

# June 16th Adventure from Hirosaki back Home



With another man also hitchhiking! His partner with him took the photo



Mari and Kurumi who took me to Odate City

I began my journey home later than usual, first a train from Hirosaki station at 11:25 a.m to Nagamine, 3 stops out of town, arriving 10 minutes later. This puts me right on Route 7, a good place to hitchhike.

After a relatively short wait of 19 minutes, a car with two 18 year old girls stopped and offered to take me to Odate City. Their names are Mari, and Kurumi, the driver. They attend a local junior college studying to become kindergarten teachers. Kurumi received her driver's license only 3 months previous in last March.

I waited for the next car at the Route 7 Odate by-pass entrance. Twenty seven minutes later around 1 p.m. a driver pulled up and offered to take me to Omagari, now called Daizen City which is a bit south of Akita City. Daizen City is somewhat out of my way and far from Route 7, but because it is a distance of 200 kilometers or about half of the way back to Niigata, I considered it a "bird in the hand" type of situation. I knew there was a road that went from Daizen city to Route 7. Last year a Vietnamese truck driver took me to Daizen, which was *very much* out of my way at the time. But in this case considering where I was standing, I didn't think it was all that much out of the way home. However, what happened later convinced me never to accept a ride from a driver going that route again!

The road the man took was Route 105. For him it was the shortest way to Daizen City. Route 105 passes through the mountains. There were few traffic lights and the scenery was picturesque. But it became narrow and winding at a point. The guard rail on the right hand side of the road bordering the edge of the mountain was all banged up from cars that hit it! This probably

happens mostly in the winter when the road is icy. There was hardly any length of that guard rail that was not dented up! Some sections of the rail were in very bad shape indicating a vehicle had hit it going at a considerable speed.

We arrived at Daizen City at 4 p.m. three hours later. I knew no matter what at least I wouldn't be passing through Akita City from that point. Akita City is often difficult to cross.

It began to rain lightly. I took out my folding umbrella and held it while pulling my luggage with wheels behind me.

After walking some 30 minutes up the road, a lady pulled over and asked where I wanted to go. I told her Route 7. She looked at me as if I was talking about some place on the other side of the country! The preponderance of the traffic was *not* going to Route 7 at all. Most drivers were on their way to Yokote City, further out of my way. Though I was walking in the right direction toward Route 7, I found later there was a major junction further up the road, and most of the traffic turned toward the left going east to Yokote, not the western direction toward the Sea of Japan that I needed to go.

I didn't have a paper said "Honjo" so I sat down, pulled out a blank A4 sheet of paper, and wrote □□ and tried to make the lines of the characters as thick as I could to make it easily visible to drivers. After waling some 70 minutes and passing the junction that goes to Yokote, a car that had just passed me turned around and came back for me, two young men. They were friendly but listening to some awful heavy metal music, a Japanese band that imitated KISS. It sounded like souls screaming in torment in hell! In fact, the word Hell was the name of one of the numbers. I sat in the back seat with my fingers in my ears trying to block out the noise.

Honjo was much further away then I remembered, a good hour drive from Daizen. No wonder the lady who stopped earlier didn't want to take me there. In the future I will not consider the "via Daizen route" a viable option.

The two men took me to Ugo Honjo Sation from where I took a train the rest of the way home. It was getting dark and still raining, and I was in time for the very last possible train. I arrived home 30 minutes past midnight.