

Tramatic adventure hitchhiking from Kansai



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

Monday, August 9, 2010: After an unsuccessful attempt to hitchhike from Suita service area in central Osaka yesterday, today I thought to make it easier on myself by taking a train to Otsu city in Shiga Prefecture, just on the other side of Kyoto. The Hankyu line is the cheapest train in Japan and it only cost 390 yen to get as far as Kyoto.



Young couple who took me from Otsu toward Kussatsu



Young couple who went out of their way to take me to Kussatsu interchange

After searching more than an hour for a ride at Otsu service area, I felt the situation wasn't any better than the one yesterday. This is now Obon season during which time the Japanese like to visit their home towns. Normally I find Obon an easy time to hitchhike, but this year seemed to be different. Is it because I'm getting older?

I realized that since the completion of the Shin (new) Meishin highway that connects to the Meishin just 10 kilometers down the road, the preponderance of traffic would be taking the ShinMeshin to go to Nagoya. But I needed to continue down the older route, the one that goes to the Hokuriku junction at Maibara. I therefore thought that by leaving the expressway parking, and hitchhiking down the low road just 10 more kilometers further, I would be on

the other side of the Shinmeshin entrance and more likely to catch a ride. It took me over 2 hours to hitchhike only 10 kilometers in two rides! The first ride I caught immediately from a young couple, but the second ride took me well over an hour. Now finally at the Kussatsu interchange I had to wait yet another 1.5 hours for the next ride! I wondered if I made a mistake leaving Otsu. Now was stuck where I was at and couldn't go anywhere else. The Kussatsu interchange where I was waiting was my only hope. Just a couple days ago I told a driver that when it sometimes takes a long time to catch a ride, it always ends up in a wonderful experience meeting somebody special. Now God was really testing me to see if I really believed that statement and have patience to wait further! I started to think about retiring from hitchhiking.

Finally the most unlikely looking vehicle picked me up. It was a deliver truck with two men in the front, and the back was so full of packages I had no room to sit down anywhere. I had to squeeze between a box and the side of the truck. The men were going the direction from whence I came, toward Kyoto. The Kussatsu Service Area was just a couple minutes down the road, and I got off there.

Now my problem is figuring out how to get to the parking area on the opposite side of the expressway with traffic going the way I needed to go. I found an overpass and walked to a gate that appeared to be used for the parking area, and I saw a lady passing through the gate. I realized she must have come from the parking area, but on the other side of the gate was a sound barrier with no apparent entrance or way to get either over it or around it. I walked toward the left, found a siding door on the wall, and tried to open it. It was locked. I walked toward the right, found another sliding door, and it opened!



Mr. Mochihara who took from Shiga prefecture to Sayama city, Saitama

The parking area going toward Niigata and Tokyo is much smaller, with fewer cars, but it was my only hope. After only a few minutes, I met a man who was traveling all the way from Miyazaki in Kyushu and asked him for a ride. His name is Mr. Mochihara, he speaks English, and was friendly. This is the man who made it worth it all that suffering! Our conversation was not only pleasant, it was deep about the basic things of life. And went out of his way to take me directly to my friend's house in Sayama city, and saved me from having to hitchhike further in the heat of this hot summer.