



Christmas 2002



This year has been a very busy and exciting one. We made a trip to Japan in May of this year, Tsuchino's younger sister and her sister's son visited us this fall. About a month after that Tsuchino's eldest sister visited along with her daughter and two of the daughter's children. We also did a major remodeling project in our kitchen and added a gas insert to our wood burning fireplace in the family room. I also joined Nikkei Jin Kai and a few months after I joined was elected to the board of directors. I am the first and only non Japanese member of the board. I have also continued with my Japanese language classes at Bellevue Community College.

We went to Japan in May of 2002 to attend the 4th Worldwide Conference of The Japanese International Marriage Society. The meeting was held in Beppu, Japan. Beppu is located on the island of Kyushu which is where Tsuchino is from. The city of Beppu is about 100 miles from Tsuchino's home town. Tsuchino is Vice-President of this group, and I was scheduled to give one of the speeches at the conference. I gave the speech in Japanese. Because we don't speak Japanese at home my skill level was virtually nil. So I started to study Japanese at Bellevue Community College. The college has an excellent 2 year program in Japanese. I had taken a year of Japanese when I was studying for my Masters Degree at Cal, but never used it and forgot most of it. I decided I had better take the BCC Japanese course so as to not make a complete fool of myself.

We also decided to make a complete vacation of this trip. We were traveling with Carl and Kazuko Stout who are friends of ours who live in Yelm Washington. Kasuzo is the President of the International Marriage Society. After the conference we went to Kumamoto and stayed at an Onsen (hot spring) Hotel. We also went on a tour of Nagasaki. We then went to



Tsuchino's family home in Fukuoka accompanied by Carl and Kazuko. We stayed a few days in Fukuoka and then boarded the Bullet Train for a trip to Yamagata which is Kazuko's home town. While at Yamagata we attended a major festival being held in the city. The young men from 15 of the Buddhist temples in the surrounding area dressed up as a dragon and competed for who could put on the best show.



Tradition has it that an angry dragon can only be mollified by sake so the local merchants put out tables and were giving free sake to all who passed by. After only a few blocks I was feeling no pain. Since we were the only Americans at the festival we were invited to view the parade on the mayors reviewing stand. We were also interviewed by the local Television station.

From Yamagata we went to Sendai to visit our friends the Ishiyama's. Hitomi Ishiyama is a member of the International Marriage Society and we have known them for several years. After a couple of days with the Ishiyama's, Tsuchino and I returned to Fukuoka with an overnight stop in Tokyo in route and the Stouts returned to Yamagata. During our travels around Japan we used a rail pass for the Bullet Train. The pass allowed us to ride as much as wanted for a full week.



In late August Tsuchino's younger sister Miyako and her son Sinji visited for two weeks. This was their second visit to America. Since Miyako and Tsuchino are close in age and essentially grew up together Tsuchino is close to Miyako and really enjoys her visits. When we go to Japan we stay at Miyako's house for the majority of the time we are in the Fukuoka area. While they were here we took them to Victoria, Canada as well as touring around the Puget Sound region. We went to Yelm and visited Carl and Kazuko.

About a month after Miyako and Sinji left Tsuchino's eldest sister and her daughter Miyoko came with two of her children, Toshi who is Miyoko's son and Hiromi her eldest daughter. They stayed for 10 days and we did the tourist thing again. Since it was now the later part of October and the weather was turning into our rainy season, we could not go to as many places as we wanted to. We did go to Levenworth, a Bavarian style village that is quite popular. We spent a full day at Seattle Center and The Space Needle. When we went to our Condo on Hood Canal our neighbor gave us 5 Dungeness crabs that he just caught. That evening we had a fresh crab dinner.



I am still going to BCC and studying Japanese. I have already finished 2 years of Japanese and would have had to go to the University of Washington to take the third year. Since now is a very inconvenient time to be traveling to Seattle everyday for a one hour class, I decided to repeat the second year Japanese course at BCC. Foreign language is very difficult for me so I needed the time to consolidate and practice what I had learned. I am putting a lot of emphasis on Kanji this year. In the Fall of 2003 I plan on taking 3 year Japanese at the UW.

I have also been busy building a web site. The address is www.MikeandTsuchino.com. of course the address is all lower case but most Web Browsers will convert the entry to lower case and the Capitalizations make it easier to read. Since we now have a Domain of our own you can send us email at Mike@MikeandTsuchino.com or Tsuchino@MikeandTsuchino.com.

If you have an internet connection visit our site. I have many pictures and several slide shows on the site. A

copy of my book is also there. The site is only about 50% done and I already have over 20 pages. I even have a page in Japanese.

I have been learning a lot of new things while building this site. I use a software product called Fusion 7 and I have the site hosted at a company in the Midwest called ANhosting.com. The cost to host a site is only \$7.95 a month. The building of the site naturally flowed from a project I have underway to scan all our photographs into the computer and store them on CD's and DVD's. I noticed sometime ago that many of our photographs were fading and changing color. I searched around for the computer hardware and software needed for loading and editing photographs and movies on the computer. The editing software allows me, to a large extent, to correct the effects of photograph aging. Once the photograph is digitized and stored on a CD it no longer ages.

Sometime ago I started to write a book about our experiences in Japan and what happened when we tried to get the military to give us permission to marry. After our trip to Japan this May I decided to finish the project. After all I have been half heartedly writing this book for several years, so I figured it was about time to get serious and finish it.

As the writing progressed the scope of the book changed and became not just our experiences in Japan but our life story. The title is "Tsuchino, A Japanese War Bride" subtitle "My life with a Japanese War Bride". The book on our Web site. You are welcome to read it.

My plans are to have it translated into Japanese and get it published in Japan. I would like to have Tsuchino write about the same things so the reader can see the same events from both her and my point of view. I haven't convinced her to do this yet. Getting a translator is the next decision I have to make. If I use Tsuchino I am convinced she will change what I wrote. While reading the book she has said several times "That's not what happened".

Because this is our retirement home and we expect to stay here until we can no longer physically take care of the house or ourselves, we decided to fix the house up just the way we really liked it. The first project we did this year was a kitchen remodel. The house was only about 7 years old when we brought it and the kitchen was "kind of" up to date. We had white tile counter tops and we wanted to replace them with granite. We also wanted to upgrade the sink, which was white porcelain and scratched easily. The



stove top range was

stainless, which did not match the granite. You all know the rest of the story. We ended up changing out all the appliances as well as adding instant hot water to the sink and under cabinet lighting, etc. The end result was great and we are really enjoying the new kitchen.



The picture to the left shows the before view and above is the after view.

We then added a gas insert to the wood burning fireplace. This gives us a real cozy family room attached to the kitchen. A full outside paint job completed this years projects. Next year I have to replace some concrete slabs that were cracked during the big February earth quake.

The last major event this year was - I sold my boat. As most of you know I have had a 28 foot Bayliner since March of 1994. We have had many good times on the boat and made many whale watching trips with our friends to the San Juan Islands. But, since Tsuchino's injury on the boat and her hip replacement surgeries we have not used it as much as we had in the past. Last year we took it out only 2 times (once to only burn off the old gas in the tank) and the year before we took it out only once. It didn't make much sense to have a boat and not use it. Just the cost to moor the boat coupled with personal property taxes, license fees, insurance and maintenance fees and we were looking at well over \$3000 before we even took it out on the water. So I finally bit the bullet and sold it. I sure missed it. It would have been nice to take our visitors out boating.



Before I close I wanted to share with you a picture I took from our back porch. The fog was rolling in over Lake Sammamish just as the sun was setting.

Tsuchino and I are in relatively good health. Tsuchino has recovered from both her hip replacement surgeries. She has no pain and has flexibility far beyond what the doctor said she would have. She still has problems after sitting in the car for a while and she gets pain and cramps after getting out of the car. WE don't know if this is because of the hip surgery or a problem in her spine that they discovered. She has a vertebrae that has narrowed and it is putting pressure on her spinal cord. She only has numbness now and

they will not do anything until she starts having pain.

We are planning on taking a trip to Australia next fall. The Australian chapter of the International Marriage Society is having a convention in the Fall of 2003 and a group of us has decided to go. Australia is one of the places I have wanted to see so we decided we should go while we are still able. I will cover the trip in my Christmas letter for next year.



We hope that you have a happy and joyous Christmas

Mike and Tsuchino