

Essay-Visiting my friends in New Zealand (February–March, 2015)

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“We’ll go to New Zealand.”

An Air New Zealand flight left Tokyo International Airport at Narita for New Zealand on 24th February, 2015. The trip this time started with a phone call placed by Prof. Ichikawa (my senior) one day. He said, “Mr. Mooten (who had taught English for one year at Edogawa in 2004) seems to be unwell these days, so I would like to see him. I’m nearly eighty years old. Don’t you think of seeing Mr. and Mrs. Mooten?” I thought it would only become a trip to go and see them. I asked my wife, Keiko, if she was willing to go. She nodded rather unexpectedly, which was a pleasant surprise for me. I told Prof. Ichikawa that my wife would join and that, after seeing them and he would leave Auckland in a week, according to his plan, we would continue our trip onward.

Looking back on my visits to Oceania I took students to Monash University near Melbourne, Australia in September and stayed at a hotel near the university in 2002. The following years from 2003 till 2005 I enjoyed my home-stay in Bruce and Jenny’s house in Auckland, North Island, New Zealand for three weeks each to accompany Edogawa students at Auckland College of Education (later turned into a part of the prestigious Auckland University in 2005). In 2009 I had a home stay at David and George Bonds’ house, escorting a dozen students to Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin, South Island, New Zealand. My wife and I had thought of going to New Zealand one day. I thought it would truly be a good opportunity to show her around New Zealand and see my home-stay families and friends there again on a private tour this time.

In Auckland

Prof. Ichikawa, Keiko and I saw Dev. and Pat. Mooten after a long while. Mr. Mooten had taught students at Edogawa University for a year in 2004. Edogawa University has sent most students to universities in Oceania since its foundation in 1991 to make them internationally-minded and to learn Living English. Prof. Ichikawa, the then chairperson, Department of Mass Media, invited Mr.

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Mooten to teach at Edogawa University. He had displayed his remarkable teaching skills. Patricia, his wife and counsellor in psychology, came together. Prof. Horie was a dean, Faculty of Sociology, and a Director, Institute of Language Education. As a teacher of English I helped Dev. and Pat. to lead a life in an apartment near Edogawa University in one way or another. They came to my house in Ichikawa, Chiba Pref. on a festive day. I was also worried about them, sent e-mail and they were fine. Prof. Ichikawa left Narita in the evening on 23rd one day earlier than us. He stayed in Auckland till 27th. I had some job to do on the 23rd and Keiko and I left the following day. Until 27th February my wife and I would stay in Auckland before flying to Christchurch.

On 25th Mr. Mooten picked us up near the pier in front of a hotel where Prof. Ichikawa was staying. We went to Auckland College of Education, now a part of Auckland University. We took memorable pictures. Later we went to the stately Harbour Bridge, which was made by a Japanese bridgework company and formerly the only toll road in New Zealand. As the government promised, it is toll free unlike Japanese toll roads, which continued to break promises to turn into toll-free later. Most Japanese would be envious of this situation.

He took us back to his house and Prof. Ichikawa and I were glad to settle for hours there after a long lapse of ten years. Keiko admired Dev. and Pat. for their neatly and nicely built house with the spiral stair leading to a nice lounge down below. When I took them to Nagasaki in Kyushu, the southern main island and settled in a hotel facing the Nagasaki Bay, they uttered, "This looks like the scenery we see from our house in New Zealand." When I heard it, I had to think it was a bluff and they were boasting themselves, though they were well-reserved and decent people. Actually, the sea seen from their house had been even larger and more breathtaking. We saw a visionary and beautiful evening sunset for all again this time. Patricia was born in England. She was studying psychology in Lead University. Dev. Mooten was an exchange student from Mauritius, a small island in the Indian Sea to the far east of Madagascar close to Africa. He is a tall, nice guy, eager to study. Patricia took fancy to such a nice Oriental person. Two fell in love with each other in 1960s. They married happily, looked for a job and began to stay in New Zealand. Their children and grandchildren live happily. Fifty years had just passed since their marriage. We gave them a cloisonné with love birds/mandarin ducks meaning in Japanese "nice couple," commemorating their golden wedding. Besides, we took the Kamonotsuru wine from Hiroshima, which was tasted by the then U.S. President Obama, the scattered paperwork by Keiko's mother and our second granddaughter (Cocona)'s Origami paperwork. The next day Keiko and I had breakfast with Prof. Ichikawa. The Mootens came to see us near the pier and all went to Devenport across from Queen Street by ferryboat.

In Devenport

We went up the hill nearby. The picnic there was very enjoyable. Patricia, six foot tall, brought and laid a thick cushioned mat. Seagulls and pidgens were not afraid of us and came to be fed. We commanded a fine view of serene Auckland, City of Sail, with a population of more than a million where many yachts were seen. From a different angle we saw Rangitoto Island made by the eruption six hundred years ago.

A long beautiful beach was seen from another angle. A few steps down there was a cannonry

butt, which looked out of place. In another area there was a big hole deep inside, which was also a remain of a cannonry butt. The Russian fleet seemed to be coming towards New Zealand to invade her in 1880s. New Zealanders prepared themselves for their probable attack. This bastion was used in two World Wars. On a wide hill there were primary school kids enjoying hiking. One ten year old Japanese boy came up to us and asked us in Japanese. "Are you Japanese?" He was from Osaka and his parents had a Japanese restaurant in Auckland.

All went to a local library, which was made of wood in many ways, a very cozy area. After taking a walk, Prof. Ichikawa, Keiko and I returned to Queen Street by ferryboat. A grand 'going around the world tour' ship was clearly seen from us. We spent a little time over a cup of coffee inside the railway station. The railway takes people to Wellington, a capital of New Zealand. To return their hospitality in their house last night we invited Dev. and Pat. to a Japanese restaurant, 'Sharaku' close to Queen Street. There was a Japanese calligraphy, 'Ichigo Ichie' meaning something like 'You meet someone important in life anywhere.' I happened to have a picture in my smart-phone with my first granddaughter (Aina)'s writing the same words. Patricia praised her work, "At the age of nine she is so skillful in calligraphy." After dinner we parted with the Mootens. They went back to Devonport by ferryboat free of charge because of their old age. They said, "Come again." We are getting old, too. It is not easy to come to New Zealand again. Can we ever see them?

In Quake-stricken Christchurch

I had come to Christchurch only for a transfer to another airplane to Dunedin. Christchurch was a renowned garden city all Kiwi people loved and were proud of. I wished to see just the outside of the city even to smell the air of the city in 2009. I was with a JTB staff and had to give up the idea. Students were around me, so no way.

The city was struck with a big earthquake in September, 2010, when a score of Edogawa students were there at Canterbury University, and another one in late February, 2011.

Some Japanese students from a different institute got killed because their building collapsed like many other buildings. The city suffered a big damage. From Edogawa University we sent some solatium. The second earthquake in February caused liquefaction of the ground 10,000 times more than the one in September, 2010. There was a daily TV broadcast from Christchurch with news of injured Japanese students. The reporter was, surprisingly, my student. Naoko Kudo was a graduate from Mass Media Department, Edogawa University. New Zealand had given her a big chance of letting her work as DJ for a radio channel for a year in New Zealand before her graduation from Edogawa University several years before. Later she married and had a name, Hiruma. She daily sent us reports of what was happening there. Many questions were given to her and she was responding properly and precisely like a professional reporter. She became well-known to many people at the time. (No one in Japan thought of the approaching big earthquake in Japan. On 11th March, 2011 the Great East Japan Earthquake caused Tsunami, which killed 5,500 on the spot and stoppage of Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, a big leak of radioactivity dubbed as a possible China Syndrome. Historically, it was definitely one of the worst accidents/incidents in Japan. Besides, Japanese people have been informed of the probable occurrence of a very big metropolitan earthquake in Tokyo,

whose epicenter is just down below the metropolis, within thirty years.) The front part of the Cathedral was destroyed. All people living there had cherished the artistically built Cathedral so much. All Kiwis were proud of it. By its side a Christian preacher was giving a sermon in a loud voice and in casual wear. Surprisingly, a high school student began to knock buckets, which sounded like the drum. The preacher's voice was not easily audible. He was taken aback just a while, but continued his sermon even in a louder voice. Around the plaza there was a large cloth with a calligraphy, a big *Dharma Chakra* in Chinese, which was hung from a rope. They shared the sentiments of loss and despair. Everything could be allowable.

To make up for the loss of the damaged Cathedral for some time the idea of building a Cathedral made of cardboard by a Japanese architect a few kilometres away was adopted. We saw the Cathedral and prayed. I touched the eaves, which were, of course, not of cardboard, but of metal. Seeing me, other sightseers laughed. This Cathedral was tall enough, but should not remain as a permanent one to be stately enough.

Back to the centre of the city where trams ran, we saw the hard-hit area again. The buildings around had their windows fall. Some tall buildings had apparent cracks. Were there fierce battles? Or was it an open set for some cinema? They would have to be torn down. Later, Keiko and I realized that other buildings had already been demolished and that they were the ones still left behind. We found so many open spaces. We wished that it was a sign of recovery. Of course, vacant lots were the first step towards recovery. There had been a big earthquake devastating the city scores of years before. This time again. Recently, the city knew that there was a fault line just down below. Can the largest city in South Island, with the third fourth of a million population, be recovered? In unutterable dismay, beautiful girls were selling fashionable goods inside the containers, not shops. The city was on a grid with Oxford Terrace and Cambridge Terrace crossing the grid. The city was nicely built by graduates from Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Natural disasters surpass the human power.

We went to Canterbury University to find out what happened there and if the university could be used again as a language teaching site for Edogawa Students. No damage was detected to our eyes. Everything seemed to be going on smoothly there.

Two weeks after my return, Prof. Ichimura, the then President of Edogawa University asked me if Christchurch could be a place for students' home-stay. I answered, "Yes, it will be a good opportunity for students to learn about an earthquake, too. I thought of a probable earthquake in Tokyo within thirty years, a probable eruption of Mt. Fuji in the near future, possible terrorists' attacks which may take place anytime. Japan often has disasters.

In Dunedin

I enjoyed home-stay in Dunedin for three weeks in September, 2009. Giorge, a Chino-Kiwi, and her Scottish husband, David Bond were my family. Before being dispatched, I wrote my hobby as swimming. The staff at Otago Polytechnic repetitively asked this family to accept me in their home. David was a breaststroke Masters champion when he was within the age bracket of 55 to 59 years. He took me to Moana Pool before six o'clock to swim early in the morning a few times a week. (Dan-

yon Loader practised there and won two gold medals in 200 m and 400 m free style in Atlanta Olympics.) It was so dark outside. In Japan swimming pools are open after nine o'clock. It refreshed my body so nicely to swim early. I saw students at nine o'clock. There was plenty of time. This time, unfortunately, David was scheduled to be on a trip and I could not see him.

One day I received a letter from him and knew Gorge had died. They travelled to Madrid, Spain. When David was writing his diary by his bedside, she suddenly collapsed and passed away. I sent him a letter of obituary, minimizing what to write. I wished to visit her tomb to lay a wreath, but that could not be done. During my home-stay, she kindly took me to a few places. I found her at a shopping mall in the centre of the city. Then stopping shopping, she took me back to her house by her thirty-year-old Mitsubishi car. She advised me always to push back my front hair to look nice. She was working at a hospital, so kind and intelligent. I miss her so much.

They had no child. David once said that their nephew missed the chance of winning a gold medal in world boat race. Later I knew he won a gold medal in another world championship. David married his old acquaintance after a while. I sent him e-mail again, asking if he could swim with me. He said that he was no more swimming much. I might remind him of Gorge. I understood. Early in the morning, I walked to Moana Pool and swam. Nothing had changed. The next day I swam again. No way to visit her tomb.

My main objective, this time, was to see Mrs. Kerrie and her family. She was and still is a publicity chair, visiting Japanese colleges to ask Japanese teachers to bring in Japanese students to come to Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin. So almost each year, I hear from her and see her in Shinjyuku Tokyo. I sent her e-mail. By return she could see us on 4th March after her return from her business trip on 3rd March. She kindly invited us to visit her family in her house. So, on 3rd March Keiko and I were free. We decided to go to Baldwin Street, the steepest street, according to Guinness Book of Records. Prof. Takata, my former colleague had taught me. 3rd March was my first granddaughter's birthday. Somewhere in some street someone said, "Why do you travel on such an important day?" True. I felt sorry for Aina. Birthdays in Japan may not be so important. The Street was located in housing areas. From down below it looked like leading to Heaven. Tourists were taking pictures to show steepness of the street. We found a postman and talked to him, He said he always takes the side street and always goes down. We understood. People live above alongside the steep street. Such people must wait in their car to come up until no one is in the street, accelerate their car to the full, giving out strong noise and get to their homes at last. They can never put on the brake on the way. At a Thai restaurant Keiko and I had lunch. We went to a botanical garden nearby, which was orderly and admirable. We saw two Japanese high school students and talked to them. One wanted to graduate from the present high school in New Zealand and aims at entering a prestigious Japanese University, making use of some qualifications allotted to returnees. Keiko and I went farther on to enter the big campus of Otago University. In the auditorium a Japanese teacher from Hirosaki University was seen to make a speech. Later Japanese students began to play the Japanese Taiko drum. Dunedin prospers. Gold mine was found two hundred years ago and many gold miners lived there. Dunedin had been a capital of New Zealand. The former Mayor was a Chino-Kiwi and spent a huge amount of money to build a rugby stadium in Dunedin for World Cup. He was not reelected. Adjoining to Otago University there was Otago

Polytechnic, where I escorted students in 2009. Some remodelings were made. Still it was the same old Polytechnic. No students had been sent from Edogawa after me. Nearly at 17.00 when the shutter was coming down, I could not resist contacting someone there and dared to ask some staff to contact Mark, who fortunately happened to be in his office.

Mark came from his office and we enjoyed talking for a while over a cup of coffee. He treated me at the same old cafeteria. I was so happy and returned to my accommodation with Keiko. Kerrie picked us up at 17.30 p.m. We went to Ella's primary school first. She was ten years old and in her fifth grade. We waited for her to come out after her dance lesson. The school bought two horses recently. Kerrie was good at controlling horses. After a while, we went to Kerrie's home. It was an elegant home with a big garden. Ella's room was neat and splendid. Inside it was nicely decorated. Outside, she showed her good performance with the trampoline and was even rotating her body. It had side frames around to keep the performer safe. Kerrie said, "When I was a child, there was no side frame and one day I fell and had my shoulder broken." The trampoline with its sidebar was said to have been invented in New Zealand. How marvelous! Japanese Gymnastics Association should consider spreading such trampolines across Japan. There was also a tennis ball hitting machine for practice. Keiko and I were envious of their sufficiently big garden. They keep their pet named Keiko, equal to my wife. Kerrie explained that there lives a Japanese lady Keiko and that it was named after her. We brought Ella a frame with a cloisonné doll inside, a cute one showing both a boy and a girl in the same height. When I took Kerrie to a department store in Shinjyuku, Tokyo, I had heard her comment about different sizes, like chopsticks, tea cups, and so on for men and women. Kerrie had said, "They might look discriminatory to foreigners' eyes."

Kerrie was versed in Japanese culture and said, "It is 4th March, so not to delay Ella's marriage we must remove the frame as soon as possible." But she added, "It looks so nice and we'll keep it for a while." I uttered, "That is true, but this is not Japan, so you may not have to worry so much." Inside her house there were nice souvenirs on the shelf. Bill, her handsome husband, works for a major bank and is a nice sociable person. He has Maori blood, according to her. Late at night, Bill and Ella saw us off at the exit. Daylight saving time system delays darkening of the night, which is nice. She took us back to our accommodation by her car. Next morning we checked out. A six foot tall Liz in charge of English training kindly offered to see me after saying, "Oh, Mr. Kato." In 2009 she asked me every day, "What can I do for you today?" I once replied, "Oh, don't use that expression. You might have to work very hard to comply with my request. It's different from saying, What can I do for you tonight?" Such was a very indecent joke of mine. While my wife was enjoying shopping outside, Kerrie, Liz and I enjoyed talking at a coffee shop at Octagon in the centre of the shopping street.

There was a request sent from a Japanese company to translate some material. I asked Kerrie to copy the material because her husband happened to be working very close by. I waited on the staircase down below, where there came some senior executive unfortunately. Definitely, he caught sight of me. I had a quick bite to start translating the material and came back to my hotel to see my wife and rushed to the bus waiting at the Dunedin Railway Station which was considered to be the most beautiful one in the world.

Enjoying Nature and Its Scenery at Queenstown and Milford Sound

This was my second trip to Queenstown. The hotel room was good and spacious. Because of Yen's depreciation hotel accommodations, water, food, and all others were also very costly. We had reasonably-priced food prepared by a Peruvian woman by the lake side, hearing nice Latin music in a crowded restaurant. Some people from South America were working there. The next morning on the 6th March we took the sightseeing bus tour to go to Milford Sound, which was my first visit. From the panoramic roof of the bus we were enjoying scenery above. At some point we saw a Japanese driver in trouble with a car accident. In Christchurch an elderly Japanese-couple said that they would enjoy driving to Mt. Cook by rented car. There was some article in a local newspaper against allowing international license drivers to drive in New Zealand. We had no regret about not driving by rented car. From the bus we enjoyed all scenery there, snowy mountains, waterfalls. We saw dolphins, seals, sea lions nearby, which was really enjoyable. On our return we saw a cinema on the bus which was about a man from New Zealand breaking the world record in a car race abroad. I thought it was just a fiction. But it was not. The driver was still alive and kicking.

We returned to our hotel and that night we went out to eat. A female Japanese exchange student working at an ice cream shop recommended us to eat at the King's Burger. There was a long queue to eat the 'World's best hamburger' they said. It was truly delicious and voluminous.

On 7th we enjoyed sightseeing in Queenstown. The scenery seen from the one-man ski lift was excellent and really breathtaking. When changing the lift to the second one, Keiko jumped off or fell all of a sudden. I couldn't tell what happened. I was so surprised, but managed to see her riding a lift properly down below. After getting off the lift, she said later that her bag prevented her hip to fit and sit on the lift. What would happen, if she had lost her life here? I was in a cold sweat.

I wanted to show Keiko the thrill of Luge, which was like a go-cart. I rode a Luge again after six years and it was so much fun. Later my wife came. Unluckily her Luge did not run smoothly. What a pity! At night we tried venison and lamb at the same King's Burger. They were not so delicious unlike the beef we devoured the night before.

Bruce and Jenny after ten years

Keiko and I went to Queenstown Airport by bus. The third Sake bottle could be used finally. Because we were carrying sake bottles, we were quite lucky. At every airport we went, we did not have to wait in a long line. At each airport, we declared, "We are carrying fragile items." So all our luggage was especially cared for. We were able to check in earlier each time than other passengers waiting in a queue. At 14.30 the airplane left Queenstown for Auckland, which landed at 16.20. We went back to the same hotel by city bus to check in. After a while, I saw Bruce and Jenny after ten years. Wow, a moving moment! Exciting moment of seeing my host family again after a long time. I enjoyed home-stays there from 2003 till 2005, as I mentioned.

They came to pick us up and go to their married daughter's house. Jane had her first boy baby. The first grandson for Bruce and Jenny. In Jane's house there's going to be a celebratory party.

Jenny specially arranged for us to visit such a wonderful party. Thank you, Jenny. How thoughtful of you! I shook hands with so many. Jane's husband, two of his friends, Jane's parents-in-law, Scott, Jane's brother, who was working in Australia, also came. For Keiko it was even more difficult to know them.

Anyhow, it was a hilarious moment. Jane's father-in-law said that he would go to Cuba. "President Obama opened up our block and there would be nice business opportunities there," he said. We could not help admiring such a wonderful party Jenny and Bruce arranged for us. Keiko and I brought a frame with a cloisonné warrior helmet. Did it recall the war? I wondered if it was a proper gift to give to a new-born baby. Didn't we push Japanese culture on them?

On 9th Bruce had a job to do. We had a free day and we would do what we could do. Their house was waiting for remodeling, so we could not visit their house. They recommended us to go to Newmarket, which was gaining more popularity. After getting off the bus, we walked a little and I remembered there was a Olympic Pool named after Philippa Gould, a world record holder in backstroke in 1950s. I brought my swimming trunks always ready to swim and enjoyed swimming 400 m individual medley. Keiko kindly took some pictures of mine swimming there. Later, we took a bus to the airport. It was, by chance, the same bus I used to take to go back from college to Bruce and Jenny's house at Shackleton. How wonderful! Later on we took a shuttle bus to the airport and checked in at a hotel near the airport. We saw a male student from Nagoya, who said that he tried all his best to see New Zealand as much as possible in a week.

On 10th March we talked with a Japanese family working there and also a Japanese teacher of English from Kinki University early in the morning before riding the bus. On the airplane a young Kiwi lady sat next to me and, surprisingly, she was going to participate in the U.N. Disaster Prevention Conference being held in Sendai, 200 km to the north of Tokyo. I exchanged some words with her, but not any more, minding other people around. We should not annoy others by talking too much. I wished to talk, but desisted. It might have been a once in a lifetime situation, Ichigo Ichie. What a pity! We began to enjoy cinemas on the plane. Our fifteen day trip came to an end. We returned safely to Japan. I became seventy years old and was able to see many old friends in New Zealand.

In passing, Kerrie, Bill, and Ella came to Japan together in 2017. This time in October, 2019 they came again to enjoy Rugby World Cup. They visited my house, too.

(This was translated into English based on British spellings from my essay in Japanese in February, 2016, commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Association of Japanese and English Language and Culture to comply with an implicit request by Kerrie, "What did you write about, Prof. Kato?" Some minor changes were made to my Japanese essay. Thank you, all, to have accepted us, Keiko and me to your homes. I also hope that some students escorted by me may recall their own home stays and may, possibly, resume their study of English, if they have stopped studying English. Please read my prior essay-What do I expect of English Education in Japan? Reflecting on my experience as an interpreter for the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee in 1964. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics are being held shortly.)