

Adventure to Kansai



March 27, 2010: Today is the first day of an extended hitchhiking adventure to southern Japan.

I left home at 7:30AM. The weather was unusually fair for normally-cloudy Niigata. The first stop was Kariwa, a village next to Kashiwazaki city and home to the [largest nuclear power plant in the world](#). Since a major earthquake just off shore Kariwa in the Sea of Japan, two of the 9 nuclear reactors are again producing electricity.



Nobuo and Miwako
at their wedding
party

After arriving Kariwa a little before 10AM, I spent the next two and a half hours with Nobuo and Miwako, friends who I came to know when hitchhiking four years ago.

By 12:30 the beautiful weather turned cold and cloudy with intermittent snow. I had hoped to hitchhike all the way to Otsu City just before Kyoto this day, but when a man offered me a ride to Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture instead, I grabbed the offer. I knew that Nagano would be better weather, and my appointment to meet a friend in Otsu was not till the next day on Sunday.

(To be continued!)

Adventure Returning Home to Niigata

City



Mr. and Mrs. Ii who went out of their way to take me to Niigata City

March 22, 2010: It was unusually windy with a few snow flurries, and the temperature was just one degree above freezing when I left my friend's house in Aomori city at 7:30 AM to walk to the National Highway route 7. I've hitchhiked on this highway before, but this morning people seemed unusually hard and unconcerned. Nearly everybody was ignoring me and the others who didn't would shake their heads or cross their arms meaning "no!" After an hour and a half and walking several kilometers I got desperate and send an email text message to my mate for her to pray for me.

Within only a matter of **seconds** after sending that text message requesting prayer, I noticed a car stopped about 100 meters up the road and started walking toward it. Not every stopped car necessarily means the driver is offering me a ride, but after walking a bit closer, a man got out of the car and waved me to come! It was a father with his teenage son. They took me to the Aomori Chuo Interchange which is an entrance to the Tohoku Expressway. It was only 3 kilometers further up the road, but they saved me at least another 30 minutes walking.

I had originally intended to take Route 7 back home which is the same route that I came on, but it was already 9AM and I figured perhaps the Tohoku Expressway would be faster even though I may have longer waits. The wind was strong and I began to feel cold. It was good to be wearing a heavy winter coat and woolen hat this trip.

After about an hour a man stopped and offered me a ride to Omagari City in Akita Prefecture. I rejoiced because this would take me to the Shiwa service area past Morioka which is about 200 kilometers further or over 1/3 of the way back home!

After arriving in Shiwa, I remembered that I had quite a long wait there last

year during a previous trip. But this time after only 10 minutes a couple with a young son offered me a ride. They were going all the way to Chiba which meant I could go with them as far as the Adatara Service area just before the junction of the Ban'etsu expressway! This is as good as it gets, for we arrived at Adatara at 3:30PM or two hours before sunset. I needed only one more good ride!

The driver was an engineer working with lasers and fiber optic cable production. I commented to him that such technology must be extremely complex, and yet it doesn't compare with the complexity of the human cell. He smiled when he realized the conversation was leading to [creation by intelligent design](#).

The engineer was also interested in what I had to say about the fall of the American government in 1913 when [Woodrow Wilson sold the American economy to a private investor corporation](#).

At Adatara after only a 15-minute wait, a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ii from Toyama, took me the final 120 some kilometers back to Niigata. May God bless them greatly for their kindness! They had to get off the expressway to drop me off which meant it cost them another 1000 yen in toll to get back on.

Germs cause cancer!



✖ “The idea that bacteria cause cancer is considered preposterous by most physicians. However, despite the antagonistic view of the American Cancer Society and medical science, there is ample evidence in the published peer-reviewed literature that strongly suggests that ‘cancer microbes’ cause cancer.” – Alan Cantwell, MD. [Read the rest of this article.](#)

Back on the road! – Adventure to Aomori, March 2010



A couple soon to be married who took me from Murakami city toward Yamagata

Princess, the Shih Tsu dog that I have been caring for since December is now with new owners. I'm now free to continue to travel Japan, meet people, share my [faith](#), and visit [Family International](#) Homes throughout the country.



Mt. Chokai as seen from
Sakata City in Yamagata
Prefecture

On February 19th I left home and arrived in Aomori city the next day. It was beautiful weather the first day. The view of Mount Chokai from Sakata City in Yamagata prefecture was outstanding! It was completely hidden by clouds the last time I passed it last November. Nine drivers, all very pleasant people, took me 270 kilometers to Akita city where I stayed overnight. There was very little waiting time between rides, and I arrived before sundown.

I expected continued fair weather but the next day was cloudy with light rain. A small fold-up umbrella I always carry with me was sufficient protection. A truck driver took me as far as Odate city which is just before Aomori. I considered this nothing short of fantastic because only 7% of the vehicles I ride in are trucks, and a truck going a good distance was just what I needed on a rainy day.

The last driver, Mr. Tooru, took me to the very door of my destination.

A look at Ubuntu 10.4



Fedora Firewall GUI. The services checked in this picture do not represent my personal configuration.

I downloaded the latest version of Ubuntu Linux, version 10.4, and installed it as a [virtual machine](#) with [VMWare](#) on my [Fedora 12](#) pc. I also ran it as a live CD from boot. I'm still not convinced that Ubuntu is better than Fedora for me. Ubuntu is missing two GUIs (software with a graphic user interface) I use all the time in Fedora. There is

- no firewall GUI
- no services GUI

The basic configuration screen of the Fedora firewall GUI is clear to understand and easy to use to open the IP ports the user needs to use, and to block the ones not needed. This makes for better security, and it makes it easier to set up other features such as networking with the other PCs on the property.

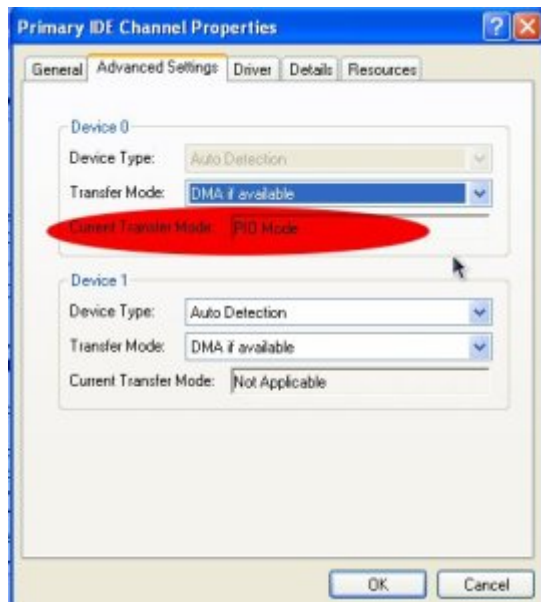
The services GUI makes it easy to turn off services I don't really need which conserves resources. I remember that previous versions of Ubuntu had a services GUI, but it wasn't as comprehensive as Fedora's.

There are firewall GUIs for Ubuntu you can download and install, like Firestarter, but none are as easy to use as the Fedora firewall GUI. Firestarter requires a basic knowledge of TCP/IP protocols and ports, but the Fedora firewall GUI does not.

I really think that Fedora is not only a more mature Linux distro than Ubuntu, but it's also *easier* to tweak to do what one needs to do.

Another problem with Ubuntu 10.4 is I couldn't install Flashplayer on my 64 bit system. I had no problem with this in Fedora.

Dramatically restoring the performance of an exceedingly slow Windows XP machine



Last night a young lady asked me to look at her Windows XP laptop. It was running much slower than it did when she first got it. Usually, I first consider that the system is probably infected with malware or spyware, and I installed and ran [SuperAntiSpyware](#) to scan the C drive of her PC. But later I realized that she, being the type of girl she is, would not be going to dangerous websites from where she would be infected. SuperAntiSpyware reported no malware present. I then remembered that the primary IDE channel of a Windows XP system sometimes reverts from DMA to PIO. The graphic on the right shows what the current transfer mode should **not** be!

IDE stands for Integrated Drive Electronics. It refers to the electronics of either your hard disk or DVD drive. In this case, the hard disk is in question.

DMA stands for Direct Memory Access, a technique for transferring data from the main memory to a device (like your hard disk) without passing it through the CPU (central processing unit, the computer's brain).

PIO stands for Programmed Input/Output, a method of transferring data between two devices that *uses* the computer's CPU.

PIO is the older and slower method of data transfer. DMA is at least 10 times faster than PIO from my personal observation. This means that if the IDE primary channel is set for PIO, this will slow down the read and write speed of your hard disk by at least 10 times which dramatically slows down the entire system! Windows XP will automatically revert from DMA to PIO if there are too many DMA errors. In such a case, it may be a sign your hard disk is beginning to fail.

You can check the if the transfer mode of your hard disk is DMA or not with the procedure below.

1. Click Start
2. Click Control Panel
3. Click Switch to Classic View (if you are not there already)
4. Double-click the System applet to open it.
5. Click on the Hardware tab to open it
6. Click on Device Manager to open it
7. Click on the plus sign of IDE ATA/ATAPI controllers to expand it
8. Right click on Primary IDE Channel
9. Left click on Properties
10. Click on the Advanced Settings tab
11. Look at the current transfer mode of Device 0. It should say Ultra DMA Mode with a number after it as shown in the picture. If it says PIO Mode, this is the reason for your slow PC.



Ultra DMA mode

If you see that the current transfer mode of the primary IDE channel on your PC is PIO, you may be able to reset it back to ultra DMA mode by [downloading and running this script](#). Just right click the and left click "save link as" to save the file. Windows may save it as a text file by adding a .txt after the real extension of .vbs If so, you would need to rename the file before you can run it by deleting the .txt, and to do that you may have to change the Windows default setting to show registered file extensions.

After you run the script, reboot and check the primary IDE channel settings again. If it is restored back to ultra DMA mode, congratulations! If not, the only fix would be to change the hard disk altogether to a new one or buy a new PC.

[Aspartame, Brain Cancer & the FDA](#)



Beware of consuming any so called sweet sugarless products containing [aspartame](#)!

Using Gnome Shell



Screenshot of Gnome 2.8 desktop

I installed a beta version of the new [Gnome Shell desktop environment](#) on my Fedora Linux PC, and it seems to be very cool indeed! And it's free, not only free in the meaning of "freedom" but even free as in "free lunch."

[Gnome](#) is the standard desktop graphical environment for many [Linux distributions](#), including [Fedora](#), the Linux distribution I've been using on my PC since February 2005. Another popular Linux desktop environment is [KDE](#). Some people like it better than Gnome, because it looks a bit more like Windows®, but I found KDE buggy and unstable, at least it was 5 years ago, and stuck with Gnome. There are even more desktop environments besides these two.

The first screenshot shows my normal Gnome desktop using a top bar to show open applications, and a bottom toolbar showing the standard Gnome toolbar. The wallpaper contains a not so subliminal message.

By default the Gnome toolbars are on the opposite sides, but like to change them because it's more what I was used to when I worked in Windows®. Click any of the pictures to see an enlargement.

This screenshot is of the Gnome Shell after first running it. Notice the Gnome applets are now missing with the bottom toolbar gone. Maybe later I'll figure out how to add them again. Or possibly that feature is still not

available in this beta version of Gnome Shell.



Gnome Shell after startup

Here's how it looks like after clicking on "Activities" in the top left corner!!



Gnome Shell after clicking on
Activities

All open applications are in the right side of the screen. Just clicking on one of the icons show the application to a full screen! The area on the left shows all the folders I have for easily finding files.

When I click on the time display on the top bar, a calendar drops down and stays down until I click on the time display a second time. Cool! Click on the graphic below to see it more clearly.



Gnome Shell with dropdown calendar

Eat your hearts out, Windows® lovers!