



## Kagaya: Back to the Future

Yes, yes, I was on a search for “Old Japan” in western Honshu, but a guy must get back to his own time from time to time. After two full weeks of dedicated scholarship along the Sea of Japan coastline, where I sought out remote and ancient sites related to centuries-old Japanese culture, I concluded my visit to the Kanazawa region with a couple of days at the swank Kagaya Hotel on the Noto Peninsula.

Our maid got us ringside seats at a Takarazuka-style show in the hotel’s theater lounge. I took pictures, but I had difficulty capturing the image I wanted. My digital camera delays for a heartbeat before it actually takes the shot. I had to anticipate the action and hope for the best. Finally I got it just right, as seen above. Gee, do all digital cameras do that? It makes one yearn for a fast-shutter 35-millimeter film camera.

The Kagaya Hotel, situated on huge Nanao Bay within the 1,200-year-old Wakura *onsen* spa, may be the best Japanese/Western hotel in Japan. It has been voted as such by hotel and travel associations. The Kagaya is obscenely opulent in the eyes of this old Japan hand, molded as he was in the '50s and '60s, but the hotel bows sufficiently to Japanese traditions. *Tatami* rooms, Japanese food, *onsen* (hot springs) baths. Much is Western-flavored, but always there is the taste of Japan. We stayed in a bay-view suite in the old Kagaya building, the one on the right in the photo. The one on the left opened only a few years ago. Emperor Akihito once stayed in our suite when he was just a crown prince. We paid “only” ¥34,000. Suites in the new building start at ¥50,000. If you convert ¥34,000 to dollars, you get \$320, which doesn't sound terribly bad for a luxury hotel. Trouble is, it's \$320 *each*, or \$640 per day. But as Yoshi often reminds me: “Two meals are included.” They were nice to us at the Kagaya. I met the *okamisan*, Madam Mayumi Oda,



the “big boss” as our maid called her. I casually mentioned that Yoshi and I had been married for 40 years, rounding off the actual 38-plus years. They made a big deal out of it, sending a portrait photographer to our suite and giving us expensive, hand-painted teacups. I felt a little guilty. We might go there again on our actual 40th anniversary.



Yoshi takes a sip of hot mineral water at the municipal *onsen* near the Kagaya Hotel. The waters are good for you, inside and out. Big birds of some kind are often commemorated at hot springs. The story is always the same. The birds were seen, hundreds of years ago, bathing injured feet in the waters. *Ah ha! The waters must have healing powers.* The mesh basket is provided for those who want to eat *onsen* eggs. Put your eggs into the basket and lower them into the hot water. You get soft boiled in 15 minutes or hard boiled in 20.