

Continents of the world form the islands of Japan



Just take a very close look at the figure and describe what you see! Click it to see an enlargement. Clicking the enlargement will make it yet larger to see more detail.

The figure is courtesy of Dr. Nakasato from Nagoya. I was introduced to him through my friend, Yoko Ishikawa of Tokyo.

As you can see, major features of Japan are relatively close in position to those features of other countries. For example, the largest lake in Japan, Lake Biwa, is close in position with the largest lake in the world, the Caspian Sea! Is this a coincidence? Or was it purposely designed by the Creator to show the importance of Japan in the final days of man's rule on earth? All comments are welcome.

End of year 2011 hitchhike analysis



The graph shows the distances I traveled over the past 7 years in Japan by hitchhiking.



Since I've been keeping records from August 2003, the grand total of distance traveled is 124,321 kilometers in 2338 vehicles. As you can see, I traveled a bit further this year than last. But the prognosis for 2012 will probably be less traveling. I have more work locally.

[Final hitchhike adventure of 2011](#)



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

December 22, 2011: I was invited to attend a meeting in Tokyo of the NPO Leap

High, 300 kilometers from home. It had been raining all day yesterday and today the weather forecast predicted the same, but by 10AM it stopped raining to the point I ventured outside and walked to the highway.

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

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

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

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

On Christmas Eve I hitchhiked in 2 vehicles back to Niigata. The first car, young lovers, Shuhei and Natsumi, took me to Kamisato Service area. The second car was a lady, Mrs. Itou, going to Tokamachi in Niigata and would therefore be getting off the expressway at Muika Machi. I asked Mrs. Itou if she knows my Tokamachi friends, Keiji and Miyoko and their family, and she said that she was one of the caretakers of their youngest daughter, Marin, at the Hokuetsu Preschool! I immediately phoned Keiji and told him Mrs. Itou had picked me up. He was really glad to say the least. I would have gone with Mrs. Itou to Tokamachi and visited Keiji, but he said he wouldn't be home then. Instead Mrs. Itou took me to the Muika Machi train station from where I took a train the rest of the way home. It was past 5PM and too dark to hitchhike.

[Nietzsche's views on Darwinism](#)

To all my friends who hold both humanism and evolution as truth: Check out what one of your mentors has to say!

"What surprises me most when I survey the broad destinies of man is that I always see before me the opposite of that which Darwin and his school see or want to see today: selection in favor of the stronger, better-constituted, and the progress of the species.

Precisely the opposite is palpable: the elimination of the lucky strokes, the uselessness of the more highly developed types, the inevitable dominion of the average even the sub-average types. If we are not shown why man should be an exception among creatures, I incline to the prejudice that the school of Darwin has been deluded everywhere.” – Friedrich Nietzsche

Mass Media Mind Manipulation



I found some great quotes exposing how the media is covertly molding the opinions of those who have not yet been enlightened to the tactics of the ruling Elite of this world. This is taken from an article by Randy Lavello, June 2, 2003, called “Mass Media Mind Manipulation and the World of Illusion.” Unfortunately, the website has gone offline.

The main concept of mind control, in the book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (by George Orwell), was to cause a person to ‘doublethink.’ Orwell explains ‘doublethink’ as a willingness “to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed.” For example, the U.S. places Saddam Hussein in power, arms him to the teeth, then declares him a menace to the world and attacks him. We are supposed to forget that Donald Rumsfeld handed Saddam a briefcase – the Weapons of Mass Destruction kit! If I hand a person a gun, then shoot him, does that make me a hero? We are supposed to ‘doublethink’ and not care how many times the Federal Government lies to us, yet still believe every word they say at present. When our nation blows something up it is called an ‘operation.’ When anyone else blows something up it is called ‘terrorism.’ By this interpretation, terrorism is defined as using a bomb without dropping it from a plane or delivering it by a missile! Because they

don't spend the money on high-tech gear, they're terrorists!

There was a War on Illiteracy – more people are illiterate. There was a War on Drugs – more drugs hit the street. Now there's a War on Terror – a war on a concept, which will, of course, bring us more terrorism. We see the results of these so-called 'wars,' yet we 'doublethink' and ignore the facts.

Fun translating text from Japanese to English

One of my jobs is doing text translations on PC from Japanese to English. I use Google translate in the process, but only as a double check to make sure I didn't miss any phrases or words. I found Google does a fairly decent job translating Indo-European languages. I studied Russian and discovered that Google is OK to translate texts such as emails in Russian. An example from Bible text of Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The Russian Bible says:

Блаженны миротворцы, ибо они будут наречены сынами Божиими.

Put that in Google translate and you get:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Not bad at all!

The Japanese Bible says:

平和な人々を築き、幸いにも、彼らは神の子と呼ばれることになる。

Put that in Google translate and you get:

Build a peaceful people, and fortunately, they shall be called sons of God.

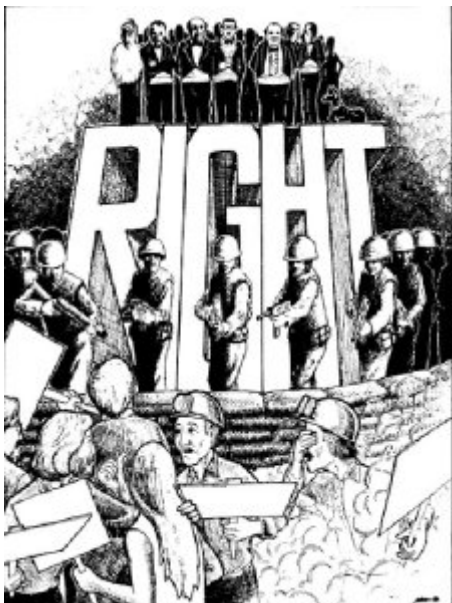
listener as one's boyfriend or girlfriend according to the context it is used!

- The predicate and main verb of the sentence comes at the very end of the sentence, not immediately after the subject as in English. There may be several clauses in between. A machine translation of a long sentence is often nonsensical.

Back in the mid '90s I once read an article that predicted by the year 2000, voice machine translators would be so good that a voice of a person in Tokyo speaking in Japanese on the phone would come out in English to the other party in America! I cannot foresee that ever happening when even text only translations are still very poorly done.

I often have to add words not present in the original to my translation because I know that is probably what the person meant to say. In other words, a percentage of the translation is really interpreting what the writer means. It's only because I know the author personally that I can interpret the author's text with a good degree of accuracy, something that no machine or software no matter how sophisticated could ever do. Are my translations OK? The author seems to think so. ☐

[New law passed by U.S. Senate: The military to detain anti-government protesters in American cities](#)



Young people demonstrating against Wall Street

On December 4, 2011, a friend sent me a shocking article:

http://www.naturalnews.com/034291_SB_1867_war_on_terror.html

“That U.S. Senators would knowingly and willfully attempt to pass a bill that legalizes the indefinite detainment, torture and killing of American citizens **with no due process whatsoever** – and on American soil! – is nothing less than a traitorous betrayal of the once-free American people. These are, our founding fathers would have said, acts of war against the People. They reveal the insidious plan to put in place **a legal framework to end the Bill of Rights**, murder protesters, and overrun America with total police state brutality.” (Quote from the web link above.)

I believe this is in further fulfilment of [Pastor David Berg’s prediction](#) in **1972!**

The artwork from a publication by David Berg drawn in early 1974 depicts exactly what is happening *today!* The people on the top represent Wall Street, big business, and the government that supports the rich. Notice the young people are being confronted not by police, but by *soldiers*, the U.S. Military!!

Former President George W. Bush once said,

“Stop throwing the Constitution in my face,” Bush screamed back.
“It’s just a goddamned piece of paper!” Ref:
<http://www.rense.com/general69/paper.htm>

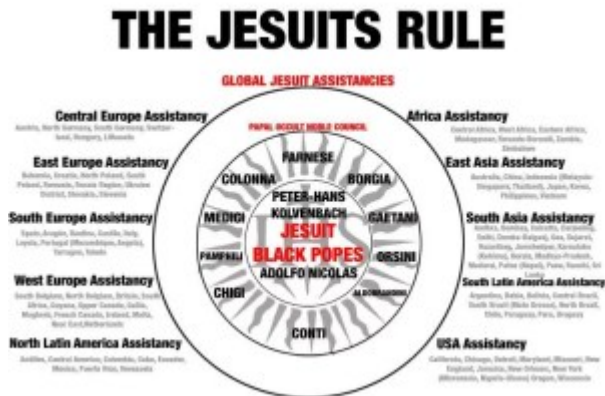
Apparently the U.S. Senate agrees with him. And what exactly does the U.S. Constitution say about American citizens under arrest after being accused of a crime?

“In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.”—Six Amendment to the Constitution.

New Senate bill 1867 seems to be diametrically against the 6th Amendment.

What do you folks think?

The real reason for the Japanese seclusion policy: Fear of colonization by Rome



The Japanese government was afraid of the Jesuits and the foreign overthrow of Japan which is why they didn't allow any visitors to their country for 200 years.

Using mencoder to convert a .VOB file to a .flv file

I've been working for a Japanese NPO, Leap High 28. Today I was asked by the NPO Chairperson, Yoko Ishikawa to upload a DVD file to Help Japan 2011, a website we made together to raise support for the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami victims. This is the code I used to convert the file to .flv on a laptop with the Ubuntu 11.10 Linux. Note the you need to have mencoder installed.

```
mencoder VTS_03_1.VOB -of lavf -ovc lavc -lavcopts
vcodec=flv:vbitrate=150 -ofps 25 -oac mp3lame -lameopts abr:br=32 -
srate 22050 -vf scale=720 -o unitedearth.flv
```

After creating the flv file, I uploaded it to the server using FTP. I also created a starting .jpg image of the same name as the .flv from one of the frames of the video, and uploaded it in the same folder.

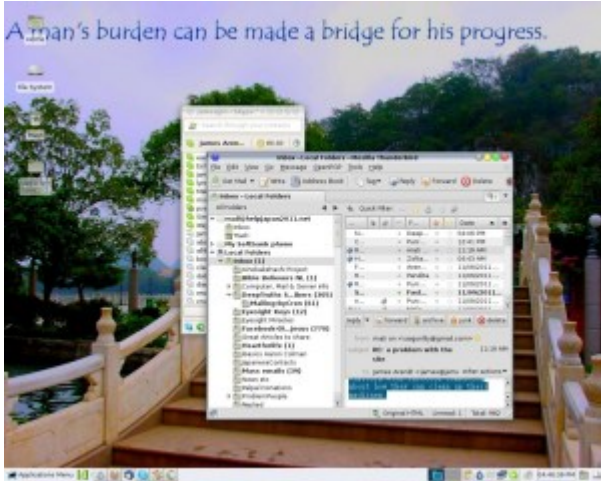
I also installed a handy WordPress plugin, FLV Embed to display the video.

On the page to post the video, in the HTML editor I added the following:

```
[flv:/wp-content/uploads/unitedearth.flv 480 368]
```

Click this link to see the result! Audio in Japanese only.

Fedora 16 review



November 9: After getting sick of Gnome 3 on Fedora 15, I tried Linux Mint Debian for a while because it has the Gnome 2 desktop environment, my favourite to date. Linux Mint Debian ran very well but because there were certain tweaks to the system I wanted to implement but could not (but can in Fedora), I decided to go back to Fedora 14, the last Fedora with Gnome 2. The creator of Linux, Linus Torvalds, preferred Gnome 2 over 3 as well. He also uses Fedora as his Linux distribution of choice. Since the advent of Gnome 3 in Fedora 15, Linus ditched it for the Xfce environment instead. I figure if Xfce is good enough for Linus, it's good enough for me. So when Fedora 16 went gold yesterday, I immediately downloaded it, installed it, and installed the Xfce desktop environment.



James Japan's Xfce desktop with Fedora 16

Fedora 16 with the Xfce desktop environment is like driving a new car with a more powerful engine but with different dashboard. I'm getting used to it. Xfce does seem to be more tweak-able than Gnome 2 was. I can see certain features that Gnome 2 didn't have. But I still miss the cool Gnome 2 applets. Won't somebody please bring them back?

March 14, 2012 update: I tried to install Compiz in LXDE but couldn't make it work. All icons on panels would disappear every time I ran fusion-icon. I wondered how it would work on KDE Plasma Desktop Environment. Compiz works

great! Here's what my desktop looks like now:



Kde Plasma James Japan Desktop

KDE Plasma has 4 different appearances

1. Desktop Icons (Plain desktop with icons on it)
2. Photos Activity (Shows random photos in the Picture folder)
3. Desktop (Makes the Desktop folder a window with the option of wallpaper)
4. Search and Launch (Shows all the installed applications)

Besides this it has a pop-up application menu that is overall better than either LXDE or XFCE, and way better than Gnome 3! All in all KDE Plasma seems to be for me the most user friendly, intuitive, easy to use and tweak-able Linux desktop environment.

[Why Gaddafi was demonized by the West](#)



I believe Gaddafi was demonized by the West only after he became a hindrance to New World Order plans. Libya was one of the most prosperous countries in the middle east before the NATO (read USA, England and France) attacks! Unlike the Egyptians under Mubarak, the average Libyan enjoyed a high standard of living.

Under the revolutionary leadership of Col. Mu`ammar Qadhafi, Libya has attained the highest standard of living in all of Africa. This is all the more remarkable when we consider that in 1951 Libya was

officially the poorest country in the world. According to the World Bank, the per capita income was less than \$50 a year – even lower than India. Today all Libyans own their own homes and cars. In the words of two Fleet Street journalists, David Blundy and Andrew Lycett, who are by no means supporters of the Libyan Arab revolution, “The young people are well dressed, well fed and well educated. Libyans now earn more per capita than the British. – Taken from <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8744/libfacts.htm> Obviously written before the NATO attack against Libya.

Now what will happen to them? The same fate of civil strife in Yugoslavia after Tito’s death, and civil strife in Iraq after Saddam Hussein! Their economy is going to crash and they will lose the good standard of living they enjoyed under Gaddafi. The [wicked Witch of the West Hillary](#) is laughing now at Gaddafi’s demise, but someday the poor and meek of this world will rejoice at her demise as they did Jezebel’s! See 2 Kings chapter 9 for details. If there ever was a modern day parallel of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of the Bible, it is doubtless [Bill and Hillary](#).

Why would the [USA, England and France](#) (read continuation of the Roman Empire) want Gaddafi dead? Three reasons, and all about *money* and power!

Also see The Legend of Sirte for more information about the true political realities of Libya.

Recently I’ve been studying the history of Japan during the the 17th and 18th century. It seems to me that the major difference between then and now, is electrical power and environment it created.

[Traumatic trip to Aomori city](#)



Went the wrong way! The blue line from Nikaho City to Akita City was my intended route. The orange line going to Daizen city is the detour route the truck driver took me, 38 kilometers out of my way costing nearly an hour extra time! The end of the orange line points to Route 13 where the driver intended to drop me off. The dark green line is the Akita expressway which took me from Daizen City to Hachiryu Station. It made up for the lost time of the detour.

September 19: Today was warm, bright and sunny, a very good day to travel by hitchhiking. I was on my way to Aomori city, about 480 kilometers from my home in Niigata city. It was imperative that I reach Aomori by evening because I had to travel further the next day to Misawa city, 70 kilometers from Aomori, and be there by 10PAM to do a job assignment.

My motivation to hitchhike is not just to save money, but to make new friends. The very first driver who picked me up was a talkative lady, Miss Tsuneko, who took me to Tainai city on Route 7, about 60 kilometers from home, a very good distance for the first ride. Tsuneko is not a Christian but she is interested in helping her Christian friend find a Christian husband.

From Route 7 I walked 4 kilometers to get to the Arakawa-Tainai interchange of the Nihonkai-Tohoku Expressway. I hoped catching a ride on the expressway would speed my journey by getting a vehicle going at least as far as somewhere in Yamagata Prefecture and thereby bypassing Murakami City entirely. Expressway drivers tend to go longer distances. Moreover, traffic on Route 7 past Murakami is minimal. In times past I had to wait more than an hour in Murakami to catch a ride going any significant distance.

The 40 minute hike to the expressway bore fruit – I got an immediate ride to Atsumi Onsen in Yamagata! From Atsumi Onsen I caught 3 more cars and got as far as Nikaho City in Akita Prefecture. It was about 3PM. I hoped to catch a ride from Nikaho to Akita city. There was just enough time for me to catch the 4:30 train from Akita station which would arrive in Aomori at 8PM.

After just a few minutes wait in Nikaho, a truck stopped and the driver said he would take me to Route 13 in Akita. I assumed he meant the intersection of Route 13 and Route 7 in Akita City, but I was terribly wrong! The driver was a foreigner, a man from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. He's lived in Japan for 18 years and spoke good Japanese, the only common language between us. The driver got off Route 7 to take a free expressway heading toward Akita City, but partway he got off the expressway at Ohuchi and took Route 105 toward Daizen city. I didn't know it at the time, but Daizen city is the new name for Omagari city. Had he said he was going to Omagari, I would have immediately asked him to let me off at Ohuchi for I knew that Omagari was way out of my way! But the name "Daizen" confused me. The driver was so positive and tried to be encouraging. "Don't worry! This road runs through the rice

fields with very few stop lights and little traffic! I'll take you to Route 13 and from there you can catch a ride to Akita city which is next to Daizen! But looking at the map, I realized I made an awful mistake!

Why did I heed the driver's advice and go with him further? It could be because he is Vietnamese, and I don't ever remember meeting anyone from Vietnam before. It's always interesting to meet people from difference countries and cultures. On September 9th two young men from Nepal took me to Akita city. They corrected me when I said the founder of Buddhism was from India. "You're twice our age and know many things, and yet you didn't know that Buddha was born in our country, in Nepal!" ☐

There was now no way I could arrive Akita city in time to catch the 4:35PM train. After that there was only one more train left, the one leaving Akita station at 6:46PM which would get me to Aomori city at 10:40PM. If I missed that one too, I would be in bad trouble indeed. It would mean hitchhiking in the dark. I have hitchhiked after sunset occasionally, but it's not nearly as easy as hitchhiking during daylight hours. It's harder for drivers to see me and more dangerous at night.

I began to realize I had to stop listening to the driver and start to follow what I knew from experience to be best. Letting him take me to Route 13 was no guarantee I would make the 6:46PM train. From the map I saw the Omagari Interchange of the Akita expressway a few kilometers before Route 13. It was right on Route 105. I asked the driver to let me off at the expressway entrance, and he did so but expressed doubts I would catch a car going on it. I didn't listen to him this time, I knew catching a ride on the expressway had the potential to make up for the time I lost on the detour.

The decision to take the Akita Expressway paid off! After only a couple minutes wait, a driver stopped and took me to the Nishisenboku Service Area. I got off there because the driver was going to Akita Airport. From Nishisenboku an elderly couple took me to the train station at Hachuryu, about 30 kilometers past Akita city. Because of the speed of the expressway, I actually caught up with and past the 4:35PM train from Akita city and caught it at Hachiryu with 5 minutes to spare! It was a happy ending to an otherwise traumatic trip. God is good. ☐

[WordPress – How to assign categories and tags to pages](#)



December 11, 2011 update: Before you read this article, you should know I now consider it unnecessary. Because of new feature of custom menus from WordPress version 3, a post can be assigned to a menu item among page menu items. Therefore there is no reason to do what I outlined before. ☐

From quite a while ago I've been wondering if there was a way to assign a category and tags to WordPress pages. There is no apparent option to do this in WordPress. Posts have the capability to be assigned categories and tags, but pages have no such option. Besides this, I wanted to have long articles added as pages to both appear in the top page menu and yet also have them appear as titles of new posts in the sidebar menu widget.

One of my projects is <http://starsandpearls.com/> The short articles were add as posts, but some of the long articles, the "E-zines", are laid out in a magazine format with its own internal menu. If you go to the site and put your mouse over the "Stars and Pearl E-zine" menu item, you will see the menu drop down with menu items that all point to pages. And yet you will find 6 of the same menu titles also in the Recent Posts side bar menu! How did I do it?

First of all, you need to install the "Page Links to" plugin from <http://txfx.net/wordpress-plugins/page-links-to/> or by entering the words

page links to

in the Install Plugins search option.

After you install the plugin, go to Posts – Add New, and you will see toward the bottom of each edit post dialog area the following:



First you make your page and publish it. Then you copy the full URL from the location bar into the clipboard. Then you make a post by the same name, assign a category and tags to it, and then paste the URL of the page you created into the "Point to this URL:" of the Page Links To section of the edit post area. You also might want to copy the first couple paragraphs of the page into the post with a Continue Reading code at the end. Either clicking on the title in the posts section or clicking on the continue reading hyperlink will take you to the full page.

I'm posting this because after Googling for the answer to this question, I haven't found any solution as simple to implement as the one I'm giving you now. ☐

The two column dropdown menu was made with the aid of ["Uber Menu"](#), a very useful WordPress plugin to make mega menus.

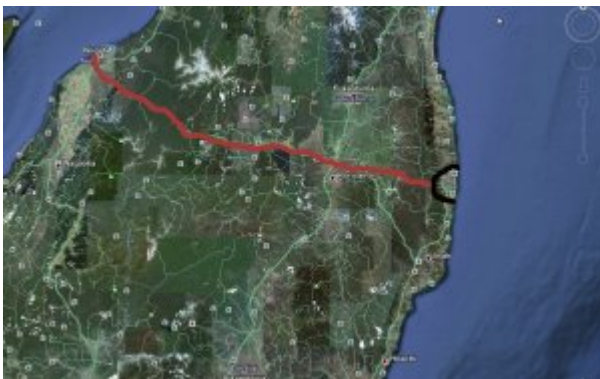
[The Truth about Libya](#)

NATO and international bankers destroyed Libya and took away its prosperity using the excuse of ridding the country of a "dictator." Soon a Libyan central bank will be set up and it will rob the people just as the American Federal Reserve and other central banks do in their perspective countries. The Libyan revolt was undoubtedly caused by outside forces for the purpose of controlling Libya's economy. The ignorant Libyans who supported the revolt are soon to regret it.

For more comments about Libya, please see:

<http://sherriequestioningall.blogspot.com/2011/08/truth-about-libya-watch-this-video-and.html>

[Attempt to hitchhike to the Fukushima Pacific coastline](#)



An attempt to visit the damaged nuclear power plants in Fukushima, Japan.

July 31 hitchhike adventure from Aomori city



Women's Table Tennis
Coach Ohka Iwao

July 31: I was on my way back home from Aomori city to Niigata. I decided to take the Tohoku Expressway which passes through Sendai and Fukushima and the Banetsu Expressway from Fukushima to Niigata rather than the much slower Route 7 that runs along the Sea of Japan. Though the Tohoku / Banetsu route is 125 kilometers longer, it's faster because it's expressway and because most drivers are going longer distances.

I didn't have to walk to Aomori Chuo Expressway Interchange today like I did on July 18th. An off duty taxi cab driver saw me and offered me a ride which saved me an hour. But unlike July 18th, I had to wait over twice the time I waited before, 2.5 hours, to catch the next ride.

It was sunny but not too hot. After over an hour of rejections, I decided to stand at another traffic light. Most of the cars turning right at that traffic light were going on the expressway. This way I could walk past each of the drivers hoping for positive eye contact. Most of them ignored me. Some waved their hands in the Japanese manner that means, "NO!"

Two drivers offered me rides but both were going only as far as Hirosaki, only about 8% of the distance back home. I actually got into one of the cars but after thinking about it for a few seconds I decided I needed to look for "bigger fish." I consider hitchhiking to be akin of fishing. You don't have to take the small fish even if you catch one, you can return them back. Usually it takes longer to find a big fish, but when you do catch one, it's worth the wait. This is especially true when looking for cars going an expressway. My first ride on the Tohoku expressway needed to take me at least 200 kilometers or 1/3 of the way toward home if I was to get home that day without having to resort to take a long train ride. When hitchhiking on a

regular road, I'm happy for little fish that comes along no matter how short a distance the driver is going. But today via the expressway, I had to catch a fairly "big fish."

It was indeed worth the 2.5 hour wait for I finally caught one! At 11:30 a man who was going all the way to Sendai offered me a ride. His name is Mr. Ohka Iwao and he is a head coach of women's junior table tennis and one of the representatives of all of Japan in international tournaments! Mr. Ohka took me to Chojahara Service area, the largest one before Sendai, a distance of 304 kilometers and **over half of the way home!** I now knew for sure I would make it home by evening.

It's always great to ride with educated and influential people for the conversation is usually deep and interesting. In 1973, one year after China and Japan established diplomatic relations, Mr. Ohka took his team to China to compete with Chinese teams. He said his team never won even once though he made many subsequent trips. According to Mr. Ohka, the main reason the Chinese are so strong in table tennis is because good players can gain quite a bit of wealth. There's no money in table tennis in Japan, he says. During his first visit to China, Mr. Ohka met the Chinese premier Chou En-lai and was photographed with him.

Mr. Ohka's home is in the Shichigahama area of Sendai and close to the ocean. He was in Aomori city at the time of the earthquake and tsunami of March 11th. His wife witnessed the tsunami from the window of their home! Their house is on a hill and therefore was not hit by the tsunami, but she saw all the houses below swept away. For the next 3 weeks there was no electricity in Sendai. Mr. Ohka was unsure of road conditions, so rather than return home by car he took trains and buses in a circular route to get home carrying as much food with him that he could hold.



Sachi, Masako and Nozomi at Chojahara SA.

I told Mr. Ohka that I would be fine at Chojahara Service Area. It was 3PM when we arrived and I've never experienced long waits for the next ride there. Three smiling young ladies, Sachi, Masako and Nozomi approached me and asked where I was heading. They all spoke some English (probably why they were interested in me) and said they would ask the driver of their van if he would take me. They all wanted to talk to me to practice their English. Unfortunately for both them and me, the driver said the van was too packed with luggage and there was no room for me to sit.

Almost immediately after the 3 girls left, a passing driver made eye contact with me and then stopped a few meters up the road. I walked cautiously to the vehicle not knowing for sure if the driver meant to pick me up or not. I've been wrong before. Sometimes drivers stop not far from me but with other intents in mind such as making a phone call. But this driver indicated he was stopping for me.

It was yet another sports coach, this time High School Soccer, Mr Shun. He took me as far as Kunimi SA in Fukushima Prefecture.

It was raining in Kunimi and so I decided to wait a bit hoping the rain would stop. After about 15 minutes and rain subsided and I walked out again to the parking area. After a few minutes, an older couple picked me up and took me to Adatara Service Area. Their daughter is married to a man from the UK where she is now. I've often been picked up by parents whose son or daughter is married to a foreigner.

The Adatara Service Area is always challenging for me. It's the closest point just before the Banetsu junction heading to Niigata, but the preponderance of the traffic is going a different direction toward the Kanto area, Tokyo and vicinity. This time in an effort to work around the problem, I held out an Aizu sign instead of the Niigata sign. The city of Aizuwakamatsu in the Aizu area is about 1/3 of the distance home from that point. I knew there were probably more cars going to Aizuwakamatsu than there would be to Niigata. This bore fruit. Within a relatively short time an older man picked me up. He took me to the Bandaisan Service Area which is just before the Aizuwakamatsu exit.

Now I was in an excellent situation indeed! The sky was clearer with no more threat of rain. A far higher percentage of cars were heading to Niigata from that point. After only a few minutes waiting, and just before sunset, a young married couple who were headed to Joetsu picked me up and took me to an expressway bus stop on the Banetsu expressway which is relatively close to home. From there it was a short 10 minute walk to the train station, and only 180 yen train ride 2 stations the rest of the way. I arrived home 8:50PM. □