

We Wish You A Happy New Year!

We've enjoyed good health, new wonderful neighbors, and fun with friends and family, this year, 1997. The biggest event was a 6-week trip (October to December) to Japan, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand. Here are some of our highlights:

JAPAN (10 days): A nostalgia tour of Tokyo, Toyama, and Kyoto, we visited friends (including the midwife who helped us deliver Beau) and family (two great grandparents and Megumi's mother!), who treated us royally. On November 1, we dressed Beau in a magnificent kimono and hakama (traditional pants worn with kimono) for a special ceremony, to receive the blessings and protections from the Shinto gods at Heian Temple in Kyoto. Called Shichi-Go-San (literally "7-5-3"), we were there with many families with girls aged 7 and 3 and boys aged 5. Japan is Beau's favorite country!

MALAYSIA (3 days): Even with the yucky air from the horrific forest fires, we enjoyed Kuala Lumpur, with its scorpion farms, the Hindu shrine in a magnificent limestone cave, lots of touristy things and swimming in the hotel pool.

AUSTRALIA (24 days): This magnificent and huge country offered us miles of beaches, endless sand-castle building opportunities, and the mighty sandbugs (75 bites on Megumi's left arm!) We stayed in cheap hostels, motels, posh hotels, camp grounds, with friends, and even luxuriated for two nights and a day, first class on the famous Indian-Pacific train. We ate lots of fish and chips, bought 9 different boomerangs, fed kangaroos and a koala, and kept our ice cream cones from the emus!

NEW ZEALAND (5 days): Such short time to visit this gorgeous country! Driving a car, Nathan and Megumi missed the nice slow pace of cycle-touring, but enjoyed playing in the waves of the Tasman Sea and riding a steam engine with Beau. It was fun to see what had changed and hadn't since our trip 8 years ago..

In addition to the big trip, we took a small trip to Hawaii in February, our second year at the Hawaiian Juggling Festival, and a few short trips to the mountains. Travel with a 5 year old is EASY especially when we think back 5 years to our Trans-Siberian baby days...!

Other news:

BEAU started Kindergarten this fall and loves it. He commutes to school on his Trail-A-Bike (a single-wheeled "bicycle" connected behind another bicycle), while humming, with mom and dad. On Saturdays, he attends a Japanese school. Right now, he likes Japanese food much more than the language. He's reading well (mostly English) and a joy to be with. He loves designing new, fantastic and original paper airplanes. His interest in trains hasn't slackened and he was *almost* satisfied with riding 38 trains on our trip.

NATHAN learned to ride a unicycle this year, and plans to start commuting to work, juggling, on one wheel soon. Fullmoon mountain biking and, of course, juggling, continue.

MEGUMI continues to build her storytelling career - come see one of her performances!

Take care and have a great 1998!

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Beau's Headline News at www.dtinet.or.jp/~bicycle/beau.html
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