the bones weren't intrusive. Sometimes there were a few bones in the salmon, but I seem to be learning to cope with bones in my more mature years.

Zachary gathered us shortly after 8 a.m. and took us to the town hall to meet the mayor of Umaji, the superintendent of schools, a few town hall workers, and his supervisor and *inaka* mother, Riho-san. Hazel handed around what we hoped were appropriate *omiyage* (the little gifts that Japanese people like to hand around and receive in return). I gave out a few business cards (*meishi*) because I thought that's what people did in Japan. I hoped they wouldn't care that they were old ones with incorrect telephone area codes on them. I got a couple of *meishi* in return. Since the cedar products industry is big there, they had cards made on paper-thin bits of cedar. Quite beautiful. Later on, someone gave us a box of blank cedar business cards. I'll have to figure out how to print on them and send some over for show and tell.

After that, Zachary drove us off to Yanase, which is an even more remote, smaller town, but which is officially part of Umaji. It's something like 20 or 30 km further in the mountains over even more scary and windy roads, albeit quite beautiful ones. They have lots of convex mirrors set up at the turns (i.e. every few feet) so you can tell if someone is coming the other way. Fortunately, we didn't hit anyone

nor fall into the stream along side that we drove, nor get hit by falling rocks. Zachary was due at the junior high school in Yanase that day and took us along with him for show and tell.

It turns out that the Junior high in Yanase has only 5 students total, a boy named Taro in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, a girl in 8<sup>th</sup> grade who I think was named Erika, and two girls and a boy in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We combined the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in one class and then did the 9<sup>th</sup> grade by themselves. The English teacher up there is new as of the first of April, and is young, maybe 23, petite and has a very round head like one of the characters about which I read in another Kenzaburo Ōe book (*A Quiet Life*). She seemed quite nice, although her English could stand a tour of duty in the States. Anyway, she and Zachary consulted for a bit and decided on something. Hazel offered some suggestions as well.

Zachary starts out his classes with a “how are you today?”, “what day is today?” and such like. Then they had the kids do a little self-introduction and Hazel and I did one back. The kids asked some questions such as, “what kinds of food do you like?” I said peanut butter, which resulted in Zach’s telling a funny story in Japanese, or at least it sounded like it was funny, about how I ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches *every* day. They also asked, “what food do you not like?” I said *ikura* which is a kind of fish roe and they would act surprised. I showed them a map of the U.S. and talked about where we came from and how we got to Japan. I suspect it was lost on them all. Hazel, much more accomplished at working with beginning language students, had some pictures of our family and showed them to the kids and asked them about their own families, brothers, sisters, dogs, etc. She had the most amazing way with the kids. I felt like I was in the presence of a true master. Not surprisingly, the kids were in awe of the picture of Brewster trying to sit on my lap. He looked like a bear to them.

We had lunch at the school with the kids. The kids all eat together (all three grades in this case). Various ones of them are tasked with getting the food. They put on little white smocks and face masks and bring up the trays of food. We all sat around in a circle and ate. If Yanase was like Umaji elementary, and I can’t

remember this part, the beginning of lunchtime is signaled by a song that’s played over the intercom that tells the kids they should wash their hands. I heard the word *te* a lot, and Zachary says *te* is the word for hand. Then while eating they have some kind of story read over the intercom. One day, I think during lunch in Umaji, the story had a character that sounded like one of the Simpsons. Then after lunch, there’s another song. The kids clear up, and are supposed to brush their teeth. This song sounds pretty much like the hand-washing song, but I kept hearing the word *ha* a lot and I know *ha* is the word for tooth or teeth.

Anyway, after lunch the kids headed off for recess (the boys whacked around a golf ball) and we headed off for *senbonyama* (thousand tree mountain). It was even more remote than Yanase and further in the cedar forest. After driving some more on the windy, scarey roads we got to a spot where they had built a nice cedar board walk up the side of the mountain. So we “hiked” up that for a while. We decided it was too far to the top given our state of physical conditioning, so stopped about half way up and took pictures and stuff and headed back down. A number of the trees had labels on them, so I gather it was a kind of nature walk. If I remember correctly, cedar in Japanese is スギ (soo-ghee; for some reason it was written in katakana in the signs). Anyway, it was really gorgeous up there. I was fascinated by the switchbacks on the boardwalk up the mountain, but the pictures I took of it didn’t look like much.

Eventually we made it back to the コミュニティー・センター and napped for an hour or so. Then Zachary came to take us to an *enkai* put on by his coworkers at the town hall. They held it in an old house that was just a short walk from the コミュニティー・センター. It was up along a stream that Zachary and some of his kiddies had stocked with firefly larvae a few months previously. The house was build around 1860 and is the oldest building in Umaji. It looked a bit like a set from a Kurosawa movie, although it was mostly open. I don’t remember *shoji* in the place. If there were any, they had been pushed back. The main room was raised up a foot or two from the ground and they had put up a long table across the room. We were

shown the place of honor, I suppose, which meant we had a wall behind us on which we could lean if we got tired of sitting cross legged on the floor. The table was set with lots of different food dishes done in traditional Japanese style, i.e. feasts for the eyes as much if not more so than feasts for the belly. The town hall people had made all the dishes themselves.

There was a small fire pit off to the side where they heated up a kettle of tea, and in addition, sake. Zach's *Jichou* I think (Asst. Superintendent) had gone out and cut several large pieces of bamboo for the sake heating. The pieces were something like 3 feet long and 3 or so inches in diameter. The top half was hollowed out and the bottom foot had been whittled down to a point. The tubes were filled with sake and then stuck into the ground by the fire pit. After a while, the heat from the fire seeped through the bamboo and heated the *sake* (sah-kay'). Then they brought the tubes around and filled up small bamboo cups with the sake for us to drink. It was pretty interesting, although in the interest of maintaining some degree of decorum, I mostly stuck with beer. Besides, beer tastes better to me.

The office people all gave little self-introductions in English, some better than others. One woman, who is a bit of a ham, did her self-intro in French. It sounded credible to me. I could follow it at least as well as I could follow some of the English intros. In addition to Zach's superintendent, his *Jichou*, Riho-san and several women from the town hall, we had a young man who taught social studies who made a valiant effort to talk to us in English and a math teacher we'd met earlier in the day at Yanase. Later on, Zach's friend, Hamaji-sensei (he took Zach under his wing during his first months in Umaji -- Hamaji-sensei says he's Zach's brother) showed up and a couple of his band mates, the leader/guitarist and the drummer who also is a Shinto priest. As part of the introductions, we were promised that the fireflies would come to greet us, and indeed, one did before the end of the night. Hazel and I begged tiredness and left around 9. I'm sure many of the rest of the party stayed quite a lot longer, and no doubt, heated up more bamboo tubes of sake by the fire.

### Friday, June 7, 2002

Zachary took us to Umaji elementary school. We were to meet with the lower grades this day. The first or second graders greeted us with a rousing several choruses of a song in English about body parts. I thought I had the song down, but I'm already forgetting it. Something like "head, shoulders, knees and toes". I think perhaps the tune is a bit like "There is a Tavern in the Town". Whatever, you do it with hand motions, i.e. pointing to the parts, and speed up for each chorus until you're falling on the floor. Zach says that the kids at his schools do a lot of falling down on the floor. One of the issues, it seems, is for the teachers to try to keep the kids sitting in their seats.

Before each class, the kids go through a little ritual. One kid says a bunch of words, then they all chime in "let's begin". At the end of class, the designated leader says some more stuff and then all the kids chime in "let's finish". They seemed to have those two English phrases down pretty well. Zachary says the lead kid changes each day.

Anyway, we talked with the kids and then it was time for recess, so a couple of girls grabbed me by the hands and dragged me off to in search of my shoes so I could go out with them to play soccer or something. About the time I got my shoes on and situated, things changed, so I stood around a lot and watched the kids dash around. The little girls, especially, seem quite interested and good at riding unicycles. The boys seemed to switch from soccer to baseball and back with no apparent rhyme or reason. Eventually it was time to come in again and take off my shoes and replace them with slippers. The ones at the schools were uncomfortable green rubber things that made the red, faux leather ones at the コミュニティ・センター seem like *haute couture* footwear.

Later on in the day, when I was sitting around in the principal's office, the girls who took me to recess peeked their heads in the door and played a few exciting rounds of rock, paper and scissors with me. That seems to be a very popular game in Umaji.

This time with one of the grades I did a few rousing choruses of "Duke of York" and that

seemed to go over pretty well. One of the questions the kids tended to ask, in addition to the one about foods, was what kinds of sports I liked. So I would tell them I liked baseball and sumo. Then I would tell them that my favorite *rikishi* (sumo wrestler) is Kaio. That's not completely true, my favorite is Sentoryu (nee Henry Armstrong Miller from St. Louis), but he's not nearly so well known as Kaio (who is best buddies with Sentoryu). Anyway, we asked the kids who their favorites were and they gave some more-or-less predictable answers, e.g. Takanohana (the most famous current yokozuna or grand champion), Zach said he liked Kotomitsuki, and then the young (alas somewhat older than Zach though) attractive, slim, shy female teacher said she liked Asashoryu. That struck me as strange given that she seemed so quiet and meek and Asashoryu is probably the most vicious of all the *sumotori* (another word for sumo wrestler). On the other hand, Asashoryu is certainly entertaining because he is strong, active and unpredictable (interesting side note, Asashoryu is a Mongolian, but went to high school in Kōchi prefecture, a fair bit to the west from where Zach lives). Also, I showed the kids some pictures of the Red Sox, and they were particularly taken by the one from last year which showed Hideo Nomo (now, alas, with the Dodgers) and Tomokazu Ohka (doing better than expected at Montreal -- I liked him, sorry he's gone) as being members of the team [in retrospect, I think this part happened the following week when we went when we met the older grades]. We had lunch with the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders this day, and I think this was the day when the story had the character that sounded like one of the Simpsons. Needless to say, we began lunch with the *te* song (hand washing) and ended with the *ha* song (teeth brushing).

During a break between classes, we went to the computer room. I tried sending out e-mails, but I don't think it worked. A lot of the so-called features of the internet interface to the PSI e-mail system don't work. One of them is the address book. It only pretends to put addresses in the "to:" field. It doesn't actually enter an identifiable address, however. So when you hit send, all your writing is lost. The

following week, I entered addresses explicitly and it all worked. Anyway, the important part is that we got to know the computer room that is where Zach gets a lot of his Xanga writing done. He's there for "internationalization" and as far as I'm concerned, part of that is not just bringing foreigners to the Japanese, but bringing the Japanese to foreigners. That's one of the things his Xanga writings do.

We had a long break in the middle of the day, but would have to be back at the school for "English club" toward the end of the day. So Hazel and I wandered about the town some. We walked down the street to the end of town where there was a "town products" center or something of that sort. It had all the local things for which Umaji would like to be famous, yuzu products and cedar products. The yuzu stuff not only includes the drink, Gokkun, but also yuzu jam (ジャム [jah-moo]), marmalade (マーマレード [maa-mah-rae-doh]) various kinds of relish and soy sauce. I could figure out the jam and marmalade because I had learned enough kana to sound out those words. It just goes to show what a little study will do. The cedar stuff comprises things made from pieces of cedar itself, such as tables, bowls and trays, but also things made from processed cedar scraps such as business cards, little trays, etc. A lot of it is quite nice. The folks in Umaji aren't quite up on the tourist trade, however, they don't take credit cards at their local gift shop where one could in principle buy a ton of nice stuff (high-class *omiyage* for one thing) for a ton of money. Anyway, we didn't buy anything there that day (later though). We headed back to the elementary school.

On the way around town, Hazel started worrying about the sun on her head, so we looked for a place where she might buy a hat. We walked into a shop that seemed to be open, but no one was apparent. We rummaged around in the hat pile for a while and found a couple that looked promising. Eventually a woman wandered up from downstairs. It seems that theft is not a major concern in Umaji, so people can leave shops open and essentially unattended. We discovered that buying things isn't all that difficult if one just points to what one wants and holds out money. Thus, we

managed to buy a nice straw hat and then headed back to the elementary school.

The English club was comprised of three girls, either 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade. One of whom was named Rira, I think, although Zachary claims it's essentially Leelah. Apparently, we don't appreciate that what we refer to as 'r' sounds in Japanese are a far cry from your typical American Midwestern 'r' sound. I think, perhaps, it a bit more like a flipped 'r', or perhaps 'dl' but I'm not really sure. Whatever, there were three girls in the club. Zachary seems to think one of them is pretty much on the ball, and one is there just to hang out with the third one. They seemed like nice kids. We tried doing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" as a 3-part round. Then we drew pictures on the board and guessed what was being drawn. We also did a game where we would whisper something to the person on our left. Then that person would pass it along and so on until it got back to the first person. The idea was to see if the item at the end of the line was the same as at the beginning. I got stumped by someone's saying they liked avocado when we were doing fruits. I never thought of avocado as a fruit, but then I think about avocado as little as possible. I'm not convinced that I wouldn't prefer to eat *umeboshi* over avocado. Toward the end of our time, we asked the girls to sing a folk song for us, but instead they ran to get their recorders and played something. They played nicely and one of them provided some harmony to the tune. We had a good time with them. The girl who seemed the shyest and least self-confident made a particular effort to thank us for having come. Just as we were about to leave, the home ec club showed up with a tray of rice balls that they wanted us to eat. So we sat back down on the floor and ate one each and took one each home with us.

After school, it was back to the コミュニティー・センター. I took a soak in the *onsen* and lay about some, probably watching some more World Cup. The *onsen*, as is generally the case in Japan now, I believe, was non co-ed. It was pretty typical, I expect, although it's only the second *onsen* I've ever visited, and much more simple than the grand one at Noboribetsu up on Hokkaido. Anyway, there was a small dressing room with lockers for our clothes. This *onsen*

had two pools each for the men and women. The larger, slightly more shallow one was in the same room where people did their initial scrubbing. That is, there were about 6 washing locations along the inside wall each of which comprised a small stool (essentially an upside-down plastic bucket), a hand shower fixture and bottles of soap and shampoo. Thank goodness I had learned my kana so I could tell which was which. After thoroughly cleaning one's self off, one soaks in the pool.

As I mentioned there were two pools. The larger one was perhaps 10 ft x 6 ft and about 3 ft deep. It had several bubbler outlets on its sides, so it was sort of like a spa. The other tub was out through a door, but not really outside, it just seemed like it ought to have been. It was a bit deeper, perhaps hotter, I'm not sure, both were quite hot. It was maybe 6 ft x 4 ft. I suppose I should have measured it against myself. I could sit on the bottom of each pool fairly comfortably. Or at least I could have sat were I not now sufficiently fat that I float a bit. I had to hold myself down by placing my hands on the edge of the pool (well, remember that the high mineral content of these things increases the density of the water so that one floats more easily). So I would sit, more-or-less cross legged, and close my eyes and breathe for a while. One time the window was open to the outside and I watched the kite soaring around and/or sitting on his telephone pole across the river. It's very relaxing, but it also gets one heated up so that one sweats for quite some time afterward. Thus it's a good idea not to have anything special to do for a while after one exits the *onsen*. Generally, I would just go back to the room and lie about for a while, perhaps watching some World Cup soccer if any game happened to be on.

This particular day, after my soak and lie about, around 6 p.m., Zachary dragged us off to his neighbor's house. His neighbor, who has also been a major source of support for Zachary, albeit with some strange ideas such as white people don't get hangovers, wanted to have us over for dinner. He and his wife put on quite a spread as well, although I suspect it wasn't all home made. They had invited a half dozen other people to join us. They set up a long low table in front of their house. This time, however, they

took pity on the *gaijin* and put up a small bench next to the table for Hazel and me to use as a seat.

It was the typical Japanese spread, a feast for the eyes as much as if not more so than a feast for the palate. There was the usual assortment of sushi and sashimi, some whole fish artfully posed (I think some of the famous Umaji *ayu* or sweet river fish, but I couldn't figure out how to eat it, and the guy I was going to watch eat one scarfed his down when I wasn't looking). Then there was a whole fish prepared Chinese style. I think this means, among other things, that it is cooked. It also seemed to be covered with a sauce or glaze. A lot of Japanese food tends to be unadorned, "natural taste" one might say (others might say lacking in taste). We just sort of grabbed some chunks of this fish with our chopsticks and found it to be actually quite good.

Zachary taught us the proper way to retrieve food from the dishes, with the back ends of our chopsticks as opposed to the ends we used for eating. Some dishes, of course, had their own serving chopsticks, but not all. So you turn them around, grab something, place it on one of the little dishes you've been given (in Umaji these are often made from processed cedar waste), then turn around your chopsticks the proper way, pick up the piece of food and pop it into your mouth. It sounds complex, but in Japan the process of viewing and appreciating food is probably more important than the actual eating part, so ritualizing things makes a certain amount of sense.

We also had plenty of beer. Our host seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of it, and every time my glass dipped down so much as an inch below the top, he was filling it. Zachary clued me in as to the proper response to such an offer, i.e. pick up the glass in my right hand, place it on my left hand, and hold both hands out to the pourer. We also tried various kinds of *sake*. Our host decided I should see that different brands had different tastes. So we sipped and discussed the relative merits of the *sake*. Some wasn't too bad, a bit on the sweet and fruity side. Others of it were pretty much like I would expect ethanol to taste. Needless to say, I prefer sweet and fruity, but I prefer even more not to

have too much, so I just took very tiny polite sips as much as possible. Anyway, it was all quite interesting.

The guy or his wife also brought out some *umeboshi* that his mother (I think) had made. They were quite a bit more crunchy and tasty than the ones served for breakfast at the コミュニティー・センター. Another delicacy they brought out to us was deep-fried eel spines. They were just sort of crunchy and salty and not at all bad, sort of like potato sticks. Certainly not at all like one might imagine fish bones to be like. Hazel was also favored with a dish of some kind of special ice cream since she clearly wasn't much of a drinker. I'm afraid I insulted our hosts by not being much of one myself. We left for our beds around 8:30 rather than drink the night away as people in Umaji (perhaps much of Japan) tend to do. I believe we saw some of the World Cup game in which England beat Argentina, 1-0.

#### Saturday, June 8, 2002

We began the tourist phase of our trip this day. We were scheduled to head off to Kyōto for a round of traditional site seeing. Not surprisingly, we got off a bit later than we had wanted. We decided to head to Kyōto by taking a train across Shikoku, thence across the Seto Inland Sea to Okayama. At Okayama we would stop to tour their famous gardens, billed as one of the three most beautiful gardens in Japan (the Japanese like to make such claims -- the *ayu* from the river in Umaji were once rated as being the best *ayu* in Japan two years running). Then if we had time, we'd hit up Himeiji Jo (castle) in Himeiji, and then try to get to our hotel in Kyōto for the night. It didn't work out quite that way, but was satisfactory over all.

To catch the train, we were going to drive into Kōchi city. It was something like two hours or so from Umaji. Then Zachary realized that the train actually would come back a ways toward Umaji before turning across the island. So he decided to try to find the station in a town called Gomen, since that would entail less driving. We found the station, but then pondered the problem of parking. They had a small lot next to the station, but it wasn't clear it was available for long-term parking. Zachary

went inside to inquire. A few minutes later he came back out and said that while we could park in the lot next to the station, a woman across the street had a couple of spots by her house where she would let us park for something like ¥200 less per day (about \$1.75, which considering the cost of everything else in Japan is rather a pittance). I believe the total was something like ¥1000 per day. So we decided to try that. The woman essentially had a large carport with a dirt floor into which she could pack perhaps four cars. Zachary had to back in, which isn't one of his strong points, but eventually he did manage to get settled. Then we schlepped our stuff to the train station, bought tickets, and waited for the train to come. I think we only waited a short time and the train left Gomen at something like noon.

Not surprisingly, the train trip across Shikoku was beautiful. The roads and railroad beds all seem to run along paths cut by rivers, so we traveled up one riverbed over the mountains and then down along another riverbed to the other side. Since it was near lunchtime, when a woman came along with a cart, we snagged a couple of bento boxes for our lunch. The bento box had pretty much traditional Japanese stuff in it, various bits of pickled vegetables and fish in compartments on a top layer, and a bottom layer filled with rice.

After we got off the train in Okayama, we hunted up some coin-operated lockers [コイン・ロッカー, i.e. coh-ee-n ro-kaa] in which to stash our luggage, and then headed up the street for the Korakuen. The trip wasn't all that far, but seemed a bit of a hike given that we had a nice hot sunny day. We managed to snag a trolley back down the street on our way back to the station. Anyway, the garden was lovely, as it had been billed. It was a bit different from some Japanese gardens in that it had some fairly large expanses of lawn. It also had little sections of tea bushes (billed as a tea plantation), bamboo groves, running water, ponds with little islands in them, a huge mass of iris in full bloom, a tea house with a thatched roof, a little hill, various small shrines, a Noh theater, and so forth. We couldn't get into the teahouse or theater, but they were interesting to see from outside. Another of the garden's features was the black

keep of the local castle that acted as "borrowed scenery", i.e. stuff that wasn't actually part of the garden itself but sat across a small river, or perhaps moat from the garden. Its presence, however, enhanced the view across the garden from certain perspectives. I gather the Japanese are big on having borrowed scenery for their gardens.

Another feature of this particular garden were the red headed cranes. Actually, there were just a couple of them in a pen, so they didn't seem all that special to me, but they were touted as a special feature of the garden. In the river or moat just outside the garden, they had "crane boats". Of course those reminded us of our famous swan boats in the Boston Public Garden.

As mentioned, we took a trolley back to the Okayama station from the garden and caught the 6:07 p.m. *shinkansen* or bullet train bound for Kyōto. We decided we'd visit the Himeiji-Jo on our way back to Shikoku. The train was fast, smooth and rather expensive. The station in Kyōto is rather large, and we wandered around it for quite some time, but eventually discovered our hotel (New Miyako Hotel) just across the street from one of the station's corners. I found the ホテル[ho-the-ru] sign, and then Zachary figured out the kanji for the name. The hotel was pretty much a western style hotel and had a number of international guests visiting from places like Germany, Brazil and Mexico for the World Cup. We had dinner in the hotel's cafe, and then watched Brazil cream China 4-0 in their preliminary-round World Cup match (China was eliminated in the preliminary round, whereas Brazil eventually went on to win the whole thing).

### Sunday, June 9, 2002

Hazel and I couldn't sleep late again and began to be wakeful around 5 a.m., but managed to force ourselves to stay in bed until around 7 a.m. We had breakfast at the hotel's cafe and then woke Zachary around 9. We had a full day planned. Before heading off to see the sites of Kyōto, however, we hunted up a tourist information booth in the Kyōto train station. The man there had excellent English skills and was quite helpful. For one thing he told us in detail how to get around on the bus system.

This included where to get an all day bus pass for a mere ¥ 500 (around \$4.50).

We caught a bus from, I believe, platform B and headed off in the direction of the Rokuon-Ji [temple] also known as the Kinkakuji or golden pavillion. This is one of the most famous sites in all Japan and is even the subject of a rather nice (if I do say so myself) watercolor my father did some 20 plus years ago and which hung in my parents' dining room. The primary scenic view is of the building's rising above a mirror lake. The top two stories of the building are covered with gold leaf. Unfortunately, the mirror lake was rather muddy when we visited, so the effect was somewhat muted. In addition, I haven't managed to learn to shut out all the myriad tourists and school kids that seem to swarm over the top scenic sites in Japan. Still, it was pretty and we got a couple of decent pictures of the place. They had a nice garden around the back that was mostly shaded, and had some nice little ponds and shrines.

Our next stop was to be the Ryoan-Ji [temple]. It was a bit after noon, and while we were waiting at the bus stop for the no. 12 or whatever it was (we waited for the no. 12 one day for sure), I started trying to sound out the kana on the signs around the bus stop. Eventually I worked out that the place in front of which we were standing was a restaurant featuring Indian food. I pointed that out, and Hazel and Zachary both suddenly felt hungry and decided that place seemed like a good bet for lunch. It was indeed.

So after lunch, we went to the Ryoan-Ji. It is another of Japan's famous sites, in this case because of its Zen rock garden. Basically it is an enclosed space, something like 30 ft x 90 ft [10 x 30 meters], covered with white, raked gravel. There are 15 large stones placed at various locations in the gravel in such a way that there is no position in the garden from which all 15 can be seen at the same time. I checked it out, and it was true. The walls on three sides are made from a mud and oil combination, which over the years has developed its own character. That is to say, the weathering process has provided some visual patterning to the walls, i.e. darker and lighter patches.

Basically, one could view the garden only from one side. The garden was inside a temple. So after entering the temple (and, of course, taking off your shoes and putting on some ill-fitting slipper things) one walked to the location of the garden. There was a veranda overlooking the garden along one of its long sides. In theory one would sit on the edge of the veranda and contemplate the garden, i.e. "watch the rocks grow", or some such Zen thing. In practice that wasn't such a trivial thing to do. For one thing, it was difficult to find a place to sit along the edge, although with some patient waiting, I eventually did manage it. Then, the contemplation was made more of a challenge by the masses of people milling around, taking pictures, waiting for a place at the garden's edge, etc. I wasn't really up to such a challenge, and besides, proper contemplation requires several hours of time, something we didn't have. We had to press on.

Actually, pressing on initially involved a walk around the temple gardens which were really rather nice. One of the "sites" in the garden was a stone washbasin known as "tsukubai" (I'm not sure if that's the name of the particular basin itself, or the general name for stone wash basin). Anyway, this basin was circular, like a mill wheel, and had a square hollow in the middle. Around the four sides of the square were parts of various Chinese characters of kanji, each of which became a complete kanji with the addition of the square in the center. That is, one character had the square at the bottom, another to its right, another to its left and the last one, on top. The characters said something like "I learn only to be contented", or perhaps, "it is enough to know myself". Anyway it's one of those spiritual things that would be at home in most traditions, that is to say we all need to find merit in our peculiar circumstances as opposed to being eternally discontent because we're driven by our personal cravings. The *Bible* verse that comes to mind is "the Kingdom of God is within you".

After Ryoanji we went to see the Nijo-Jo [castle]. In general, one pays for the bus when one gets off. One enters the bus from the rear, but exits from the front under the watchful eye of the bus driver. Sometimes when you get in at

the rear you take a ticket, sometimes not. Apparently, most people know how much to throw into the coin box when they get off. People with passes, like us, put a card with a magnetic strip on the back through a slot next to the coin box. I presume if everything is ok, the bus driver sees a light or something and waves the person along. At this particular stop, the one for Nijo-Jo, I got confused and fished my hotel key card out of my pocket rather than my bus pass. Needless to say, the card-reading machine wouldn't take it. The bus driver first thought I was just some stupid person who had put it in backwards or upside down, so he grabbed it out of my hands. Upon seeing that it was the wrong card, he got quite disgusted. I was still having problems understanding why Hazel and Zach's cards had worked and not mine. I looked helplessly out the door at them and noticed one of them still holding a card that didn't look at all like the card I had tried to use. Then dawn broke over marbelhead, as we say in Massachusetts, and I realized I was using the wrong card. I found the correct one and it worked just fine. The bus driver was still pretty annoyed. I guess he doesn't have a sense of humor when it comes to stupid *gaijin* tricks.

The Nijo-Jo is actually more of a palace than a castle in that it wasn't set on a hill and highly fortified like the castles we saw in Osaka, Himeiji and Kōchi. It was a palace built by the first Tokugawas, started by Ieyasu himself and finished in 1626 by the 3<sup>rd</sup> in that line, Iemitsu. We walked through. One was forbidden to take pictures, or even to make drawings of what one saw inside. The walls were works of art. They had gold leaf with paintings on them in a rather large scale (Kano school). It was typical birds and pine tree branches and such, but quite lovely. The ceilings were elaborate and the floors were designed to squeak, so that people wouldn't be able to sneak up on the *shōguns* unannounced.

The palace was the living quarters of the Tokugawas when they were in Kyōto (normally they lived in Edo now called Tokyo). As such the rooms were various offices, living rooms, food preparation rooms, audience rooms, etc. They had a wax-figure display of an audience of a bunch of *daimyo* with the *shōgun* in one room.

Needless to say, they also had a nice garden out back. We walked around it for a while. I really liked the garden. It had the typical ponds and bridges and so forth. In this garden a number of the bridges were made from huge slabs of stone, something like 10 to 15 feet long, a couple feet wide, and 6 or 8 inches thick. It must have been a real chore to drag those things into that garden. It's amazing what can be accomplished if one is rich and ruthless enough.

After we got kicked out of the garden at 5 p.m., we took the bus back to our hotel, had a beer in the lobby lounge [ロビー・ラウンジ or roh-bee ra-oo-n-jee] -- not cheap at ¥2250 (~ \$20) for the three of us --, and took naps before dinner.

### Monday, June 10, 2002

Hazel and I wrote post cards at breakfast and then went to rouse Zachary. We got another all-day bus pass and headed off to Sanju-sangen-do. Although it is essentially the hall of a thousand Kannons, its name is something like the "hall of the 33 spaces between the columns". Its official name is actually the Rengeoin temple. It is a very long hall (120 meters, or almost 400 feet) which houses row upon row of golden statues of the Buddhist deity generally known as Kannon (officially, Juichimen senju-sengen Kanzeon). There are a thousand of these statues, all pretty much alike, but differing slightly. They all date from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Apparently Japanese visitors search for statues that look similar to their ancestors. I spent considerable time trying to figure out the subtle differences between the statues. Essentially there were 100 ranks of 10 each. Each rank was comprised of two staggered ranks of five. The statues all had lots of arms, perhaps 30 or so. Most of them held things off to either side. One pair of hands was together in prayer position (*namaste mudra*) and another pair was together in meditation position (*dhyanna mudra*). I spent most of my time trying to figure out if they were all holding the same things in the other 26 or so hands, or if there were slight differences in what they held. I'm pretty sure there were some differences, but there were so many of them, that I couldn't keep

track of them. The statues all had spiky golden halos around their heads. In the middle of the hall was a giant, seated Kannon.

In front of the 1000 statues were 28 statues of various guardian deities. They had little plaques in front of them containing explanations in Japanese and English. For some reason the plaques would say something like, "this represents the guardian deity xxxx. Tradition has it that this deity has such and such characteristics. This particular rendition is lacking these characteristics." I'm not sure how they knew it was deity xxxx if it didn't have the proper characteristics, but I suppose that's an example of the Japanese borrowing something from a different culture, in this case India, and "improving" things by filtering them through their own point of view. Anyway, they were all quite interesting and I wished I'd had more time to inspect them all. We couldn't take pictures in this place either, so only have our brochures and memories, the latter rapidly suffering the ravages of middle age.

After the Sanju-sangen-do, we figured out where to wait for the bus that would take us to the Kiyomizu Temple. While waiting at the bus stop, a young schoolgirl approached Hazel with an "interview" sheet in hand. She was from Tokyo on a school trip and apparently had the assignment of interviewing people in English. So she picked Hazel. When she was finished we made her friend interview me. Then we took pictures of each other and went on our ways. Zachary wasn't sure how much good the exercise was. The girls' quiz sheets were written in English and also "spelled" out "phonetically" in kana. Kana English, the style Japanese learn in school is full of extra syllables and vowels and is virtually unintelligible (as can be seen in the illustrations I've given). I thought the girls did an ok job, however. It seemed to me that just approaching strange *gaijin* was a significant accomplishment.

The Kiyomizu Temple was actually a temple complex on the top of a hill, over looking Kyōto. I don't seem to have a brochure from there, but I think some of the buildings are rather old and weathered and some are newer and painted a garish orange like the Heian shrine (which we visited later in the day). We got some

nice views of pagodas in the trees and such. I don't remember actually going into any temple proper there. I think we just wandered around the complex. Perhaps we had some lunch, but I can't remember it (we must have had lunch somewhere). What I do remember is we got to an area with a sacred fountain. Three or four streams of water poured out from troughs about ten or 15 feet in the air and down into a pond. People would walk behind and under the troughs and then reach out with long handled dippers to capture some of the falling water. Then, trying not to whack the person next to you with the handle of the dipper, which was something like 6 or 8 feet long, you'd take a drink. The dippers were then put back into a ultraviolet sterilization box for the next person in line to use. We all managed to get drinks and also pictures of ourselves doing it. I'm not sure if the water was supposed to work miracle cures or what. It seemed a popular thing to do, however, so we did it too. The back of my ticket to the Kiyomizu Temple has a little saying on it, "When Kannon-sama arises in your mind, then you are in Oneness with Kannon-sama". I think there's a verse from the *Bible* which is similar in its meaning, but I can't quite seem to bring it out of the recesses of my mind at the moment.

After the Kiyomizu Temple, we walked back down the hill via a long, narrow, stepped street, perhaps the one called Sannenzaka, or maybe the Ninenzaka (or both). Whatever, the streets were lined with various craft shops and the like. We passed one with some prints in the window. The one that caught my eye looked rather like the Hiroshige prints of the Tokaido road about which I'd read in a book I stole from my mother's house, *The Japanese Inn*, by Oliver Statler. This book had stories about the life of people traveling along the Tokaido road, the principal route from Edo to Kyōto during the Edo period (ca. 1600 to 1860) and illustrated some of the stories with wood block prints by Hiroshige, Hokusai, and several others. Also, before we left for Japan, Hazel had read some books on Japanese prints. So we were interested in prints, perhaps even snagging one if we could afford it.

Well, no one seemed to be in the shop. Hazel is a more proactive person than Zachary or

I, so wasn't much content to hang around waiting for someone to show up. So she spoke right up, "Sumimasen?", which is a sort of all purpose "excuse me, can I have your attention, ...." We heard a grunt from behind a curtain and eventually a middle-aged man wandered out. We got Zachary going right away about the prints, and the man went to the window, grabbed them and started showing them to us. Since he could tell that Zachary was pretty fluent, he chatted rather volubly about the various prints, happy no doubt to have an audience. I didn't get much in translation, but I think he was claiming they were indeed Hiroshige, but of more modern origin. That is, someone had reprinted them using Hiroshige's original wood blocks, but with a little scraping and digging out here and there to make things sharper. It may be that they were prints that mimicked the subject matter and style of Hiroshige. Whatever, we liked a number of them and eventually settled on two. Fortunately, the man was happy to take a master card, so we were all set.

After leaving the print shop, we continued down the hill and back up another to find Ishin-no-Michi. This is historic spot containing burial plots and such for various heroes of the Meiji restoration. Our particular object was to visit the place where Sakamoto Ryōma was buried. He's the most famous person from the Kōchi area of Shikoku (then called Tosa), and Zachary played him in a play the JETs put on in the spring. The spot was up a hill, so we could also get a view of the city of Kyōto laid out below us. As people do at burial sites in Japan, there were some food offerings before Ryōma's stone. Also there was quite a nice spray of paper cranes in all different colors hanging next to the stone, perhaps even a thousand of them, since the tradition is to fold them by the thousand (sprays of them are called *senbazuru*, *sen* being 1000, *senba*, thousand-fold, *tsuru*, crane, and for some reason, the *tsu* gets switched into something akin to *dzu*). I wonder if I could get our confirmation class interested in folding a thousand paper cranes and then sending them to Hiroshima or somewhere? We took pictures of Zachary in front of the statue of Sakamoto

Ryōma and his sidekick, Nakaoka Shintaro, and then headed on to our next destination.

After paying respects to Ryōma, we walked back down the hill to the main road where we caught a bus bound for the Heian Shrine area. The Heian Shrine is of relatively recent vintage, having been built, I believe, in the 1950s or 60s. It is styled after a more ancient tradition, however. It is basically a large courtyard surrounded by gaudy orange and green buildings. I tried to take several shots so as to make a panorama, but we haven't actually tried splicing them together. Anyway, the nice thing about the shrine is the garden out back, which is patterned after the most beautiful gardens of the Meiji period. We had a nice time walking around, stepping across bits of water on stepping stones, looking at the colorful *koi* (golden carp) and even a few turtles swimming in the pools, etc. There's a large covered bridge in the garden and we sat there for a while in the afternoon sun. Zachary got a couple of stale loaves of bread the we broke them into pieces and tried to throw the pieces to the smaller *koi*, and especially to the two or three turtles that were swimming around. Not surprisingly, the big fat *koi* found where we were very quickly and came up to snarf up what they could.

Although the day was winding down, we weren't finished yet. We caught the bus to the Gion district, which is allegedly a center of a more traditional nightlife. Hazel had also read about a theater production that showed several of the traditional arts of Japan and wanted to look into seeing that. We walked down one of the narrow roads in the area, and suddenly a geisha popped out of a side street and walked down the road ahead of us. She was followed by two attendants. At the street corner, we saw a bunch of people standing around with cameras at the ready and they started snapping pictures of the geisha, who rounded the corner and disappeared into one of the buildings along that street, mostly bars and restaurants. So we stood around at the street corner for a while as well, wondering what was going on. The other people standing around seemed to think something special might happen. We did see another geisha or two walk down the street and Zachary managed to snap a picture or two. He also

snapped a Japanese businessman out for a night on the town with a couple of little poppies in tow.

We wandered around for a bit, looking for something that looked theater like. The theater itself was called Gion Corner, so we thought perhaps we'd find it at the corner where everyone was hanging out. Not so. Eventually, Hazel asked inside a coffee shop, and was told that the place to go was down the other end of the street along which we'd seen the geishas and the businessman. We walked down that way, found the theater and noted that they weren't even going to be selling tickets for another hour.

So we decided to hunt up some dinner. We walked back along the street, looking at the places that seemed to serve food, but decided we weren't really all that interested in paying a hundred dollars each for a 3-ounce steak. We eventually ended up back at the coffee shop and ordered sandwiches and soft drinks or, perhaps beer. It was nice, and the nice woman who ran the place understood about foreigners and hot weather and provided us with multiple refills of our water glasses.

Thus fortified, we went back to the theater, Gion Corner, and bought our tickets for the show. They managed to stuff 7 traditional performing arts into a one-hour show: tea ceremony, koto music, flower arrangement, Gagaku (ancient court music -- mostly shrill squealing things and strange drum beats accompanying a dancer wearing a weird mask), Kyogen (a comedic play usually done between acts of a Noh play), Kyomai (Kyōto-style dancing peculiar to the Imperial courts during the Edo period), and bunraku (a Japanese-style puppet play). It was all pretty interesting. For the most part the tea ceremony took place off to the side of the stage, and we didn't see all that much of it. During the tea ceremony they started up the flower arrangement, and while both were running we had the koto playing. Needless to say, the koto players did traditional things like "*sakura*", but it was fun. There were two of them playing, presumably a teacher and one of her students. Having developed a taste for the koto, I was entranced with watching them.

I pretty much described the Gagaku in the parenthetical phrase above. I don't think

such performing would do much for the young people of today. They might, however, be able to get into the Kyogen, or into the theme of the particular story portrayed in this one. Basically it was a story about a master who was going to go on a trip and he was worried that his two servants would get into the sake while he was gone. So he tied them up. Unfortunately for the master, they discovered that by working together, they could manipulate their hands in such a way as to get into the sake anyway. It was basically slapstick comedy that seems to be common to all cultures and times.

The Kyomai was basically done by two geisha, one of them one we saw walking down the street no less. While geisha normally have make up which seems a bit strange to us, one of these had lipstick only on her bottom lip. The top lip was lost in the white pancake make up that we associate with geisha. It looked very strange to us. The dance was a series of very slow and deliberate moves to the music. I think perhaps it is a kind of chick thing. I like dancing to be a bit more spirited.

Finally the bunraku was a part of a classic story about Japanese lovers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or some such time. For a group of people who aren't particularly romantic in their individual relationships, the Japanese seem to love the unrequited lover themes. Anyway this particular story involved a young man who had to commit suicide and the young woman who loved him, but whose father wanted her to marry some old lecherous guy who had lent the father a lot of money. The old lecherous guy, of course was dishonest and was involved somehow in instigating the scandal that was the reason the young man had to commit suicide (his master had lost a valuable sword of the *shōgun*; the old lecherous guy had found it and hidden it away). The part we saw involved the girl's finding the sword or perhaps she talked the old lecherous guy out of it. Then she climbed a bell tower to ring the bell to send a message to her lover not to commit suicide. Ringing the bell was forbidden, but it was the only way she knew to catch the young man's attention. Something like that. Anyway, all we saw was the girl fussing around, climbing the tower, and clanging the bell.

The puppet is operated by a master puppeteer along with two assistants. The assistants are all in black, including black masks over their heads. You can see the face of the master puppeteer, but he tries, more-or-less to be unobtrusive. I believe he operates the head and one arm, and the assistants operate the other arm and legs and help with costume changes and so forth. Anyway, it's just amazing how expressive the guy can make the puppet be with arm waves, head nods and the like. In a normal bunraku, they would have a bunch of puppets, and therefore, a bunch of puppeteers. We saw part of one in a video once. Zachary managed to take some nice pictures of the show and has some of them available in his yahoo briefcase. ([http://briefcase.yahoo.com/bc/za\\_piper/](http://briefcase.yahoo.com/bc/za_piper/) -- then go to the folder called Parents' visit).

#### Tuesday, June 11, 2002

We went off to Nara this day. It is a bit north of Kyōto and takes something like an hour by train to get there. I believe that Nara was the ancient capital of the Emperors before they moved to Kyōto, perhaps back in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century. The weather was cloudy and oppressively humid. While we were there, rainy season officially began.

Our first stop in Nara was the Kofuku-Ji. It was the site of an ancient temple that had quite a collection of Buddhist statuary. One of the interesting parts of the collection was a bronze Buddha's head that dated from something like the 12<sup>th</sup> century. When the temple burned, all but the head was lost. The head somehow got stuck inside a wall or pillar or something and wasn't discovered to be there until sometime around 1930. Anyway, this temple had that head and a bunch of other statuary. It was all laid out rather like a museum, and we had to dodge swarms of school kids to see anything.

Then we wandered around Nara's park area off to find the Todai-Ji, another temple. The park area is overrun with hungry deer whose begging is more importuning even than Brewster's. The people there don't help the situation since they sell packets of "deer cookies" for ¥150. Anyway, the Todai-Ji is a huge temple (they claim it's the largest wooden

building in the world) that houses a giant Buddah statue (*daibutsuden*) and some lesser ones. They were pretty impressive. I believe we got a couple of half decent pictures here (I have no idea why we can take pictures in some places, such as this one, and not others, such as Sanju-sangen-do and Nijo-Jo). Again, the place swarmed with school kids.

After we left the Todai-Ji, it started to rain, so we decided it must be time for lunch. We popped into a cafe and got some food. Unfortunately, when we finished lunch, it was raining even harder. So Zachary and I bought umbrellas (I guess Hazel had one), and we decided to give up on site seeing for the day and headed back to the train station. We went back to Kyōto and took naps.

While we were waiting for Zachary to finish his nap and come get us for dinner, we turned on the TV and saw that the Kintetsu Buffaloes were playing baseball with someone, Lotte Marines perhaps. Anyway, I remembered that Tuffy Rhodes (called Karl by his mother) played for the Kintetsu Buffaloes, and sure enough, he came up in a few minutes and smacked a home run. Most people in the U.S.A. don't remember much about Tuffy Rhodes, but he finished up his undistinguished major-league career with the Red Sox in 1995. I believe he batted 0.080 in 10 games for the Sox (ok, I admit I looked him up, but I did remember the name). Anyway, since leaving Boston, he's become a big star in Japan, having tied the Japanese single-season home-run record of the immortal Sadaharu Oh last year (they were very worried he might break it, so he was walked for the last two weeks of the season).

We had dinner in the hotel's cafe and had a weird waiter with a squeaky voice. He was rather strange and fussy. After that we watched Germany and Cameroon rumble in the World Cup. The poor referee had to issue something like 14 yellow cards and even two red ones during the game. It was brutal. Germany won and eliminated Cameroon from further World Cup activity.

#### Wednesday, June 12, 2002

We left Kyōto by train and headed toward Himeji, which is southwest from Kyōto

and in the direction we needed to travel to get back to Shikoku. Himeji is the site of the best castle in Japan, the Himeji-Jo. It was built by Hideyoshi in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He married his son off to Tokugawa Ieyasu's granddaughter, Princess Sen when she was only 7. Eventually when Ieyasu took over Japan, Hideyoshi's son and his mother had to commit suicide and Princess Sen was married to someone else (Lord Honda, I think -- I wonder if his progeny are responsible for my car?) and lived a more-or-less comfortable life in this castle. At least that's what the brochure said. It didn't look all that comfortable to me. I believe Ieyasu himself might have lived there for a time.

The castle has six or seven floors and sits on top of a hill overlooking the city. It's painted all white and is called the white egret or white crane or some such (I couldn't find it in my brochure. I did eventually find it called "*shirasagi*" in a guidebook. *Shirasagi* means white heron, but the guidebooks I consulted said "crane" or "egret". I thought cranes, egrets, and herons were all different. I guess people who write guidebooks aren't physical chemists who get confused about such inconsistencies.) Anyway, we trooped up all six or seven floors. There were lots of little slits out of which one could shoot arrows and guns and larger holes through which one could dump boiling oil or small boulders. The stairs between floors were quite steep and narrow. In one of the top floors they had a bunch of display cases containing artifacts related to the building. Among these were some paintings said to have been done by some of the former lords, books of poems written by former people (*waka* poems?), some ledgers, diaries, etc. and also some more regular artifacts such as swords, shells, armor, etc.

The castle also had lots of gates, court yards, interesting roof ornaments with the crests of various of the castle's lords on the ends of the tiles (and one with a cross on it -- I presume from before the Tokugawas killed all the Christians and drove them out of Japan). One courtyard was called the *harakiri-maru* (suicide circle) and another place had a famous well in which a young servant girl had been thrown following her murder by an evil chief retainer of the castle's lord (he tortured her to death in

revenge for her having foiled his plot to attack and kill his lord, and thereby take over the fief). To this day, "they" say you can hear her wailing from the well.

After the castle, we went through the gardens next to it, the Koko-en. They had something like a nine interconnecting gardens, tea, herb, rock, flower, etc. We liked them ok, but I don't remember the gardens as being nearly so nice as those in Okayama or the temples of Kyōto. Interestingly, I think I got some of my best garden pictures in this place.

We caught a 6 p.m. train out of Himeji and headed toward Okayama where we would catch a train back to Gomen in Shikoku. We had a really lovely ride through southern Honshu in the late afternoon and early evening. The countryside was covered with little rice paddies and small gardens in the plain where the rail bed was laid, and had mountains on either side. It was very calming, especially with the light and shadow golden created by the late afternoon sun.

The train out of Okayama left around 7:30. Shortly before the train left, we heard that there wouldn't be a woman on the train selling *bento* boxes, so we jumped off the train and snagged three from a woman standing forlornly on the platform. It was pretty ordinary fare. Zachary wasn't sure his sashimi was all that fresh. My rice was so gloppy I could barely separate it enough to eat. It's one thing to eat mouth-sized globs of rice, and quite another to hold a huge glob in one's chopsticks whilst nibbling around it's edges. Anyway, it was nice not to make the whole trip hungry.

As the train pulled out of the station, we suddenly noticed it had become dark. So we saw little of the Seto Inland Sea or of the mountains of Shikoku on our return trip. The train pulled into Gomen around 10 or 10:30. Zachary, who had a cell phone, had called the コミュニティ・センター and been told that they wouldn't be open if we arrived after 9 or 10. So we had to hunt up some place else for that night. First, however, we had to retrieve Zachary's car and put some gas in it. He had also called the woman where we had parked, and she said she'd leave it open with the keys, or perhaps Zachary had the keys. Whatever, they made some deal whereby we could just sneak in and take it. Then we

drove around looking for a gas station. The young men at the station we finally found open seemed happy to have something to do. They very cheerfully washed our windows and gave Zachary a cloth so he could swipe down the inside of the windshield as well. Near the gas station, we found a Holiday Inn (no kidding) that was open and which would take us.

Thursday, June 13, 2002

Hazel and I had breakfast at the Holiday Inn, then got Zachary up. We drove down the coast and stopped off in Aki to drop off our film to be developed. Then we headed further down the coast towards Muroto Cape. Before we got to the cape, however, we headed inland (perhaps from Nahari), across the island and came out on the opposite side at a town called Toyo. The drive through the mountains was gorgeous, of course. One interesting thing we noted in several places was that there seemed to be a lighter shade of green outlining some of the ridges. It seems that at one time they had cut firebreaks or something of the sort out of the cedar forests and something else had grown up in the cut spaces. That something was a lighter green and a smoother texture. I believe we got a decent picture of that, but perhaps it was just Zachary who did (nope, we have one).

Not too long after, we came out on the ocean coast at Toyo. We drove along the coast for a while. There seemed to be some places for fishing boats to unload, both visual and olfactory observations confirmed this. After a while we came to a place where there were some huge rocks standing along the ocean. Two were linked with a big rope. Zachary said they were husband and wife, although I'm not sure which was which. Anyway, we stopped and tried taking some pictures.

Shortly after that, we stopped at a roadside restaurant to have some lunch. We had some noodle kind of thing (*udon* or *soba*?) that was pretty good. While we were settling up, one of the women who ran the place started chatting with Zachary. Next thing we knew, the other woman working there came in with a plate of red things on it. They were about apricot size, but were red and textured like raspberries. Unlike raspberries, however, they had solid pits

inside. We had quite some discussion about these fruits that were called *yamamomo* or mountain something (peach?). Apparently one is supposed to swallow the pits. Then they travel through the intestines in a snaky fashion (lots of wiggling the hands around the tummy here) and they will clear out one's digestive system. Very good for one! So we tried it. The fruit was quite tasty and I managed to swallow the pits without problems. I think the women were impressed. Hazel wasn't impressed, nor was she interested in swallowing her pits. I'm not sure what she did. Whatever, they seemed to work. The next day my bowels cleared out quite nicely. Too bad I wasn't near a western-style toilet when they worked their magic.

After lunch, we headed along the road down to Cape Muroto and past it up the other side. Shortly after passing the point we headed inland to shrine no. 24 of the famous 88 shrines of Shikoku. Shikoku is known as a place for pilgrimages. The ideal is to take a summer off from school or work and walk the whole island, visiting each of the 88 shrines. Many people now do it in a week by doing the pilgrimage as part of a bus tour. We did see a few "real" pilgrims (*henro*) walking along, however, with their white suits of clothes, conical straw hats and walking staffs with jingley things on the top.

Anyway, we visited just the one, no. 24, the Hotsumisaki Ji. We had to walk up the hill, about 300 meters or 1000 feet. It was nice and peaceful up there. They had a couple large guardian deities near the entrance that were carved out of wood and were a bit the worse for wear. The only decent picture we got of them was of the toes of one. There were several small temples or shrines inside and a few neat statues. One of them had a woman with about 8 arms and another had a pilgrim of some sort. We went out through the pilgrimage center (*henro* センター) and past a couple more statues, one of an 11-headed something with a row of heads on top and a horse's head on top of that and a woman with 3 faces.

From the shrine, we drove up the hill to a lookout point, which happened, among other things, to overlook a "haunted" hotel. This was

a very strange looking poured cement structure with several small towers, which at one time in the not too distant past had been a hotel. It is now completely abandoned. A few weeks after we left, Zachary and some of his JET friends checked it out more closely, and found it pretty uninteresting considering that it was supposed to be haunted. The nice thing about the overlook, however, was the nice view we had of the sea off the point, and the swallows darting around in the clear-blue sky.

We drove along the coast again and stopped at Aki for our pictures. We had something like 12 to 15 rolls of film between us and it ended up costing a small fortune to have them processed, ¥27000 or about \$220. For that, we got developing, a set of prints, *and* each of our prints converted to electronic format and put on a CD. So I have electronic versions of our pictures from the first half of our trip. There seem to be lots of garden pictures, “uh, which one was this?” Some day, I might post these on a yahoo briefcase site so other people can see them.

We got back to Umaji and checked into the コミュニティー・センター around 5 p.m. Zachary signed us up for dinner there. He thought he might go off to Aki to have dinner with some of his JET friends, Jenny and Robin. I went to the *onsen*, then we went in to dinner around 7:30. Fortunately, we didn't have to order anything. Also fortunately, we didn't have a problem figuring out where to sit even though they'd changed our name tags. I have no idea what the new one said, but it sure as hell didn't say パイパー and didn't have the characters saying board of education that we'd had our first time around. Anyway, they just brought things, pickled vegetables, bamboo, carrot, green bean stuff we didn't recognize, some raw stuff which might have been chicken or veal, and some speckled gelatinous stuff; a little river fish that wasn't too bad (but not, apparently, the famous local *ayu*); *miso* soup, rice, etc. It was an ok dinner. Not something I might normally have but decent enough, and nice on the eyes.

Zachary came in about the time we were finishing up and was immediately hailed by a table of rowdy guys, one of which was his *jichou*

or assistant superintendent. They were having a meeting of some kind that apparently required a fair amount of lubrication to run properly. When we finished, they asked us to join them, so we did for a while. I tried to stick with beer, but they thought I should try some local *shochu* (?) that seems to be like ethanol. One makes it taste better, apparently, by dumping a couple of *umeboshi* into the drink. I managed to make some forester's life better by letting him have the rest of mine. They substituted it with a mixture of *shochu* and *gokkun*, which was quite lovely. One of the guys at the table spoke a little Spanish, so he and Hazel worked in that language a bit. Another guy seemed to be the father of the boy we met at Yanase Jr. High, Taro, just about the only kid whose name I managed to remember. I guess I picked the right one to remember. I told him I liked his kid (I did) and he was pleased to hear that. While I'm sure they wouldn't have minded our staying longer, Hazel and I managed to beg off a long night of drinking and headed back to our rooms while we were still reasonably steady on our feet.

#### Friday, June 14, 2002

Zachary had to go back to work this day, so he dragged us along to Umaji elementary. Whereas the first time we visited the elementary school, we hung with the lower grades, this time we hung with the 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders. We had met three of them before at English club. The 4<sup>th</sup> graders sang a couple of songs for us. Boy could those 10 or so kids put out a lot of volume. They had a decent pitch as well. They also whipped out their recorders and played a Carpenters' tune, “The Old Songs”. It seemed a strange place to hear the Carpenters. We would, of course, have preferred to hear some traditional Japanese folk songs, but I guess that's not what the kids do much these days. Oh well, they did a nice job.

We had lunch with the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Their teacher is Hamaji-sensi, Zachary's buddy and self-professed brother. For a change it wasn't Japanese style food, but consisted of a bread roll (like a small sub) and an aluminum dish of potatoes au gratin (ham, potatoes, chicken,...), some pickled things, a half kiwi, and milk.

Hamaji-sensei and Zachary prepared a small lesson plan. We worked in self-introduction, "Hello, my name is xxx." "Hello xxx, my name is Larry. I'm pleased to meet you." "I'm pleased to meet you." We all went around in a group and each kid did each other kid, plus all of us. I'm not sure that in a U.S. class all the kids would manage to make themselves do all the strange older visitors, but these kids did. I thought they did a nice job. They also asked Hazel and me questions and got to hear Zachary's story about my peanut butter eating and so forth. We had a good time with them. I gather a couple of the kids can be pains in the butt, but they were fine with us that day. Bratty kids are often like that.

This school day was short, so we got Zachary to go with us to the Umaji gift shop and bought some cedar and yuzu things. Then Zachary headed back to work and we headed back to the コミュニティー・センター for a nap and stuff. I went to the onsen, watched a bit of Japan beating Tunisia in World Cup (2-0), read out on the deck and so forth. Zachary showed up around 8 for dinner. He hadn't booked us at the コミュニティー・センター, and discovered his favorite place was closed that day. So he had to take us to his house and whip up some curry dishes and rice. We also had a little chocolate cake from Kobe that Zachary's principal had given us as return *omiyage*. We watched Korea slip past Portugal in World Cup (1-0) and noted that the U.S. had humiliated themselves by allowing Poland to beat them, 1-3. Still the U.S. got to move on to the final round of 16, something they hadn't done before, or not recently at least.

#### Saturday, June 15, 2002

Zachary's bandleader wanted to show us the sites of Kōchi. So after breakfast, we met up with a couple of his minions (drummer/Shinto priest and a young man who is essentially their roadie, i.e. he comes to all the gigs and takes pictures but doesn't play anything) and started off. The bandleader had stayed the previous night in Aki, so we had to retrieve him there. Anyway, they took us to the Ryugado Caves, thence a wax museum about Sakamoto Ryōma, and then the Katsurahama beach.

The Ryugado Caves are like underground caverns everywhere, I suppose, full of interesting rock formations build up by the action of mineral-laden water dripping on stone. So there are patterns that build up images and erosion that wears away parts of formations. In the end you get things that look like skulls, fried eggs, water falls, flowers, etc. It was pretty nice inside, and cool as well. I tried finding resonances in some places, but the hard rock doesn't have the resonances you can get in softer places (like bathroom stalls). The frequencies are higher. In the same area as the caverns they had a little museum where they had some of the famous Tosa long-tailed roosters. Their tails can grow to something like 30 meters in length (almost 100 feet). Unfortunately, I'm not sure the guys with the long tails were all that happy being confined to standing on one place with their tails draped over various pegs in their display boxes. They also had little statues of Tosa Fighting Dogs, but we didn't actually see any of those. These dogs do a sort of sumo-style of fighting, i.e. they try to push each other outside a circle.

After the caves we went to the Sakamoto Ryōma wax museum. They had something like 25 different scenes depicting the life of Kōchi's most illustrious son. Ryōma's mother died when he was 12, and his sister, Otome, took over bringing him up. She was an interesting character in her own right, I think. She was alleged to be 175 cm tall and weighed over 100 kg. Well, I'm almost 175 cm (5' 9") tall, but nowhere near 220 lbs. She would have been a big woman today, but in Japan in 1850 she must have been a considerable presence. She is said to have excelled at swimming, Judo, horseback riding (I feel sorry for the horses) and fencing (perhaps *kendo*). She told her daughter, "there is nothing that a woman can't do if it can be done by men." For Japan, she was at least 150 years before her time. In Tosa they called such women "*hachikin*" and are proud to claim them. I believe the rest of Japan quails at the concept of *hachikin* women even today.

Anyway, Ryōma was one of the most important figures in bringing about the Meiji restoration, as I probably already mentioned, and Kōchi's favorite son. I had an English

guidebook for the museum, so I kept trying to read about all the things in each of the scenes and kept falling behind everyone else. It was pretty interesting. They also had a couple of scenes thrown in from other things, e.g. Cleopatra, Ronald Regan (yes, it did say "Ronald"), Marilyn Monroe, etc. I thought most of those were rather cheesy, but I liked the Ryōma stuff.

After the wax museum, or perhaps before, I don't seem to have it written down, we went up a hill where there was a small European-style castle. We couldn't go inside, but the main point of interest in the location was the view over the plains of Kōchi with the city off in the distance.

From there we went to Katsurahama beach. It is quite a beautiful beach. On one end is a hill with a little shrine on top. The beach is fairly coarse sand. We walked along the beach, but Hazel is the only one who actually walked barefoot and did any wading. I just couldn't figure out the shoes and socks off and on thing.

As we were walking along the beach I looked down and noticed a little varicolored pile of stones. I started looking around some more and came up with a little collection of white, black, green, brown, maroon and gray. It turns out that one of the things for which the beach is noted is its six colors of stones. I discovered that one could even buy little bags of varicolored stones for about ¥100 (\$0.85). I'd already made my collection, however, so didn't need to bother buying one. We hiked up the little hill with the shrine on it and looked out at the sea and more beach on beyond. The water was different colors in different places, some quite green, others gray, and they had birds flying around (a couple hawks even -- perhaps more kites?). It was lovely up there. We got a couple of decent pictures.

After this we checked into our hotel. It was in the center of Kōchi. The Palace Hotel was small, but decent. The restaurant associated with it was called the EZE Palace Beer Village. It was actually quite nice and respectable -- little sort of thatched wooden booths around the edges, a nice outdoor patio, etc. We had breakfast there two days and our dinner there on the second day.

This day, however, our dinner was rather special. Zach's band mates had a treat in mind for us. We gathered in the lobby around 6 p.m. or so and headed off through the streets of Kōchi. The place we found was down a set of stairs, along a short hall, then up into a Japanese style room off to the left. Naturally, we had to take off our shoes and sit on the floor. The dinner was laid out along a long, low table and was quite a spread. Unfortunately for Hazel, most of it didn't appear to be cooked. It was, however, a delight to the eyes. There was a plate of sushi in which the rice, which was under the bits of fish, octopus, etc., had been laced with bits of ginger. As such, our hostess assured us, we didn't need to mask the taste with soy and *wasabi*. It was pretty good. Then we had some sashimi, or raw fish. Then they brought in some "grilled" *bonito* or *maguro* or some kind of fish (like tuna), which was slightly seared on the outside, but otherwise still raw and jiggling on the inside. Still, with plenty of *wasabi* in the soy sauce, it wasn't bad. Every once in a while our hostess would bring out a new dish with lots of chatter and flourish. Actually, she seemed a nice homey person and Hazel and I both liked her even though we couldn't understand her. She succeeded, however, in making us feel at home.

We had some barely-cooked beef that was considered quite a delicacy. Then they brought out some little cray fish or shrimps or something of the kind. We were supposed to eat them like potato chips, shells, claws, legs, eyes and all. Actually, they weren't bad, they *were* sort of like eating chips. We had some snail things in swirly shells like a conch, but small, only about an inch and a half or two long. We were to pry the inhabitants from their shells with toothpicks. They were cooked, actually, and tasted sort of like clams. I brought my shells home for show and tell.

We also had some *chichibu*. They are small fish, perhaps 3 or 4 inches long and were the subject of one of Zachary's early adventures in Umaji. One day last August when not much else was going on Hamaji-sensei took Zachary into the mountains fishing for *chichibu*. Anyway, they were also cooked, and one just ate them whole, head, fins and all. Zachary says he doesn't much care for *chichibu*. I don't

remember that they were particularly objectionable. On the other hand, I wouldn't go out of my way to have some more. Anyway, we had quite a time of it there. When we finished, Hazel managed to escape back to the hotel, but Zachary and I had a night out on the town with the boys in the band, and I made my debut as an international lounge singer.

The bandleader said something about a strip club and I mumbled something about not having been to one in a while. So, I thought that might be where we were headed. I guess not. Our first stop turned out to be a "snack" which is a small Japanese style bar where you have a hostess who serves up small talk, flirtation and extremely watered down whisky. Our first hostess seemed a little on the plump side compared to most Japanese women, but she had a jolly face, and seemed nice. She served up our drinks and kept refilling them after each sip or two. I was still thinking we might be in a strip club but didn't think she was exactly dressed in things that came off easily. Eventually I decided we weren't in a strip club, which was fine with me.

After a while our hostess disappeared and a more attractive and slimmer young woman took her place. That seemed ok too. Our bandleader seemed to think the woman claimed to be Chinese. The young man whom I've called a roadie seemed to get along with her just pretty well. Then this woman disappeared and an older, less attractive hostess showed up for a bit. I was thinking that they were doing some kind of bait-and-switch routine, but perhaps not, the "Chinese" one reappeared soon thereafter and stayed with us, flirting mostly with the "roadie".

While we were sitting there, a group of 3 or 4 men out for a night on the town came in. One of the younger ones said something like, "Oh foreigners!", to which Zachary replied, "Is that a problem?" The young man, a bit taken aback with the fluent response said of course not and so forth. That group seemed to inherit the jolly, plump hostess. We were basically seated in an alcove that had a bench type seat along the walls. There were two tables, one for us and one for the other guys. So in essence we were sort of

facing off across from each other. The hostesses kneeled or sat on the floor between the tables.

I believe the other guys first started up doing *karaoke* (it's kah-rah-oh-kay, not carry-o-kee), or perhaps our bandleader suggested it first, but they got the head start. Anyway, the bandleader had heard from Zachary that I sang, so he wanted to check me out, I think. I said I'd try it, but it would need to be something I knew with some help on the words. Help with words is part of *karaoke* of course. One queues up a song and the words pop up on a TV screen while an accompaniment blares along. It's almost like "follow the bouncing ball" from the old Sing Along with Mitch (or whoever) days. They had a catalogue with the songs in it. Unfortunately, the catalogue was in Japanese. Eventually, I figured out that some songs were listed in katakana (the written characters for foreign words), so I looked for those sets of characters and tried to figure out what they were saying. After working away for a while, I figured out that ポルアンカー [po-roo ah-n-kah] was most likely Paul Anka, someone I remembered from my youth, and that ダイアナ [dah-ee-ah-nah] might well be the song "Diana". So I decided to go with that one. Sure enough, the song that came up was the old Paul Anka tune, "Diana" ("I'm so young and you're so old, this my darling I've been told ...").

Actually our band leader started us off with some Elvis song (エルビス-- eh-ru-bee-soo), "You Don't have to Say you Love Me". I could remember parts of it, so we passed the mike back and forth. I believe I ended up the song. The people from the other group were polite in their applause (we were sharing the *karaoke* machine). Later, after they'd done a couple of numbers (not very well, the young man who wasn't so sure about the "foreigners" was pretty terrible, poor thing -- he was out with his boss), I did the "Diana" song. The other group got up and did the twist (actually the twist was a few years after "Diana", but youngsters wouldn't know that, it seemed old-fashioned enough to them) and when we were finished the young man with the foreigner problem said I was the best. I suppose those singing lessons I took with Luther paid off in a

way after all. Perhaps we did some good for “internationalization” that night, i.e. I was helping Zachary do his job. Zachary did “La Bamba” and did a quite nice job of it too. I’d been told he was a *karoke* god, and got to see it first hand.

After a while, we left the snack and the other group and headed off for other places. We ended up in a jazz piano bar. The gentleman at the piano was a Japanese American about my age. I thought he was pretty good. I think the others at our table liked him as well. After a while he broke into song, and I was amazed at the sound. He sounded just like Willy Nelson to me. I’m sure my friend Norma at church (my greatest fan who thinks I sound like ol’ Willy) would have liked to have been there. After a while it dawned on me that he was singing the old Drifter’s tune, “Stand by Me”. The reason it took so long was that he was doing it at a much slower tempo and in a style quite different from Ben E. King the lead singer of the Drifters at that time. I likened the rendition to being more like Willy Nelson on pot than Ben E. King on coke. I liked the different way of doing it, however, unlike the atrocity that was alleged to be the “Star Spangled Banner” by someone I never heard of named Anastasia (the name of Jessica’s late pet rat -- I think the rat had a better sense of pitch and intonation) at this year’s All Star Game.

Anyway, when the guy finished his set, the owner of the bar sent him over to chat with us. I think he said he’d been born in the U.S., or perhaps it was his father, but that they’d been sent back to Japan at the outbreak of World War II (in which case he would have been a bit older than I). He also had a Spanish grandfather or grandmother or something. A real person of the world. Our band leader got chatting with him and suggested that he have Zachary sing a couple of numbers with him. So after he finished his break he went back, played a tune or two and called Zachary and the bandleader up. They did some Beatle’s songs, “Yesterday” and “Let it Be”. Initially, the two of them were singing along, but fairly quickly the bandleader snuck away and left Zachary on his own. Zach did a nice job, naturally.

During the next break, when the guy joined us again, the bandleader suggested that I sing something. I guess the guy is used to such requests, because he seemed willing. So after he played a couple numbers (one was “Happy Birthday” for a young couple out celebrating same), he called me up. We started with “Stardust”, something he’d been doing on the piano when we first came in, although he didn’t sing that one. After that, we looked for something else and settled on “My Blue Heaven”. It went pretty well. There was a young couple at a table near the piano that was celebrating a joint birthday. So I pretended to be singing to them. They didn’t throw any sushi, slices of lime, or *umeboshi*, so I suppose they didn’t mind too much. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, and I was singing romantic songs after all. It’s a good thing I went through that period of learning Tin Pan Alley songs when I was taking lessons around the time Zachary was born. Anyway, despite the beer at dinner, the watered whisky at the snack, and the Guinness at the piano bar, my voice was working better than I had expected it to. I have no idea why, but I wasn’t particularly tight. Of course I wasn’t trying to sing tenor opera arias either.

Anyway, we eventually decided we should head back to our hotel. Hazel responded quickly to my knock on the door. That was nice or her. She had slept fine, woke up just enough to open the door and then fell back asleep. She didn’t know what the time was, and I wasn’t about to tell her.

### Sunday, June 16, 2002

Originally, we were going to meet relatively early and go off to visit the Kōchi-Jo [castle]. Given the lateness of our previous night, however, we met not so early. Hazel and I got up for breakfast at the EZE Palace Beer Village. Eventually Zachary joined us. When we were done, we found his band mates out in the lobby waiting for us. We headed off to the castle.

Like most castles that were put up for fortification, the Kōchi-Jo sits on a hill over looking the city. Instead of being surrounded by a moat, it is now surrounded by a park. So we walked into the park and began ascending the

steps up to the castle. One of the first sites we saw was a statue of a gentleman with a long, forked beard. He looked rather like a Bolshevik revolutionary. I thought that a bit strange given that most Japanese don't have much in the way of beards. This guy was Itagaki Taisuke and he was one of those folks from Tosa (Kōchi area) who were important in the early years of the Meiji restoration.

As we started up the steps to the castle, two Japanese schoolgirls stopped Zachary to chat about something. I have no idea what they wanted. Certainly it wasn't to interview him in English, and they had no interest in me (I don't blame them; were I a young girl, I'd find Zachary more fascinating as well). I'm not sure how they knew they could talk to Zach. Perhaps he'll tell us what was up one of these days.

At the top of the steps, just before the castle gates proper, was a statue of a rather imposing woman standing next to a very sturdy looking horse. She was the wife of Yamauchi Katsutoyo who was the guy who first built the castle in 1601. Her name was Chiyo and she is famous in her own right as being the archetype of a loyal wife. Apparently, they were poor. Katsutoyo wanted a magnificent horse so that he could ride it and impress Oda Nobunaga (the most powerful war lord in Japan near the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). Chiyo came up with a stash coins that she had been secretly hoarding (a wedding present from her parents, perhaps) and gave it to her husband so he could buy the horse. Nobunaga was indeed impressed and thereafter the fortunes of the Yamauchi household improved greatly. Some say wives in Japan still justify having secret savings so they can be like Yamauchi Katsutoyo's wife.

When I first saw the statue, I figured she was one of those *hachikin* women. She looked pretty formidable to me. Somehow, I'm not sure I've yet integrated the concept of *hachikin* women also being dutiful wives. Certainly, Sakamoto Otome wasn't a dutiful wife. She thought her husband was a weakling, so divorced him.

Anyway we wandered on into the castle and climbed up its various sets of steep stairs. It had something like 5 or 6 floors. It was quite nice inside, I believe, and probably had suits of

armor and the like as well. We were getting rather tired by then, so it's pretty much a blur. The one thing I do remember was that the castle was essentially rebuilt around 1950 or so. They tried to use the old construction techniques and had photos of the reconstruction process and an elaborate model.

When we exited the castle, Zachary's band mates bade us farewell and headed back to Umaji or where ever they had to go. We wandered through the Kōchi Sunday market. The market begins at the bottom of the hill next to the castle and continues along for several blocks. Actually, I think we walked pretty rapidly through the market in search of some lunch, then took a more leisurely tour through it after we'd eaten something.

The market essentially consisted of a number of booths lining the walkway. People were selling whole fish, shredded fish, vegetables, craft types of things, jewelry, old musical instruments, clothing, and so forth. Zachary got me a little bamboo crab in honor of my impending birthday (my sign is cancer). Hazel looked a coral necklace or some such thing but didn't find anything she liked. It was rather fun to walk along and check stuff out. We were getting rather worn down, however, so eventually went back to our hotel and crashed in the mid afternoon.

During our copious naptime, we found a bit of a jungyo (a sort of mini sumo tournament held at various places between the big 15-day ones which occur six times a year) on TV and watched some of that. It was a kind of single-elimination affair. We got to see about three or four rounds. Chiyotaikai ended up beating Asashoryu for the title. I think it was where Kaio got hurt, i.e. just before the grand tournament in Nagoya in early to mid July. As I write this, nearing the end of the Nagoya basho, it's looking like the championship might come down to a battle between Chiyotaikai and Asashoryu, although Musashimaru is far from out of it at the moment given that he still has those two guys to face (Chiyotaiki did indeed win).

We went for a walk around 6 and found the Harimayabashi (a famous old-style bridge) and a special animated clock on the side of some

building, although the clock finished its special effects before we got to it. Then we headed back to the EZE Palace Beer Village for a nice dinner. We finished the night watching Spain beat Ireland in World Cup after a 3-2 shoot-out victory. Zachary and I were rooting for the Irish (because we've decided we have Celtic forebears -- it just *feels* that way to us) while Hazel seemed to be going with her teaching inclinations, and backed the Spanish.

### Monday, June 17, 2002

This was our leaving day. We got up had breakfast at the EZE Palace Beer Village and headed off to the Kōchi airport. Zachary sat with us for a while then headed off. Then he came back and sat with us some more. Eventually he had to leave because he had to get to work. We headed off to the gate and boarded our airplane. We took a last fond look at the display of Umaji's yuzu products in the airport with the rosy-cheeked people (and dogs and fish and mountain caribou etc.) looking up in the air at planes flying over their heads. Soon they would be looking up at us.

When we got to Osaka, we had to recheck our baggage, get re-inspected, frisked, etc. Once through the line, we had a bit of time left. I hadn't had any lunch, so I found a place near the gate that sold me a bowl of shredded beef on *udon* noodles and broth and so forth. We took off from Osaka around 4:20 p.m. We arrived in Detroit about the same time, I believe. The flight wasn't so hot. The plane's video

display was on the blink in our section, so we couldn't watch movies. Then we had some rather strange flight attendants. One of them looked a bit like Stone Cold Steve Austin (beefy with a shaved head -- Austin is a 'rassler who plays on being a redneck with a bad attitude) and had an attitude not a whole lot more pleasant. Another was a former dumb blond who got old and burned out. In honor of returning to U.S. life, I read *Summer of '49* by David Halberstam. It's a baseball book in which, naturally, the Red Sox fall a bit short at the end of an exciting season and the damn Yankees win yet another one.

At Detroit we went through customs and got on a plane for Boston. We arrived around 6 p.m., I believe. As we were leaving the terminal, I thought I saw a Logan Express bus at the stop.

I started running to catch it. The bus driver was preparing to drive off, but when he saw me banging on the door, he seemed perfectly willing to get out of his seat, stow our bags under the bus, and let us on board. So we made it back to Woburn pretty quickly. We waited for a taxi for a while, then decided to call Justin. About the time I got him on the phone, a taxi showed up. We got to our house around 8 p.m. Justin, Kim, and Brewster all pretended to be happy to see us. We could tell, however, that they had all had a fine time by themselves and would probably not have minded had we extended our stay for several more weeks. Our bank accounts, however, would not have been so happy.

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