

Mr. and Mrs. Kudo take me to Aomori city



Hiromi, baby Hayato and Taiki

July 17 It was another day after rainy season. I walked a little over a kilometer to route 7 in Hirosaki hoping to hitchhike to my friend's home in Aomori city, a distance of only about 44 kilometers. But most of vehicles consisted of city traffic and I waited what I considered to be longer than usual, about 30 minutes.

A young man, Taiki Kudo with his one year old son Hiyato strapped to a child-seat in the back, pulled up and offered me a ride. Taiki said that he saw me standing with my Aomori sign and circled back toward me hoping I would still be there waiting. He said that he was just about to go to Aomori city with his family and needed to pick them up first. I replied I wasn't in a hurry. So Taiki took me to his apartment building where we waited for his wife Hiromi to come and join us. I had a great time talking with them and they took me all the way to my friend's house in Aomori city saving me 810 yen train fare.

Picked up by young mother with two little boys



Mrs. Takahashi with 5 year old son Raima and 3 year old son Shuga who took me 478 kilometers toward my destination.

Monday, July 18: From Aomori city in northern Tohoku I needed to go in one day to Noda city, Chiba Prefecture, a distance of around 700 kilometers. It took me one hour to walk from my friend's house in Aomori to Aomori Chuo Interchange, the beginning of the Tohoku expressway, and it took yet another hour of waiting to catch the first ride. It was worth all the effort considering the very first car took me 70% of the 677 kilometer length of the Tohoku expressway! The driver was a mother, 30 some years old, Mrs. Takahashi with her two sons, Raima (5) and Shuga (3).

When I first saw Mrs. Takahashi waiting for the traffic signal just before the expressway entrance to turn green, I thought, "No chance with her! She has two little kids in the back seat!" And so I was therefore surprised when she turned into the gas station by the expressway entrance where I was standing and waved to me to come.

The front passenger seat was filled with belongings. Mrs. Takahashi had to arrange things a bit to make room for me and my suitcase. I greeted the boys and they were both very friendly. The older of the two, Raima, was quite talkative throughout much of the trip.

Mrs. Tahahashi said, "Let's have a good trip!" I was so happy to know she was going all the way to Nasu City in Tochigi Prefecture. This would take me past the big city of Sendai which is sometimes hard to cross.

It was the second time Mrs. Takahashi picked up a hitchhiker. The first time was with her husband. She took a young Japanese man toward his destination. I was glad too to be of some service to her in helping her keep her two boys from fussing with each other too much and making too much of a racket. Every time I turned around to talk to them, they would calm down.

Mrs. Takahashi seemed to be in a hurry to go home and often approached a

speed of 140 kilometers per hour! “Don’t worry,” she said. “The car won’t go any faster than this!”

I had a receptive audience of 4 hours to share with what the Holy Scriptures have to say about God, creation of the universe, the history of Adam and Eve in the Garden, why people became what they have become, why evil exists, why we are all criminals in the sight of our Creator, and why we need to be saved. Mrs. Takahashi was impressed to know that Adam put the blame on his wife for eating the “apple.” Most people in the West have heard all these things in church much of their lives, and they have either accepted them as fact, or rejected it all to the point they don’t care to listen anymore. It was the very **first time** for Mrs. Takahashi to hear it, and because she seemed interested I was glad to keep sharing more. I’ve *hardly ever* been turned down by a Japanese person an offer to share with them stories from the Bible. I can only think of a handful of times out of 10s of thousands of people I’ve talked to in the 34 years I’ve lived in Japan.

We stopped for a restroom break and Raima held out his hand toward mine for me to hold hands with him to walk with him and his mother toward the parking area facilities. He then followed his mother into the restroom.

The next day at the Miyoshi Service area on the Kanetsu Expressway heading home, I met another young mother with her son. They were from the USA and are now living near Yokota AFB. There were many American service personnel with their dependents around who were on their way back to the Air Force base after a field trip. I told the lady I’m about to hitchhike to Niigata. She didn’t believe me at first. I showed her the picture of Mrs. Takahashi and sons that I took with my cell phone. “It wouldn’t happen in America” the lady replied. I tend to think that Japan is now, “the land of the free and the home of the brave”, more than the USA is, don’t you? America *used to be* so back in the 19th century.

[Picked up by two members of the Akita Prefecture Parliament](#)





Akita Parliament member Jun with me in the background. Jun is holding my cell phone trying to include Teru Kun in the photo, but missed him because he couldn't see the camera viewer from his position.

July 15: Today I hitchhiked in 11 vehicles from Niigata city to Hirosaki city in Aomori Prefecture, a distance of about 430 kilometers. The highlight of this trip was car #9 with two lawmakers of the Akita Prefecture Parliament, driver Obara Masateru and front seat passenger Numaya Jun who took me from Akita City to Odate City, a good distance of around 100 kilometers. They told me to call them Teru Kun and Jun.

It's an absolute first for me to get picked up by active politicians! Once I was picked up by the former mayor of a city of 50,000 people, Mr. Kobayashi of Niitsu city, but he was retired then and not serving in any public position.

Well, you can imagine the fun I had talking to these guys and telling them all the things I heard about crooked American politics! **Two Illinois governors in a row**, George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich were arrested and convicted on corruption charges. George Ryan is sitting in prison and will be there till July 4, 2013, and Rod Blagojevich was recently convicted and about to go to prison.

Teru Kun and Jun became Akita Parliament members just last March. They said they're good guys who will not be corrupted by money. They promised never to take a bribe. I tend to think they are sincere because they had nothing to gain by picking me up, and they gave me presents when parting, an expensive looking bottle of grape juice, Japanese daikon and cucumbers. And they seemed to know nothing about the Secret Societies in America that formulate policy behind the scenes.



3 presents from Teru and Jun

Japanese public servants receive quite good salaries, perhaps double of many other countries. Teru Kun and Jun acknowledged that they are well paid, but said that the budget of a politician is quite high and they have to struggle to make ends meet. The meeting in Odate they were required to attend would cost them 10,000 yen each. They referred to themselves as "poor politicians." Indeed their car was nothing fancy, just a regular type of vehicle that most salary men drive.

Hitchhike adventures since the March 11th earthquake



Mrs. Ayami who took me from Hirosaki to Namioka city in Aomori Prefecture on July 9th.

I haven't felt it appropriate to write about my adventures meeting people hitchhiking in Japan since the catastrophe of March 11th. People are still suffering and I want to do what I can to help those who are going directly to the disaster areas to treat people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

This is just to say I'm still hitchhiking, people still pick me up, and I still need to travel this way to do my job and save money at the same time. Since March 11th I hitchhiked 22 days in 75 vehicles and traveled 6400 kilometers. Some of the people I've met have been directly involved in the relief efforts. One man came from as far as Sasebo city in Kyushu to Soma city in Fukushima.

On July 11th I passed through Fukushima city on the Tohoku Expressway. Radiation levels in Fukushima city are higher than other places in Fukushima Prefecture where people are still allowed to live, even higher than in Soma city which is 20 kilometers closer to the damaged nuclear power-plants. This is because the wind happened to be blowing toward Fukushima city when one of the plants had a chemical explosion. The no-go zone is a 20 kilometer radius around the powerplants. The inhabitants of that area have not only lost their homes and land, but any livestock and crops they happened to have.

Merely passing through Fukushima city presents no danger from radiation. The Fukushima city people have not been reporting any radiation sickness. So far not a single person has died from radiation, not even the ones who worked

close to the plant to cool down the reactors. For this reason IMHO I consider comments from so called "experts" that Fukushima is far worse than Chernobyl to be nothing but hype and fear mongering! According to world-nuclear.org 30 operators and firemen died within three months since the Chernobyl accident. It's now been four months since the Fukushima powerplant meltdown, and **not one power plant worker has died** or is even ill from radiation!

Day 5 after the Japan earthquake: Hitchhiked back home



The red line shows the route I took back to Niigata. The right arrow points to one of the nuclear powerplants in trouble.

March 16, 2011: While in Kobe I joined a NPO project and worked nearly all my waking hours for two days to setup a new web site, Help Japan 2011, to help raise aid for the earthquake victims. The next day I traveled back to my home in Niigata partly by train but mainly by hitchhiking. I started off at Kanda parking area on the Hokuriku expressway in Shiga prefecture. It was surprisingly cold and snowing the front license plates of the cars where covered with wet snow and unreadable. I brushed off the snow from several license plates to determine how far the driver may be going.

Parts of the Hokuriku expressway run very close to the Sea of Japan. There was no threat of tsunami danger as they rarely occur on this side of Japan. However, on 26 May 1983, [104 people were killed in close to the Sea of Japan in Akita](#) by a tsunami after an earthquake.

You can see from the map that I traveled back to an area closer to possible danger. But I do not believe Niigata will be affected much even if the

situation in Fukushima worsens.

God was good to me and I saved thousands of yen getting lifts as far as Uozu city in Toyama Prefecture in 5 cars. It was past dark by that time and so I took trains the rest of the way. To save money, I took local trains. However at Joetsu the trains were stopped due to a plastic sheet that had wrapped itself around a power-line of the train. In order to get home that day, I was forced to take an express train from there for which I was charged an extra 1150 yen express ticket to Nagaoka city. For some reason I wasn't charged for an express ticket the rest of the way.

The first driver was a young man who listened intently to the Bible stories I shared with him. The second was a father and son who run a Buddhist Temple. The son was dressed in a Buddhist monk's clothing and had a shaved head. They asked me to explain who Jesus Christ is and what He means to the world, and of course I was more than glad to do so.

You may wonder why I would talk of matters of faith at such a time of crisis as Japan is in now. Most Japanese are very apathetic to matters of religion, but now they are seeking comfort, and are open to hearing answers from the Bible about their problems. One man even told me to pray for the earthquake victims!

One of the drivers was a young single lady, Kana Chan, who lived in Australia for two years. Thank you Kana Chan for the ride!

[Day after the Sendai earthquake – hitchhike adventure from Tokyo to Osaka](#)



Saturday, March 11, 2011: The morning after the major earthquake in the Pacific not far from Sendai, the largest city in the Tohoku area, I accessed the Internet news and saw more horrific photos of destruction by the tsunami.

A friend with whom I stayed with said, "Over 10,000 people were killed!" I began to weep but learned later he got it wrong. So far the number of reported deaths is 1/10 of that number, but it will probably go much higher.

I have been to the city of Sendai many times, and even lived there once from 1976-1978. The year I left there was a major earthquake that destroyed part of the city. I used to visit from time to time the very towns along the Pacific coast that were destroyed by the tsunami.

The purpose of my trip is to search for employment to earn more money. Jobs are now scarce at home, and my previous source of income was terminated. I had considered visiting friends in Yaizu city in Shizuoka Prefecture, but because their house is right on the coast, I didn't consider it a safe place to be at this time. Osaka was a better option for me. I had only 1500 yen left in my pocket, but I knew it would be enough to get me to Osaka. This is why I headed the opposite direction from the destruction in Tohoku. I am not running from danger. I know another earthquake can happen at any time no matter where I am, and I'm now in Osaka, not far from Kobe which was destroyed in 1995 by a major earthquake.

The trains in Tokyo all stopped immediately after the earthquake, but the next morning they were all running again. I took a 260 yen train ride to Fujigaoka station on the Denentoshi line and walked from there to the Kohoku Parking Area on the Tomei expressway. In just a few minutes a car with 3 men offered me a ride as far as Nagoya.

Part of the Tohoku expressway in Shizuoka Prefecture runs right next to the ocean, and there was a tsunami warning alert out. The police closed that section of the expressway till the alert was lifted. In spite of the alert, vehicles waited in a long line for many kilometers in anticipation that the alert would be lifted. I don't know how long the first cars waited but we had to wait only 15 some minutes.

In order to keep some of the impatient drivers from speeding after the expressway re-opened, a police car and an expressway maintenance truck led the procession of traffic at a slow pace at first, only 60 kilometers per hour. A few kilometers later they increased the speed to 80. Finally both left at the next exit and the traffic took off! The driver in the car I was in started to cruise at 150 KM an hour and reached up to 180 KM an hour from time to time, 60 KM over the limit. It would have been a hefty fine and his license taken away if he was caught.

From Nagoya a 31 year old man took me to Kyoto. From there it was only a 360 yen train ticket to Osaka.

During times of major catastrophes such as the earthquake, the Japanese become more open to hearing about God and matters of faith. The man listened intently as I shared with him the meaning of the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The first 3 chapters of the Bible hold the key of understanding all the rest of the Scriptures. Most Japanese have no interest in religion per se, but are highly interested in history. I try to share faith with them from this point of view.

As i write this I am siting in my friend's apartment in Osaka walking the news about the earthquake on CNN. I know as much as you do about it. Osaka is far from Sendai and nobody here even felt the quake.

Niigata to Kanto – tramatic 4th 2011 hitchhike adventure



Walls of snow along road in Japan

February 1, 2011: I started out very well with the first ride on my trip to Noda city in Chiba prefecture, just east of Tokyo. The purpose of this trip was to attend a fellowship meeting at 7 PM. It was good weather and I left home at a very good time, just after 10 AM. Tokyo is 300 kilometers away but it usually takes me less than 6 hours, only half a day. I found that weekends are best for hitchhiking, but today was a weekday, a Tuesday. I finally arrived in Noda at 8:25 PM!

After waiting only a minute, the first driver took me all the way to Sanjo city, the entrance of the Hokuriku Expressway. He kindly went out of his way to do so. From there I took a 180 bus ride to Sakae parking area on the Hokuriku. The preponderance of the traffic was local. Hardly anybody was going to the Kanto plain.

After waiting at Sakae PA in Sanjo for over 90 minutes, I accepted a ride from a young single couple to Ozumi parking area. This is further down the road but just past the Nagaoka junction going towards Joetsu city which is not the direction I needed to go. However I knew I could walk to the other side of the expressway and catch traffic that could go toward Kanto.

I found my situation at Ozumi even worse than it was in Sakae! There was much snow and ice in the parking area, and most of the traffic was going back in the direction I just came from. After waiting another hour and a half, I accepted a ride from a lady going to Nagaoka city. Normally I would not want to get off the expressway in Nagaoka, but the situation was so that my only hope was to hitchhike from Nagaoka down National Highway route 17 and get back on the expressway – this time the Kan'etsu – to catch a car to Kanto.

The lady took me only as far as National Highway route 8, too far to walk to route 17. Snow was piled up so high along the road I had very little room to stand between it and passing cars. A police car approached me and the officer said in very good English, "Don't enter this road! There are many truck accidents here!" Oh my, things could hardly be worse! It was already past 2PM and I have yet 250 kilometers to go. I couldn't walk further down the road without disobeying the police officer. The only option was to stand at a rather poor intersection with more room to stand hoping to catch a car. Cars whizzed past me. Drivers coming to route 8 from the road perpendicular to it were only 2 or 3 every few minutes.

Finally, after waiting there for about 20 minutes, an older man in a pickup truck took pity on me and offered me a ride. He went out of his way to take me to route 17.

At route 17 I caught the next ride within a minute! The driver offered to take me to the Yamaya Parking area on the Kan'etsu. I had never been to Yamaya before because it is a rather small parking area with few cars. It took a while to find it. Snow in that area is one of the deepest in all of Japan. Walls of snow higher than our heads lined the roads everywhere making navigation harder than it would have been without them.

The driver, being a local man, was able to figure out Yamaya's location and took me to the back entrance. As soon as I got there, I saw a man and told him I needed to go to Kanto. He looked at me warily and asked me who I was, and if I didn't have anything dangerous in my luggage. He was a Yamazaki bread truck driver with a load of bread going all the way to Tokorozawa in Saitama and offered me a ride to Higashi Tokorozaka station. But because of company rules, he couldn't go any faster than 80 kilometers an hour which meant at least 40 minutes longer than most cars would take me. But in this case, it was a "bird in the hand" situation and I was happy just to get to Noda. It turned out being an hour and 25 minutes late wasn't such a big problem after all, for the meeting continued to 10 PM, and I had a good time and made new friends. The trip was worth the effort.

My return trip was the exact opposite of the previous day. It only took one car with hardly any waiting to get all the way back home. A 25-year-old man named Takuma who sells wasabi offered me a ride to Niigata station but then decided to take me a bit further to my area.

The first hour of our conversation was just asking him questions about his life and background. It didn't seem to be leading to anything deeper. I feel I owe to every driver who picks me up a message of Salvation in knowing the Author of life, Jesus Christ, but because Takuma wasn't asking me anything about what I do, I didn't see any openings to the subject of Biblical/spiritual things. Finally, I got the inspiration to ask him if he knew the story of the Garden of Eden. This worked and led to deeper talk! Most Japanese are open to hearing bible stories, and Genesis chapters 1-3 is a good place to start because it explains so many things about why the world is as it is today.

Saitama to Niigata – 3rd hitchhike adventure 2011



January 25: Today in 4 cars I hitchhiked back to Niigata. The third driver would have taken me to Nagaoka train station, but because it was not too late, still 4PM with a hour of sunlight left, and because I would have had to wait 50 minutes at the train station for the next train, I decided to try to try to hitchhike a bit further. It was now the beginning of the rush hour, in spite of many cars on the road, nearly everybody was ignoring me. The ones who didn't gave me a cross arm sign meaning, "NO!". I always turn my eyes away from them when they do that and don't take it personally. This is the only type of rejection I find no trouble to handle. ☐

The 20 minutes wait on snowy route 8 proved indeed to be worth it, for Miss Mao, a young lady in her 20s, took pity on me and turned around to pick me up! Miss Mao is one of those special people who I know God especially has His eyes on, for she has love for others, and she listened intently as I told her stories from the Bible.

Hamamatsu City to Tokyo – 2nd hitchhike adventure 2011



Mr. Yasunori who took me to
Nihonzaka service area

January 24: Today I traveled in 3 vehicles to a train station in Kawasaki which is close to Tokyo. Two of these were trucks which is pretty rare seeing that only 6% of the vehicles are trucks and hardly any of them on the expressway. It was a fine day and I had a great view of Mt. Fuji.



Mt. Fuji as seen from the Tomei
Expressway

[Niigata city to Hamamatsu – second hitchhike adventure 2011](#)





English speaking couple who took me
to Echigo Kawaguchi

January 22: This morning it snowed constantly, not too hard but enough to make me want to take a train the first part of this 500 kilometer plus journey. My destination was a port town in beautiful warm and usually sunny Shizuoka Prefecture. I knew the enough though it continued to snow in Niigata, on the other side of the mountains separating Niigata and the Kanto Plain, it would be sunny with little or no snow.

The train took me 30 kilometers to the Tsubame Sanjo train station which is next to the Hokuriku Expressway. From there I caught a 180 yen bus to the Sakae Parking Area. It connects to the Kan'estu expressway, a straight shot to Tokyo.



Snow at Echigo Kawaguchi

After only a few minutes wait I met a young married couple who were on their way to Muika Machi. They took me to Echigo Kawaguchi Service area, one of the snowiest areas of all of Japan. After I while I started to regret accepting that ride because I had a relatively long wait to catch the next ride, about 40 minutes. I had a warm coat and wasn't cold but it continued to snow as I stood in the parking area. Finally another young couple with a 3 year old son offered me a ride to Tokyo.



Mr. and Mrs. Maehara and 3 year old
son who took me to the Kohoku PA

It's easy to hitchhike to Tokyo from Niigata. The trick is to somehow get on the other side of Tokyo to the Tomei expressway which runs to Nagoya. This couple was going to Yokohama which meant they would be going in the direction I needed to go, and they took me to the Kohoku Parking Area which is on the Tomei – as good as it gets! It was just past 3PM, but now I was in a warmer dry area with a blue sky overhead and much traffic passing by. Success looked pretty certain.



Portuguese Water Dog



Man with Matsuda Mx5 sports car who took me to Ashigara SA.

Two more drivers took me as far as Ashigara Service Area with a beautiful view of Mt. Fuji toward the north. At Ashigara I saw an unusual looking dog. The owner said it is a Portuguese breed. I found on the internet what I think is the breed, a Portuguese water dog. But the dog on that page sure does look cuter than the one I saw!

It was now 5PM and soon to get dark. From experience I knew Ashigara was not an ideal place to hitchhike at. The traffic splits into two parts of the parking area. Standing too close to the place they merge was not fruitful because the cars are going too fast at that point. Mt. Fuji slowly faded into the darkness and I began to despair wondering if I would make it to Hamamatsu that day. I still had 200 kilometers left. There was plenty of traffic going at least that far or further, but everyone was ignoring me.



Mt. Fuji as seen from Ashigara just at sunset

By 5:45 PM it was already dark. I stood in a place with a bright lamp and tried to make eye-contact with the drivers passing by standing as close to the passing traffic as I deemed to be safe. One thing I've learned though the years is that no matter what the conditions I find myself in, the drivers who truly have a heart for those in need will stop no matter what. It's usually just a question of time. And of course there is the "God factor". I find when I have to wait the longest, it's usually because God has somebody special He wants me to meet. And today again it was so. At 6:40PM a man in his 30s on his way to Nagoya offered me a ride. His name is Mr. Inukai – a rather rare family name in Japan. It literally means "Dog care".

Mr. Inukai is an interesting man because he had a problem of mental illness but largely recovered from it. He still has a problem with speaking – something I can identify with because I also have had Moses' handicap as written in Exodus 10:4 being 'slow of speech and of a slow tongue" At one point Mr. Inukai said he didn't want to talk anymore because his mouth was tired; it took him considerable effort to communicate orally which is something I understand very well.

I got to my destination in a good time, just before 9PM.

First hitchhike adventure 2011



Koji, an employee of a nuclear power plant. He took me from Misawa city to Hichinohe.



Family who took me from Hachinohe to Iwatesan Service Area

On January 9th I hoped to hitchhike from Misawa City in Aomori Prefecture back home to Niigata but I ended the day 130 kilometers short of my goal! The main reason was accepting a ride from Mr. Suzuki, (24) from Kushiro in Hokkaido, who I met at Iwatesan Service area. He asked me if I would mind a stopover in Morioka city so he could do some shopping. Because Mr. Suzuki would be going all the way to Fukushima and therefore passing the Atadara service area which is just before the Ban'etsu junction, I didn't mind the delay, for he said it would be only "30 minutes or so." I assumed he meant he was going to the center of Morioka city, only a few minutes drive from the expressway.



Mr. Suzuki who took me to Fukushima Prefecture

from Iwate

It turned out Mr. Suzuki wasn't really going to Morioka city at all, but a small town 76 kilometers to the east of Morioka, and most of the way on snowy mountainous road! This "30 minutes" Mr. Suzuki referred to really only meant the shopping and didn't include the 3 hour car ride just to get to the shop and back to the expressway! Besides that, we also stopped several times for rest and once for dinner. By the time we arrived at Adatara, it was half past midnight! I didn't want to go further with him to Tokyo because it would be nearly 4AM when arriving, but there were too few cars in the service area parking lot to make it worth the effort to hitchhike further that day. So I looked around in the inside customer area and found a nice comfortable soft bench to lay down on. It was warm but brightly lit. I used a piece of luggage for a pillow, pulled my wool hat over my eyes, and had a good 6 hours sleep. Nobody bothered me and I think hardly anybody even noticed me or cared if they did. If in my home country, the USA, I'm sooner or later an officer of the law would be yanking on my feet waking me up abruptly and asking me to leave. This is what happened in 1978 when sleeping my own car in a national park when traveling from Washington State back to Chicago.

The next morning there were still too few cars in the service area with no Niigata license plates, and so I opted to leave Atadara service area and take the regular road. Route 4 is only a 20 minute walk from there. In 3 cars and just before noon I returned to Niigata city. The final driver was a nurse on her way to Toyama Prefecture. She rescued me after waiting some 30 minutes at the cold and snowy Bansaisan Service area on the Ban'etsu expressway.

[Hitchhike stats for 2010](#)



Happy new year to all!

Yesterday, December 30th, I returned home after a very fruitful 12 day trip to the Kanto and Kansai areas of Japan. Kanto includes Tokyo and Kansai is all of the area of Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and surrounding towns and cities. The

total distance hitchhiked in Japan this year was 15800 kilometers.

The graph below shows a comparison of the distance I hitchhiked this year compared to 4 previous years. As you can see, it was a bit less than last year's total of 19530 kilometers.



Graph of distances hitchhiked in Japan through the years

[Hitchhike from Tokyo to Osaka less than 6 hours](#)



Today in only two cars and a short 260 yen train ride, I made it from Tokyo to Osaka, right to the location of my destination, in only 5 hours and 45 minutes! This is very good time considering the distance of 500 some kilometers. Normally when going to Osaka I'll arrive after 8PM, but today 4:15PM. If traveling from Niigata it would take me normally from 10 to 12 hours. Once I did it in 8 hours, also a record.

The first driver took me from Kohoku PA on the Tomei expressway to Ebina service area. He is a 7/11 employee.

After waiting approximately 30 minutes at Ebina, a tanker truck that carries some dangerous liquid chemical took me the rest of the way, an older man 66 years old, and the owner of the company. He said his load of liquid was delivered and he is returning empty.

The man had only 4 hours sleep the previous night and was both tired and sleepy at times. I kept up a conversation with him to keep him awake. It worked and we arrived to Osaka without incident.

Adventure hitchhiking to Saitama city



Today is the first day of another extended road trip. I hope to use this Christmas season to tell the Japanese people about Christ, and the best way I know how to do that is by hitchhiking when traveling and talking to the drivers individually.

I hitchhiked nearly 300 kilometers in three cars to the Kanto area which includes Tokyo and vicinity. My destination was Noda city in Chiba prefecture.

Two of the drivers went out of their way for me, the second driver, Mr. Tokaji very much so because it meant at least one hour extra of his time. He took me to Omiya station in Saitama City from where I took a train the rest of the way. There is a direct train from Omiya to Noda.

Mr. Tokaji said that he is a religious person. It is uncommon for me to hear such statements from Japanese people. Most say they're not interested in any matters related to faith.

Mr. Tokaji asked many questions about the Bible. He was impressed when I told him that both Christianity and Judaism helped mold Japanese culture from as early as the first century A.D. and that the chant "washoi washoi" that the Japanese say when carrying the *Omikoshi* is a Hebrew word meaning "carry". Only a tiny percentage of the Japanese know of their Jewish/Christian roots.

Total cost for transportation today: 400 Japanese yen.

Adventure hitchhiking home from Misawa

city, Aomori Prefecture



Nov. 14, 2010: Today I hitchhiked back home from Misawa city in Aomori, a distance of 570 kilometers, in only 8.5 hours and 3 cars! This was probably one of the quickest and easiest days ever hitchhiking such a distance.

Misawa is home to a large US Air Force base. Many of the people of the city can speak English. I'm sure they benefit economically from the base.

The first driver was a young father, Mr. Nagano, with his two sons, 5 and 6 years old in the back seat. He works as an air traffic controller at Misawa Air base and his wife works part time at a MacDonaldds. Mr. Nagano was on his way to Hachinohe, but because he had extra time, and because he seemed to enjoy speaking to me in English, he took me way out of his way down the Hachinohe expressway to Orizumi Service area. From there it was much easier to get a ride rather than from the expressway entrance at Hachinohe.

The next car were 3 older ladies on their way to Mizusawa in Iwate Prefecture. They took me to Shiwa Service Area past Morioka. I was now in an excellent position to get to Adatarara Service Area in Fukushima, the service area just before the Ban'etsu expressway junction. I needed to travel along the Ban'etsu if I hoped to get home that day.

The last driver, Mr. Motoki, was on his way to Maebashi city in Gunma. It was pretty much a straight shot for Mr. Motoki to go down the Tohoku expressway, get off at Sano in Tochigi prefecture, and take the national highway route 50 toward Maebashi from where he would pick up yet another expressway, but he instead opted to take me to Niigata via the Ban'etsu expressway. It was a bit longer for him to go toward Niigata, but it is also a straight shot from Niigata to his destination of Maebashi.

It was dark by the time we reached Adatarara SA, and Mr. Motoki didn't want me to hitchhike in the dark, so he offered to take me home. It was probably better overall for Mr. Motoki to return the way he did, for he avoided at least one traffic jam and saved an extra 1000 yen in toll by staying on the expressway. On the weekends in Japan, if you have a "ETC card", you can travel any distance in Japan on the expressway for only a 1000 yen! This is only a fraction of the toll on a weekday.

Adventure to Akita station



I needed to travel from Niigata to Aomori city for important business the following day. If I hitchhike, I like to give myself two days to be on the safe side to be on time for such matters. Aomori city is 470 kilometers from home and mostly by regular highway. I often can only get as far as Akita city – a little over half way – where I spend the night at a friend’s house. But this time I couldn’t spare an extra day. That meant a long ride by the slow, non-express train to save money.

There was an hour and a half wait time between changing trains in Akita. Rather than take the train to Akita station, I opted to get off at Kamihama station which is close to Route 7 and half way between Sakata city and Akita city. The train station man was surprised I got off at Kamihama. He said, “There is nothing here!” I told him, “I’ll find something to do!”

After only a few minutes wait at the traffic signal just in front of the station, a man in a recycle truck carrying what he referred to as “sleeping resources” (a junk motorcycle and some metal trash) picked me up and said he could take me just before Akita city, about 80 kilometers! I knew I could still easily make the train connection at Akita station if I couldn’t hitchhike further past Akita.

The man, Mr. Shindo (63) is a metal recycle dealer. His business card says, “Metal recycle with a smile”. Mr. Shindo’s philosophy of life is similar to mine. “Life is a journey” he says. It began to rain and so he decided after a while to take me all the way to Akita station. On the way Mr. Shindo bought me a nice lunch of fried noddles and introduced me to his lady friend at the noodle shop. By hitchhiking, I made two new friends, got a free lunch, and saved 1000 yen of train fare. Life is indeed a journey.