

Adventures in St. Petersburg, Russia



I lived in St. Petersburg, Russia, from August of 1994 to October of 1997. It was known as Leningrad during the time of the Soviet Union. Many people who don't live in St. Petersburg still call it Leningrad! At least they did during my stay in Russia. But I don't remember a resident of St. Petersburg refer to it by the Soviet name. They are proud of their pre-Soviet history when Peter the Great founded the city on the tributary of the Neva river – actually a wetland. The mosquitoes in the summertime are terrible!



Gostiny Dvor on Nevsky Prospect.

The photo is *Gostini Dvor* on the main street, Nevsky Prospect. In 1997 I spent over 2 whole hours looking for a weather thermometer but could not find one. The salespeople kept telling me to go to a pharmacy. I replied, "I'm not looking for a body thermometer! I want a weather thermometer." They replied, "Yes, but they also sell those at the pharmacy." Well, can you guess what happened when I posed the same question to the pharmacy people back then? They looked at me like I was nuts! "This is a drugstore, not a household appliance store!" "I know I know! But the main department store in town **TOLD me** to come to you!" And so I was bounced back and forth about 3 times before I finally gave up. A few weeks later I went back to my old neighborhood in Chicago and found what I was looking for in a Dollar Shop in a matter of minutes.



Nostalgic communist lady

The lady on the right is a nostalgic communist who is campaigning for the return of communism. Behind her are photos of Stalin, Lenin, and a contemporary politician named Zugannof. If you guessed by the sour look on her face that she doesn't like me, you're correct. She knows that I am a foreigner and a Christian missionary. I just smiled back at her and walked

on.



A beggar in St.
Petersburg

St. Petersburg is situated on a tributary, and so it is divided into several small islands that are linked by bridges and tunnels. Here is a typical beggar in Petrogradskaya Ostrov (Petersburg Island). It is hard to tell which beggars are really in need and who is faking. Some are professional beggars who actually pay the Mafia to beg on their turf. After a day's work of soliciting donations, they can relax in a fine restaurant eating a good meal. This is something I could not afford to do when I was there!



James and Helen

There was real poverty in St. Petersburg when I was there. I often visited a poor lady named Helen. Here I am with her in 1997. But though she was old and needy, she never begged. She taught English and got paid in groceries. Sometimes I would bring her food and gifts. Read [more about Helen](#), a former interpreter who helped in an interview with the famous Yuri Gagarin, the first man to be shot into space into orbit!



Giving a talk about the meaning of
Easter in a school in St. Petersburg

Here is a picture of me and my friends in a school in St. Petersburg. It is close to Easter and I am giving a talk to the pupils on the meaning of Easter – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I had the total support of the school teachers and principal to do so. Do you think I could get away with this in a public school in my homeland, the USA? Only deep somewhere in a rural area in the State of Indiana where the Amish live perhaps.



With Natasha Blond

Here I am with Natasha Blond in a park in front of a horse. Isn't she pretty? The horse was kinda pretty too. Her family name is not "Blond" but I named her that because of her real 100% natural blond hair, smooth as silk! You can tell that I really liked Natasha Blond! But alas, she was way too young for me.



Selling audio-visuals at an
exhibition in St. Petersburg

In the photo is Russian Stephanie, American Nat, and me at the main exhibition hall in town. We are offering audio-visual teaching material for children. This is partly how we supported ourselves. The rest of the support came from donations from the headquarters of The Family and monthly donations from my faithful friends in Japan to whom I wrote monthly newsletters of my missionary activities in Russia.



Lydia with a women from Georgia

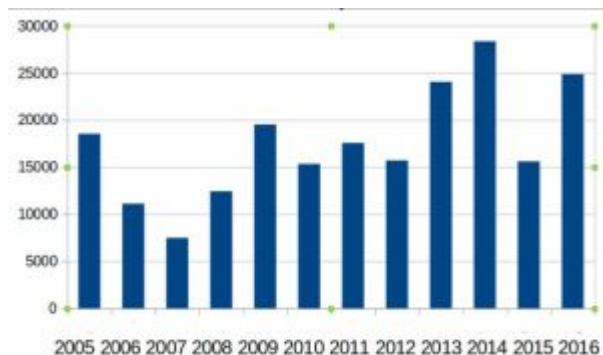
In the picture on the right is Lydia (right) talking to a lady from the former Soviet republic of Georgia. I don't know why in English we say "Georgia" because the correct pronunciation doesn't sound anything like the US state of Georgia. It sounds more like Gruzia. Lydia was a friend of the head of security at the main exhibition hall of St. Petersburg. He would let us inside for free when everyone else had to pay \$1.00. A dollar doesn't sound like much now but it sure did then! That was 5000 RUBLES!! It was nice to walk around with the head of security. This way the other guards would get to know us and leave us alone while we offered our teaching materials to the guests.



Lydia by a vendor of flowers

Here's Lydia again on a street by a vendor of flowers. Lydia is from Kiev, Ukraine. People often remarked that she spoke with an accent, unlike a Ukrainian. This is due to her learning English and being with missionaries from America. She married and has a one-year-old daughter named Diane.

**[Distances Hitchhiked Since year 2005 /
Sharing Christ with the Japanese](#)**



A white American hitchhiked throughout Japan consistently over a 20-year period.

Hitchhike Adventure to Aomori City and Kanto



On September 17th, 2016, I hitchhiked from the crossroads of Route 345 and Route 7 near Gatsugi Station in Murakami City in Niigata Prefecture all the way to Aomori City in a single car! This is a distance of about 400 kilometers or 250 miles. I am 66 years old at the time of this post.

The driver's name is Hiroshi who lives and works in France as a chef of French cuisine. He once was the chef of the Emperor and Empress of Japan and actually met them! He bought me lunch and went way out of his way to take me exactly where I wanted to go, a 5 hour drive from his original destination. Unfortunately Hiroshi wouldn't let me take a photo of him.

Hiroshi needed to go to Yokote City to buy some exotic Japanese cuisine. Normally I would have refused to go with him to Yokote, but he promised me he would take me the rest of the way to Aomori afterwards and I believed him. Yokote is the longer route to Aomori.

The scenes are in Akita Prefecture. The red and white striped pole is to mark the edge of the road after heavy snowfalls, a frequent winter occurrence in

this part of northern Japan.



Akita Prefecture, Ani



Two days later my destination is now Sayama city in Saitama Prefecture. Saitama is one of the prefectures in the Kanto Plain area of Japan. Aomori City is the northern city of Honshu, and Saitama is just north of Tokyo which means I needed to travel 600 kilometers or 400 miles that day in order to make it. I nearly didn't!

After waiting only 30 minutes, a couple going to Furukawa City in Miyagi picked me up. This was a good distance of 200 kilometers, a 1/3 of the distance I needed to go!



The couple who took-me over 200 kilometers-from Aomori City to Miyagi Prefecture

The second driver was on his way to Nagoya and would pass through Niigata. Normally I would have gone with him to Niigata which has been my home till date. But because today I'm going to Saitama, he took me to the Adatara Service Area in Fukushima Prefecture which is just before the Banetsu junction that goes to Niigata.



Masayuki who took me to Fukushima from Miyagi



The third car of my hitchhiking adventure from Aomori City to Sayama City in Saitama was a young couple I met at Adatara service area in Fukushima. They were on their way to Utsunomiya in Tochigi Prefecture and had also picked up a university student who was also hitchhiking from Aomori City! He was on his way to Matsumoto in Nagano which is 3 times further than my destination in Saitama. The couple offered to take us both to the Sano Service Area in Tochigi.

By the time we arrived to Sano, it was dark and raining heavily to the low atmospheric pressure influence of the typhoon in Okinawa. Because it was a holiday, "Senior Citizens Day," the service area was crowded with vehicles and thronged with people. But from experience I knew that was not necessary a good thing. Too many people means the average Japanese thinks someone else will give the poor hitchhiker a ride!

I stood in front of the restrooms out of the rain and showed the paper sign of my destination to everyone. They all knew what I was doing but nearly everyone ignored me and avoided making eye contact. Often a person who makes eye contact is willing to help.

At the service area there were 3 other hitchhikers. One was the university student who came with me from Fukushima, and the other two were highschool students on their way to Hannyu city in Saitama. We were all in the same boat. Nobody was offering them rides either.

After about 45 minutes, a man approached me and gave me a can of hot coffee and a pet bottle of green tea! He couldn't help me but wanted to encourage me.

After an hour I decided to call it quits. I consigned myself to an uncomfortable night camping out in the service area rest facility. There were only hard chairs to lay down on.

I sat down at a crowded table in the midst of other travelers. After a few minutes a young lady sitting on my right started talking to me in English. She was interested in what I was doing but I could tell her male partner wasn't interested in helping me.

After she and her partner left a man sitting at my left started speaking to me in perfect English! He lived in Germany for 4 years and went to an international school in Frankfurt and all that time schooled in a total English environment. He was on his way with his family to an area in Saitama which is relatively close to my final destination! I told him I am facing an unpleasant night unless I can leave the service area and get to a train station and go by train where I needed to go, Sayama City. He talked to his family and they agreed to take me with them! And what a family! It was his parents, his wife and children, and his brother's and sister's spouses and children, at least 20 people in all! And because they all lived in Germany before, most of them speak English! They were traveling in the huge bus you see in the photo.



The bus that took me from Tochigi to Saitama.

In the beginning I spoke to them in English but later switched to Japanese as I shared my faith in the Creator God and true history from the Bible. They listened with interest and one of the men became my Facebook friend.

I am facing a crossroads in my life at this time. Rather than hitchhike several times a month to Aomori just to earn money, I am thinking and praying about moving there. Any financial help or encouragement you can send me is appreciated.

First Hitchhiking Adventure of 2016 from Niigata City



On March 4th, 2016 I hitchhiked 100 kilometers or about 60 miles to the city of Tokamachi. It is a city in the midst of hills. The Shinano River which is the longest river in Japan flows through Tokamachi. It's called "Shinano" for that was the old name of Nagano Prefecture which is its source. But in Nagano Prefecture the same river is called Chikuma.



Doctor Masaya

The first driver was a medical doctor by the name of Masaya. He works in a hospital not far from my home. I asked Masaya if he believes the spirit is separate from the physical. He said most doctors do not believe the spirit affects physical health, but he does. I gave him tracts from [Dr. John Gideon Hartnett](#) that expose Evolution, Big Bang, Dark Matter and Dark Energy as pseudo-science. Masaya took me from Niigata city to Sanjo city which is on the Kanetsu / Hokuriku expressway. He could not take me exactly where I wanted to go in Sanjo because he was pressed for time. I walked the rest of the way, about 20 minutes and crossed a bridge over the Shinano River to get to the expressway interchange.



Man who took me to Echigo Kawaguchi

After hitchhiking at the expressway interchange for 15 minutes without success, I decided to take a 190 yen bus ride to get to the Sakae Parking area of the expressway. From there a man on the way to Gunma prefecture took me to Echigo Kawaguchi. "Echigo" is the old name for Niigata before the Meiji era. Kawaguchi literally means "river's mouth". It has some meaning related to the Shinano River which passes through it. The man was coming from Gosen

City on his way back home in Gunma.

Because the man was not getting off the expressway, he dropped me off at a parking area from where I could walk over a bridge to get off the expressway to a regular road. Pedestrians are *not* supposed to be walking on that bridge! One of the expressway workers saw me passing by the toll booth and knew I must have walked over the bridge from the expressway parking area! By the time he saw me I was already in safe territory and there was nothing he could do to stop me from going further. He was only curious as to what I was doing. I was honest with him and told him I was hitchhiking and needed to go to Tokamachi. Because the driver didn't get off the expressway at that point, I had to walk. He told me that was a no no and not to do it again, but he wasn't upset at me at all. He said it only out of a sense of duty to the people he works for.

After that it was only a few minutes wait for the next man to stop. Tokamachi was still too far to walk to. It was a 30 minute drive from Echigo Kawaguchi. The weather was fine that day and the sunset was beautiful over scenic Tokamachi. This city is noted for its heavy snowfalls, but this year the snow wasn't as high as last year.



Tokamachi at dusk

My purpose to go to Tokamachi was to visit my good friends Keiji and Miyoko and family. The next day Keiji had business in Mitsuke city which is going back the way I came. But nevertheless because he would be passing by Ojiya City, I asked him to take me to the Ojiya Interchange. My destination was Sayama City in Saitama Prefecture. From Ojiya it is nearly twice the distance that I traveled the previous day. But I had all day to get there.

Ojiya City is close to the epicenter of a major earthquake in October 2004. About 50 people died. Had an earthquake the same strength occurred in the center of Tokyo, hundreds of thousands would have died! Roads after the earthquake were broken and cars could not pass from Niigata to Tokyo the shortest way possible.

After only a few minutes at the Ojiya Interchange, a man stopped and took me to Echigo Kawaguchi, the expressway service area I had been to the previous day. But this day I needed to go further. It was fine weather and so warm I actually took off my heavy winter coat!

It was about an hour before I finally got a good ride. Just before it a man offered to take me to Muika Machi, but it was too close and would have taken me back off the expressway had I gone with him. The driver and couple were elderly in perhaps their late 70s. They were on the way to Saitama, but would get off the expressway at a point before my destination. I asked them to take me to the Kamisato Service area which is just within the border of Saitama.



Driver and car that took me to Saitama Prefecture



The entrance of the Kanetsu tunnel, the longest car tunnel in Japan.

We passed through the Kanetsu tunnel which is the longest tunnel in Japan for vehicles. It's nearly 11 kilometers long and takes about 10 minutes to pass through at the speed limit of about 100 kilometers per hour. It would take more than 2 hours to walk through it. Gasoline trucks are not allowed through it in case of accident. The tunnel passes through the highest mountains at that point and exits in Gunma Prefecture.



Just inside the Kanetsu Tunnel

At Kamisato Service Area after a relatively short wait, a lady sitting in the passenger side of her car offered me a ride as far as Kawagoe. That was exactly the spot I hoped to get off the expressway at!

The lady was with her husband and their two elementary school children were sitting in the back. They had lived in Singapore for 3 years and could speak English! I suspected that was the reason why they picked me up recognizing me as a foreigner and probable English speaker. But though we spoke in English for a time, suddenly they both switched back to Japanese.



Couple who lived in Singapore who took me to Kawagoe.

From the Kawagoe Interchange it is only a 15 minute walk to Minami Otsuka Station, and from there only 190 yen train fare to my final destination of Sayama City. From Sayama station rather than take a 220 yen bus ride to my friend's house, I decided to hoof it and use the navigation on my Tablet PC for directions. Another 25 minutes later I was at my friend's house just before 6 p.m. the very arrival time I was shooting for.

God is good! My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ provides all my needs!

My First Hitchhiking Adventure of 2016



Father Tsukasa and son Naoto who took me to Miyagi Prefecture from Akita Prefecture.

On January 31, 2016 I hitchhiked from the Hanawa service area in Akita Prefecture on the Tohoku Expressway back home to Niigata city. My friend Keiji who is from Akita Prefecture was amazed that I made the 505 kilometer (316 miles) trip in a single day. To be honest I myself am amazed! It's only because of the good Hand of my Creator Who provides all my needs. His Name is Jesus.

I shaved my one month growth of beard the day before the trip. I shaved it because I wasn't sure whether people would want to pick up a Westerner with a beard. Would you?

The hardest part of hitchhiking from A to B is often the very beginning. Somehow I had to make my way to the Tohoku Expressway if I wanted to return home the same day. Using Google Maps on my Android Tablet, I perceived the Hanawa Service Area is within walking distance from the Kazuno Hanawa train station. Kazuno Hanawa is only two stations away from Towada Minami from was. It was only a 210 yen (1.75 USD) fare for me to get to Kazuno Hanawa,

I have never been to this part of Japan before. But thanks to Google Maps and my Asus Tablet PC, and especially thanks to the Global Positioning System (GPS), I was able to find my way from Towada Minami to the Hanawa Service Area in spite of taking three wrong turns. I estimated the walk would take less than 30 minutes. It took me over an hour!

The weather was clear with a blue sky and the temperature was a few degrees below freezing. I walked over hard and slippery icy and hard packed snow much of the way carrying my or pulling suitcase (it has wheels) with me.

Twice I was puzzled in trying to find the expressway service area. The first

time I misunderstood the navigation directions on my tablet and took a wrong turn which ended in a dead end. For those who have never been to Japan, most areas are not divided into blocks like they are in America. The "go around the block" concept is not common in Japan unless you happen to live in Kyoto or Sapporo. Arriving at a dead end of a road in Japan basically means, "go back the way you came to get back to the turn you should have taken." The other alternatives are either trespassing on private property and / or trying to find a safe way to the road you want to get to which is just below a fairly high and steep hill. I contemplated both. But because the steep hill was covered with deep snow, and because I would rather not walk on property that is obviously not public, I deemed it a no go.

After that and more more wrong turn, I finally walked to the point of visual distance of the Tohoku Expressway. Due to recent poor eyesight, I can mainly tell I'm close only when I hear the traffic of vehicles on the expressway.

The problem I faced then was the navigation led me to follow a road that was filled with snow! I needed to get to the *opposite* side of the expressway. This meant I needed to find an underpass that led under the expressway, or a bridge that led over the expressway. It was clear that no vehicles were taking the road which the navigation showed me to take. There weren't any tire tracks in the snow on the road. I walked back a hundred meters (yards) back to the well travelled road that ran parallel to the expressway and walked a couple hundred meters to the direction I perceived the expressway service area to be. But initially I wasn't even sure I was indeed walking in the right direction! After walking 2 or 3 hundred meters (yards) further, I saw a passageway under the Tohoku Expressway which the snow covered road I previously saw led to. What to do? I turned around to get back point I was a few minutes before, back to the snow covered road. There was a mountain of snow that was created by a snow removal vehicle but I saw just around it were footprints in the snow which were going the direction I needed to go! Would those footprints take me to the underpass to get to the opposite side of the Tohoku Expressway? Can you guess? They didn't. The footprints ended a hundred meters away. It was a small man-made structure of the size that probably no more than two people could be in at the same time! I walked around the hut only to find myself in knee-deep snow! There were no more tracks in the snow that headed in the direction I needed to go. I looked and saw only level (and deep) snow, and a fence that bordered the expressway, but no underpass in sight that led under the expressway to the other side.

What to do? In such a situation I learned from experience there is only one good and effective solution: Go back the way I came.

(To be continued!)

Chart of 10 years of Hitchhiking



The chart shows how many kilometers I hitchhiked every year for the last 10 years. Only the first year of 2005 doesn't show accurately how far I hitchhiked that year for I started keeping records from August 2, 2005. The total distance to date is 223,042 kilometers. over a period of exactly 925 days in 3587 vehicles. The latter two figures should be exact but the distance traveled may have a small percentage of error. I'm trying to be as accurate as possible. I used to use Google Maps to measure distances but now I use an on-line application on <http://www.mapfan.com/routemap/routeset.cgi> which should be more accurate. This is a great app if you live in Japan and can read Japanese well enough to use it.



Last year of 2015 was 12,749 kilometers (7968 miles) less than 2014 which was my record to date of 28,352 kilometers or 17,720 miles. The reason for this is I made far fewer trips to Aomori Prefecture. Will 2016 be a better year for me? I hope so. The number of trips has something to do with not only how much money I save, but how much income I can earn. You can see my income fell last year from the year before.

November 2015 Adventure Hitchhiking to Aomori Prefecture



On November 21, 2015, I hitchhiked in 9 cars from Gatsugi in Murakami City, Niigata Prefecture, to Hirosaki in Aomori, a distance of 330 kilometers of about 206 miles. This trip was so unusual that I feel compelled to document it in this post.

The first car was from Murakami city at the intersection of Route 345 and Route 7. Two ladies with two little boys 3 and 4 years old stopped for me! They were on their way to the Kamo Aquarium in Tsuruoka City, Yamagata Prefecture. It was such fun talking to the boys and the ladies. They are sisters, twins but not identical, and the one sitting on the passenger side is the mother of the two boys.



The ladies dropped me off at a point still far from the center of Tsuruoka. I walked a mile or so to get to a better traffic light where I could hitchhike. On the way I met the goat you see in the photo! He was friendly and let me pet it, but then he put my arm between his horns and twisted his head in such way it hurt my arm! I immediately left. □

Car #2 was a lady who took me to an ideal point in central Tsuruoka. From there many cars would be going to the next city of Sakata.

After only a short wait a man on his way to Sakata picked me up. He plays the viola in a orchestra!

Car #4 was a mother and daughter who took me close to the border of Akita, the town of Yuza.

Car # 5 was a lady from Niigata, Kazuoka Kobayashi, who is from the same remote area of Japan as my friends, the Matsuoka family, and she of course knows them! She was on her way to her home town. I would have gone with her to see my friends but their children were sick with the flu. Even more unusual is that she heard the Gospel when she was little, loves the Words of Jesus, and realized she is a child of God! And because her and I would be returning back the same day two days later, we arranged that I meet her at the closest train station that was convenient for both of us so that we could return to Niigata together. And so we did!

Kazuko took me to an expressway parking area that had only a few cars. Normally I would not choose such a place to hitchhike, and felt a bit worried. However only a few minutes after Kazuoka left a car with a married couple entered the parking area and offered to take me to the next large city of Noshiro. This was perfect for me!

From Noshiro after only a few minutes wait a lady, car #7 pulled up and offered to take me to Futatsui. This is only a relatively short distance but on my way to the next city of Odate.

Car #8 was yet another lady, Keiko Kanako, a piano teacher! And she was playing George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue which I just heard the previous evening! I introduced her to Emily Bear, a gifted American pianist that some consider to be a child Mozart. See

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=To7EG40KofU>

Did you count the number of cars with only ladies? Six in one day! This is by far my record! Things like this happen only in Japan.

Keiko took me to my favorite hitchhike spot in Odate, from there many cars would be going to Aomori. It was cold and I went to the toilet of the convenience store nearby to put on warmer clothes. It's now after 4 p.m. and getting dark. After 20 or so minutes of no success and getting cold I decided to walk up the road to try to stay warm. After another 10 minutes or so a man offered to take me to Hirosaki train station. This is only 45 kilometers or 30 miles short of my final destination. I took a train the rest of the way.

God is good and answered my prayers in Jesus's Name abundantly!

[James Japan on another Journey](#)



Dear friends and followers of this website,

On April 6th I left my home in Niigata City and traveled to Noda city in

Chiba prefecture which is just to the northeast of Tokyo. It was the first day of an extended trip which will last till the end of April. But only a few days later on May 2th, I'm off again on the road!

The red line starting at the top of the map and going southeast toward Tokyo was the first leg of my journey. The rest continues on to Osaka, and then back to Niigata via the expressway along the Sea of Japan. The blue arrow shows where I am at the time of this post, Shizuoka City.



Some folks have asked to have Skype sessions with me. While on the road it is difficult to arrange such direct sessions. I am not always in a quiet place with time and a good Internet connection. I need all 3 simultaneously! When at home I always have a quite place with Internet, and I can usually arrange making the time, but while on the road, it is very seldom I have all three factors at the same time. And this morning when I did, the person seeking to Skype with me was off line!

For the time being I may not be able to continue much on my project of adding more chapters to "The Two Babylons" article on this site. Maybe I will complete it next month.

[The Hitchhiker's Woe: leaving Valuables in the Vehicle](#)



My hitchhiking adventure to Aomori on March 6, 2015 was both wonderful and traumatic! Wonderful in that it was on a day of good warm weather with relatively little waiting for the next car. Traumatic in that I left my suitcase in car number 7, and my tablet PC in car number 9!



This is Miki who lives in the city of Noshiro. She was driving from Tokyo and had not slept all night. I was throughly into a deep conversation with her about the false teaching of the evolution of life. Her job is helping to

bring new life into the world; She's a midwife! Miki took me to a parking lot of a convenience store at Higashi Noshiro. There I took photos of her. Here she is holding the sign I was carrying that says Noshiro, which was the next city toward my destination of Aomori. I thanked her and she drove off, but to my dismay I saw that my suitcase wasn't on the ground next to me! I left it in Miki's car!

What to do in such a situation? I had no way to contact Miki. I could only pray that Miki would return to the spot she left me as soon as she noticed the suitcase, or that she would contact me eventually via Facebook for she had my name written on a tract that I gave her. I waited and waited, and I prayed and prayed. I also called a friend in Aomori and told him of my trouble. I could not access my Facebook account from my location for I had no WIFI, so I asked my friend to access my Facebook account for me. He did but there was no friend request from Miki. At the time of this post though 4 days later, there is still no friend request from her.

After about two hours Miki returned with my suitcase! Was I overjoyed! She apologized for taking so long to notice it, and I apologized for causing her trouble to drive all the way back for me. I take the ultimate responsibility.

I had lost two hours and had only a bit more than an hour left of daylight. After only a few minutes, another lady stopped for me. She said she saw me hanging around the parking lot of the convenience store and wondered what had happened to me. The lady took me to Futatsui which is about 10 kilometers further up the road. I still had 100 kilometers left to my destination.

It was now getting dark and from experience it has been often difficult to catch a ride further past Futatsui. Rather than use a sign and wait at the traffic light, I decided to walk up the mountain road. When I'm in a lonely place often the driver will have compassion on me and stop. Sometimes they will pass me, make a U-turn up the road, and come back for me. Such was the case today. A man who runs 3 food stores returned for me. He was going all the way to Hirosaki which was better than I hoped for! Hirosaki is in Aomori ken and only 40 kilometers short of my final destination.

The man's name is Mr. Kimura. He runs three food shops with 21 employees. I often get rides from company presidents. Mr. Kimura wanted to take me to his shop in Hirosaki and treat me to a meal of one of his food products, but because we saw I might be able to catch the 7:21 p.m. train from Hirosaki station rather than the 8:13 p.m. later train, we opted for the earlier train. In my haste to catch that train I quickly disembarked without checking if I left anything behind. I made the train with only a minute to spare, but to my dismay, my tablet PC was not with me! I realized I left it in the car or perhaps might have dropped it when running to the train station. I had no way to contact Mr. Kimura. At the time I didn't even know his name or the name of his shop! I only knew he had three food shops and the cities they are located.

The next morning after waking up a new thought occurred: I had told the driver where I work! It was a place he knew of. Hopefully, he would bring my tablet PC to the place. Sure enough, Mr. Kimura contacted my work place. He

sent one of his employees to bring me the tablet. In the process, I learned his name, his phone number, and the name of his shop. The next time I come to Hirosaki I hope to visit him.

More photos



A lady who took me to Sakata from Tsuruoka. She is a former English teacher. She went out of her way to take me to Sakata, 20 kilometers away, for that was not her destination.



The lunch that driver #4 gave me.



Young man in car #6 holding a tract by John G. Hartnett that exposes evolution as a pseudo -science.



Car #6: A mother with her son and daughter who took me to Akita station.

First Hitchhike Adventure of 2015: Niigata to Osaka



The green line shows my route along the Hokuriku and Meishin expressway from Niigata in the north to Osaka in the south.

January 16, 2015: I had been intending for months to visit my good American friend from the State of Arkansas, Roger. I've especially been meaning to tell him about my new understanding of the [70th Week of Daniel](#)! He lives in the big city of Osaka, Japanese second largest city. Though Osaka is 550 kilometers (344 miles) from home which is 125 kilometers (75 miles) further than Hirosaki in Aomori (my usual destination), it is actually easier to hitchhike to Osaka than Aomori. This is because of an unbroken expressway most of the distance. When I hitchhike to Aomori, I'm mostly traveling on a regular road with stoplights.



The first driver to pick me up.

It was raining the previous evening but good weather the day of this trip. I took public transportation (680 yen or about \$6.00) to Sakai Parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway. Sakae is a convenient place to hitchhike because I can go from there 3 different directions, either to Tokyo, Nagano or towards Osaka which includes Toyama, Ishikawa and Fukui Prefectures. But the parking area is not so big, and sometimes I've had to wait long periods to catch a ride, often an hour, sometimes two hours, and once 3 hours and 40 minutes!

I used to stand near the entrance ramp just before cars re-enter the expressway, but now I stand close to the concession stands where people walk after parking their vehicles. I learned this gives me more opportunity to catch a ride. Anybody who notices me or the A4 paper sign which shows my destination, I try to make eye contact with them and ask them if they would take me. Most say no but some stop to talk and encourage me. And doing so proves to them I can speak and understand their language. One reason why a person may not pick me up is because he or she fears the foreigner (me) cannot communicate with them in Japanese.

Though I have waited for long periods at Sakae parking area, today the very first man I met offered me a ride! He was going to Kashiwazaki, about 40 kilometers away. This was good for me because it took me to a parking area past Niigata Prefecture's second largest city of Nagaoka where most of the drivers would be exiting the expressway.

The young man took me to Ozumi parking area just past Nagaoka. This parking area is smaller than Sakae, but more than half of the traffic will be traveling past the next large city of Kashiwazaki in the direction I want to go. After a relatively short time, a printer from Niigata City took me to Yoneyama service area just past Kashiwazaki.

Yoneyama is much larger than either Ozumi or Sakae, but much of the traffic will only go as far as Joetsu City, and some of the traffic will go toward Nagano Prefecture. It's possible to go to Oaaka through Nagano, but the distance is longer. I would only accept a ride from a man going through Nagano if he were going as far as the cities near the southern edge of Nagano near Nagoya. That would definitely make it work going to Osaka via Nagano because it would be more than half the distance in a single ride. But such a scenario is rare.

After close to an hour wait at Yoneyama I caught a ride from a man going to Toyama city. He took me to Arisoumi service area, a good distance of 125 kilometers, the furthest in a single ride so far today.

After considerable wait for over an hour, a sweet couple from Ueda City in Nagano took me to Oyabegawa service area which is past Toyama city. Oyabegawa SA is large with many cars, but most of them would be going only as far as Kanazawa City in Ishikawa. I needed a ride that would take me past Kanazawa, and preferably to somewhere in Fukui Prefecture.

A gas lady gas station attendant approached me and asked my destination. She said she would tell the customers about me and maybe one of them would offer me a ride. I have been helped before by gas station attendants. A few minutes later she walked me to me with a cup of hot coffee in her hands! I'm not supposed to drink coffee because I consider [caffeine an evil addicting drug which is harmful for health](#), but I accepted her gift and drank it. I don't want to offend the Japanese who show me much kindness.

After 30 some minutes a lady going to Fukui offered me a ride. She took me to Onagatani just before Fukui city. From that point I was more than halfway to Osaka and absolutely positive I would make it that day.

A man saw my Osaka sign and told me he would be going a different direction, to Nagoya. But I realized that he could still take me further down the Hokuriku Expressway before he gets to the junction of the Meishi Expressway from where drivers can go either south to Osaka or north to Nagoya. The man then offered to take me as far as Kanda parking area just before the Maibara junction.

Kanda is a small parking area and I regretted getting off there. I could have gotten off at Shizugatake, a much larger service area though a shorter distance from where the man picked me up. But after only a few minutes, a lady saw my Osaka sign and offered to take me to Taga Service area. Though Taga is not far from Kanda, it is right on the Meishin expressway with all the traffic going my direction.

At Taga after 30 minutes or so, I approached a truck driver who offered me a ride to Suita Service area in Osaka! This was my exact destination and the end of hitchhiking that day. I arrived just a little after 5 p.m., 10 hours after I left home. From Suita it was a short walk to a bus stop from where I caught a 220 yen (\$1.75) bus ride to Minami Senri station, and from there a 15 minute walk to Roger's apartment. Total transportation that day was 900 yen or about \$7.50. The Shinkansen (Bullet train) would have cost 22,000 yen

(\$175.00) and by plane 33,000 yen (\$275).

Year 2014 – A record year for hitchhiking



The graph shows distances hitchhiked from 2005 to the present.

In 2014 I hitchhiked 28,352 kilometers (17,720 miles). That's 4304 kilometers or 2690 miles more than year 2013– a record to date! The older I get, the easier it is to catch a ride! ☐

December 12, 2014 Adventure to Hirosaki





70 year old man who took me to Akita City. He says he has been married for 50 years.

Today for the first time instead of hitchhiking on lonely Route 345 along the Sea of Japan, I took the train 25 kilometers further to Gatsugi station so I could hitchhike on Route 7 which has more traffic. It was cold but it wasn't raining or snowing as it was the previous week.

Five drivers took me to Hachiryu which is the beginning of a free expressway. I opted to get off there even though the driver said he was going further. Hachiryu (means 8 dragons) is an ideal place to hitchhike because the preponderance of traffic is going the direction I need to go – north. They want to take advantage of the free expressway that goes north from that point. Not many cars would be going south from Hachiryu because the road is a tollroad going south. Tolls are expensive on non-free expressways. Only those people who are in a hurry or those who can easily afford it will take them.

After over 30 minutes wait for a car to stop for me, I was getting desperate. In less than two hours it would be dark. Darkness ends further hitchhiking that day. Finally a lady stopped! I immediately jumped into her car without asking her destination. What a mistake that was! I assumed she would go at least as far as Higashi Noshiro, the second exit going north and another good place to hitchhike. But I was dismayed to learn she would get off at the first exit, Minami Noshiro. I knew both from experience and logic Minami Noshiro is a bad place to hitchhike! Most of the traffic would be going the opposite direction toward where I came from, to the south and not north toward my destination. The lady knew from the sign I was holding that I was going both north and east from that point. Why would she think she was helping me? She wasn't. She actually hindered my journey by picking me up! Nevertheless I was courteous and thanked her. She was on her way to a hospital to be treated for a cold. I gave her a few drops of my peppermint oil and told her to rub it on her nose. Since I have been using peppermint oil, I hardly get a cold anymore.

I knew God would have to do a miracle for me to get me out of my fix. And sometimes He uses my mistakes to get me to meet people I would not have met otherwise.

A man stopped for me. Sure enough, he was going south. I told him no thank you and he drove off. Later I wondered if I should have told him to take me back to Hachiryu. I decided to do so with the next driver who stopped if he or she was going that direction.

After a considerable wait, another lady stopped for me. She was also going south, but when I told her I was going north to Hirosaki and would be passing through Odate (the birthplace of the dog Hachi of the film of the same name starring Richard Gere) , she said she would take me to Odate! It is her home town and it would give her an opportunity to visit her mother. The miracle I

needed! God is good!

The lady is a nurse. Nurses often stop for me. She was glad to hear the Message I shared with her from the Bible. She called me a “happiness doctor.” I really wanted to take her photo but she said no. She is 40, a mother of two daughters, and her husband is 43 centimeters taller than she is! He is 190 cm tall. Not many Japanese are taller than me. I’m 183 cm.

December 5, 2014 Hitchhike Adventure to Aomori



Truck that took me to Aomori City
from Murakami in Niigata.

I wore my warmest coat, hat and gloves for another adventure to Aomori on a cold rainy day. I stood again for more than an hour showing passing drivers my A4 paper sign that says “Tsuruoka”. The place was on [Route 345](#) which runs along the now turbulent [Sea of Japan](#). For some reason there was a lot of trash on the road and sidewalk where I stood. Workers arrived to clean it up. They got closer and closer to me which caused me to walk further up the road to get out of their way.

Finally a driver stopped for me but he took me only 2 or 3 kilometers down the road. Now I was in a windy area. I used my umbrella to shield myself from the wind and intermittent rain.

About 15 minutes later I prayed, “Oh God, please send a car to take me at least to Route 7!” *Immediately* a car with a man and woman stopped for me. They were headed in the opposite direction, the direction I had just come from. “You’re not going to catch a ride to Tsuruoka standing on this road!”, the lady said. “Come with us and we will take you to Route 7 which has more

traffic!"

I knew she was right. Route 7 runs parallel to Route 345. It connects to Route 345 about 25 kilometers from where I was standing. However the man and woman wanted to take me to a point on Route 7 which was closer, and to get there they had to go the opposite direction from my destination. There was a mountain range separating Route 7 from Route 345, and to cross it, they had to go backwards from the direction I was heading. Nevertheless, I agreed to go with them.

About 30 minutes later we arrived at a convenience store on Route 7 in the area called Asahi. I have stood there before several times. "Look, that truck has Sapporo license plates!", said the lady. "Ask the driver to take you." And so I did. Sapporo is the largest city in the northern island of Hokkaido. I knew the driver would be going to Aomori Prefecture, and maybe even to Aomori City where I could stay even cheaper than I could if I only went as far as Hirosaki. Aomori City is a port town in the northern part of the main island of Honshu, some 400 kilometers from where I was in Asahi Town, Murakami City. Ferry boats run from Aomori City to Hakodate in Hokkaido.

The truck driver seemed surprised at my request but he graciously agreed to take me.

It is not common for a truck driver to stop for me or agree to give me a ride. Most truck companies have rules that forbid taking on passengers. They don't want to be liable to a passenger in case of an accident.

The driver's name is Hideki Watanabe. Mr. Watanabe had been driving all the way from Okayama Prefecture, an area the other side of Osaka, some 800 kilometers away. He says he makes the Okayama – Sapporo trip every week! This means if the timing is right, I can meet him in a parking area in Niigata, perhaps even as early as next week when I need to travel again.

Mr. Watanabe said there was an accident on the Expressway in Toyama which closed the road and delayed his trip. If it were not for that, I would not have met him!

Mr. Watanabe was impressed with the music I played him from my tablet PC. When I return back home to Niigata I hope to post it on this site.

I'm using the tablet now to write this post. If I don't write up an adventure as soon as it happens, I often lose interest to write it later when home. Who reads this stuff anyway? If you do, please write me some encouragement in the comments below and perhaps I'll be inspired to write more often and even the past adventures.

October 10, 2014 Hitchhike Adventure to Aomori



Mr. and Mrs. Suehiro who took me from Niigata Murakami City to Kisagata in Yamagata, a distance of 150 some kilometers

October 13, 2014: Today is the first day of a major change in my life. I returned home from my trip to Aomori prefecture to an empty house. My beloved spouse has gone to America to help her daughter's large family of 7 children. Our dog, Lady, was also not in the house but I retrieved her from the lady who is caring for her when I am not home, Yoneko san, whose business is to care for dogs when their master is out of town.

Now that I find myself with more time on my hands, I hope to be more regular in writing about my experiences hitchhiking in Japan. I need to travel nearly every weekend some 400 kilometers up north.

October 10, 2014: It's was a cool Autumn day with a cloudy sky when I arrived at Majima Station on the Ouetsu Line at 7:40 a.m. The station is just 100 meters from Route 345, the road that runs along the Sea of Japan in Niigata Prefecture. The traffic is sparse. The drivers see the paper A4 size sign I am holding and drive on by. The sign says, TSURUOKA, nearly 100 kilometers further up the road, the next major city in Yamagata prefecture which is the neighboring prefecture just to the north of Niigata. Fukushima prefecture happens to be Niigata prefecture's neighbor to the east! FYI most of Fukushima is NOT the nuclear wasteland some people portray it to be. I have passed **many times** pass through Fukushima prefecture since the March 11, 2011, tsumami and nuclear power plant disaster. It's interesting that suddenly a large area of Japan named Fukushima gets the stigma of being a nuclear catastrophe like Chernobyl. Some people, even from the alternative media have called it, "worse than Chernobyl." How can the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster be worse than Chernobyl when you consider only one person that

worked at the Fukushima power plant after the disaster has died? And whether or not that person died as a result of nuclear radiation has *not* been validated!

I know without doubt the drivers of the vehicles passing by me take notice of both me and the paper sign I am holding. They all veer toward the middle of the road as if avoiding to hit me. Even if they didn't veer they wouldn't hit me because I am standing far enough away out of their path. The Japanese are taught to veer away from pedestrians when attending course in driver's school. The Japanese law has zero tolerance for drivers hitting pedestrians. That means even if a pedestrian purposely jumps in front of a vehicle, the driver is still at fault! You can now understand why a driver would take no chances. I wish they would implement such a law in Russia. The most dangerous thing to do in Russia is to walk across a road. The drivers won't even slow down and actually expect you to jump out of their way! I lived in Russia from March 1994 to October 1997 and know what I'm talking about.

It's sometimes a long wait to catch the first ride on Route 345. I have a beautiful view of the ocean which is on my right when turned around facing traffic. Seagulls often fly over my head to keep me entertained. The waves are sometimes choppy and water splashes from time to time all the way to the road where I stand. There is no traffic light to stop the cars but because the road is a lonely one I know from experience that drivers from other areas of Japan will stop for me when they see they are going as far as the sign says I want to go.

Today was such a case. After only a short 10 minute wait, Mr. & Mrs. Suehiro from Kanagawa Prefecture (the prefecture just southwest of Tokyo) stopped for me. They were going all the way to Akita Prefecture! This meant that they would be going past Tsuruoka in Yamagata prefecture and I would be able to skip Yamagata Prefecture entirely! They took me to the Kisagata road station in Akita.

After waiting 20 some minutes at Kisagata, Mr. Saitoh stopped for me. He said he would go to Akita City, a good distance up the road of at least 60 kilometers. Unfortunately he let me off right in the middle of town, a place not well suited for hitchhiking. The traffic was heavy but most of the drivers are not going very far. I have experienced hitchhiking there before and knew I might not catch a ride at such a place, and so I walked backwards pulling my suitcase with wheels and held out the sign of my next destination, NOSHIRO, some 60 kilometer further up the road.

The time was now 12:30 p.m. There was a train leaving at 1:43 from from a train station, Tsuchizaki, which was few kilometers away. I thought I might have time to catch that train if I started walking to the station immediately, but after an hour walk I realized I wouldn't make it. I often walked backward with my thumb out hoping to catch a car, but it was fruitless. The traffic was going by too fast with not much room on the shoulder of the road for them to stop.

At 1:40 p.m. I arrived at the closest point to Tsuchizaki station though still standing next to Route 7. A teenage boy approached me asking if I have a

problem.

"No problem," I replied, "I'm hitchhiking on my way to Aomori City."

"You don't have any money?" he inquired.

"I do."

I reached into my bag and handed him a Gospel tract which he received, and I shook his hand. Handshaking was not part of Japanese custom until fairly recently, say within the last 20 or so years. When I first came to Japan in 1972, I didn't like to shake hands with a Japanese person because they just didn't know how to do a good firm handshake. They do better now.

Though I missed the 1:43 p.m. train, I knew there would be another one around 2:30. I had plenty of time to catch it because the train station was now only a 10 minute walk. Around 2:00 a lady stopped for me and saved me the trouble of walking any further.



Mrs. Hanga

Her name is Mrs. Hanga. She is now the president of a construction company since her husband passed away a few years ago. Mrs. Hanga saw my sign that said NOSHIRO and told me she was going only part way, but it turned out that because she was going all the way to Takanosu which is past Noshiro by a different route, I told her I would be delighted if she would take me to Takenosu! It's much further down the road than I had hoped for.

As we approach Takenosu Mrs. Hanga pointed out the buildings that her company made. That included large stores.

**Six hundred kilometer hitchhike trip
home in record time**



Route from Hirosaki to Niigata

I left Hirosaki in Aomori Prefecture just after 7:00 a.m. and got home in Niigata city by 2:04 p.m.! This is about as good as it gets to travel 600 km or 400 miles in only 7 hours in 5 cars with very little waiting. What's more, the folks that picked me up made the trip really fun!

It's 200 kilometers further to take the Tohoku Expressway rather than Route 7 along the Sea of Japan, but because it is all expressway with drivers going long distances, the potential to return home sooner is high.



Yoshi and Junya Kudoh. They took me from Hirosaki to Shiwa service area in Iwate Prefecture.

I arrived at the Hirosaki / Owani Interchange of the Tohoku Expressway early just before 7:00 a.m. Within minutes two men in a black car pulled up and offered me a ride. They were two brothers, Junya and Yoshi Kudo who was the driver. They past by me once, decided to picked me up, and circled back around to get me.

After getting in the car Yoshi told me they are Japanese Mafia. He said he was in prison for 4 years! I didn't ask him what he did but said I hoped he learned from the experience not to repeat the crime he committed. But Yoshi didn't seem too certain he wouldn't do what he did again.

Since keeping hitchhiking stats from August 2003, so far 6 men have claimed to be in Japanese organized crime. All were friendly and treated me with respect. And of course you can be sure I treat them with respect! They stopped twice at parking areas to rest during which time they bought me ice creme and something to drink. They were on their way to the coast of Miyagi Prefecture to go fishing. I saw their fishing poles. The coast of Miyagi was one of the areas devastated by the tsunami of March 11, 2011.

Shiwa service area was rather desolate with only a few cars. Rather than just hold out my sign, I approached people walking and asked them their destination. After only a few minutes I met Mr. Sasaki on his way to Chiba which is just past Tokyo. He would be passing the Adatara Service area in Fukushima. When I asked him to take me to Adatara, he willingly obliged my request.

Mr. Sasaki is from a town on the Pacific coast in Iwate but he works and lives in a city in Chiba Prefecture. His job is leveling out playgrounds, school grounds and sports areas so that when it rains water doesn't collect anywhere. The ground has to be flat but slightly higher in the center to cause water to flow away. The height to width ration is so slight it's imperceptible to sight.

At the Adatara Service area I met a lady walking her two toy poodles. I bent over the pet the dogs and asked her how far she was going. She replied Koriyama City which is just past the junction of the Banetsu Expressway, the road I needed to take. I knew she wouldn't be going my way. I then complimented her about how lovely her dogs are, and walked away.



Mrs. Harumi and her two toy poodles. She went 100 kilometers out of her way to help me get back home!

A few minutes later the same lady with the dogs came up to me in her car while I was hitchhiking near the exit of the parking area that leads to the expressway. She asked me my final destination. Though I told her Niigata she nevertheless offered to take me to the Bandaisan Service area in Aizu – 100 kilometers out of her way to Koriyama!



Tomoe Okubo who took me to Niigata City from Aizu in Fukushima.

After only a few minutes wait at Bandaisan Service Area, a lady with Ishikawa license plates offered to take me to Niigata. This is on her way home to Nanao in Ishikawa. When I got in the car I saw a book that looked like a Bible. It was a Bible! The lady, Tomoe Okubo, is a Christian and her brother is a pastor. She rejoiced knowing that I am a Christian and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ! Tomoe said that she was coming from Koriyama city where her son is attending high school. It was Sunday and she thought to go to a church in Koriyama that morning, but because her home in Ishikawa is so far, she decided to head out early. God blessed her and me both as a result of her decision not to go the church that morning!

Meeting other Christians for fellowship and worship is indeed a good thing, but organized religion today has become so corrupted that it's hard today to find a good Church to go to. I told her it mostly has to do with the pastor, what kind of man he is, that makes the church good or not. Many American churches are preaching a false prosperity Gospel! It's the *preachers* who are living in prosperity, not their poor members who give to them!

Adventure to Aomori via a new route



The red line shows the route to Hirosaki I took this trip. The blue line is my normal route.

In order to save a bit more money, rather than take a train from Niigata city to Murakami, I decided to take that train only as far as Shibata. This placed me directly on Route 7 rather than Route 345 on the Sea of Japan. The last two times hitchhiking on Route 345, I had to wait over an hour to catch the first ride. I thought perhaps my chances would be better on Route 7.

The first driver was a professional cook. He took me only as far as Tainai City, a few kilometers down the road.

The second driver was a lady who saw my sign (I often hold up A4 size signs in Japanese showing my destination) which shown my next destination as Murakami city. But she was going only as far as the entrance of Murakami and dropped me off at a place I had rather not have gotten off at.

The day was a traffic and pedestrian safety campaign day of the Niigata police department. There were many traffic cops visible. One policeman saw me hitchhiking and told me it was dangerous to stand where I stood on the road. It wasn't just any road, but a major national highway he said! But there was plenty of room on the side of the road for cars to stop. I didn't feel any

danger in the least. Nevertheless the policeman took down all my personal information and let me go after advising me to take a train!



Hiroaki Abe, the truck driver who took me to Tsuruoka City in Yamagata Prefecture.

Now I felt I was in a yet more difficult situation. I prayed I wouldn't see the same policeman again and get a ride quickly. After walking up the road a couple more traffic lights after only a few minutes I saw a man walking up to me. His name was Hiroaki Abe and he offered to take me as far as Tsuruoka City in his truck! It's not common that truck drivers pick me up these days. Mr. Abe is a very friendly guy. We had constant conversation and he even became my Facebook friend!



Pedro who took me from Tsuruoka to Shiwa SA in Iwate Prefecture

At Tsuruoka after a relatively short wait, an older man saw my Sakata sign and offered to take me there. His Christian name is Pedro and is one of the few Japanese I've met with some Christian background. When he said he was going all the way to Morioka city in Iwate Prefecture, I decided to go with him rather than go only 20 kilometers further with him to Sakata. The route to Iwate took me on roads crossing Yamagata Prefecture that I've never been on before. And it took me to roads and places such as Shinjo, Yokote and Yuzawa, cities I haven't been to in over 30 years. Pedro took me to Shiwa Service area on the Tohoku Expressway.

As you can see from the map above, going the way Pedro took me is actually a much longer route than the one I normally take via Route 7. Readers of my hitchhike adventures on this blog know that I usually take the Tohoku Expressway on my way back to Niigata, but not from Niigata to Aomori. Today was a notable exception. The reason why the Tohoku expressway is not necessarily better going north than it is going south is because the amount of traffic significantly decreases past Morioka City. But because Pedro was going so far, I applied another principle I learned in hitchhiking: *The closer I can get to my destination in a single ride, the better!*

I was now at the Shiwa Service area just before Morioka, but after an hour wait I still couldn't find a driver going past Morioka! I could have saved that hour wait by going all the way to Morioka with Pedro. As it turned out, I accepted a ride from a lady going to Morioka with the hope that my chances would be better from Morioka. But who knows? I believe nothing happens by accident. Maybe God wanted me to meet that particular lady.

The lady dropped me off just on the other side of the toll gate of the Morioka interchange. It was a good place to hitchhike because the cars are going slow at that point, but because I've often been kicked out by expressway workers from the area near the tollbooth (where normal pedestrians do not go), I usually hitchhike at the normal highway which leads to the toll booth. But the lady told me the cars would be going too fast to stop for me at that point and wanted to drop me off near the toll booth, and so I let her.



Midori and Miki who took me from Morioka to Hirosaki in Aomori Prefecture.

I prayed desperately to get a ride before being asked to leave the area. In only a few minutes, two ladies stopped and offered me a ride. Their names are Midori and Miki and they were on their way to Mutsu City in Aomori. Because Mutsu is on the east, they would not normally be going past Hirosaki but would take a junction that leads to Hachinohe, way out of my way. I therefore asked them to drop me off at the Iwatesan Service Area which is just before the junction that goes to Hachinohe. But the girls seemed to like to talk to me and decided to go out of their way and take me all the way to Hirosaki! This was not only more time for them, but it cost more money for the toll on the expressway. Most of the expressways in Japan are toll roads. Midori and Miki went 63 kilometers out of their way to take me to Hirosaki.

I got to Hirosaki by 6:30 p.m. about an hour later than I usually do. Perhaps I won't be taking the Tohoku Expressway route to Aomori in the future. □