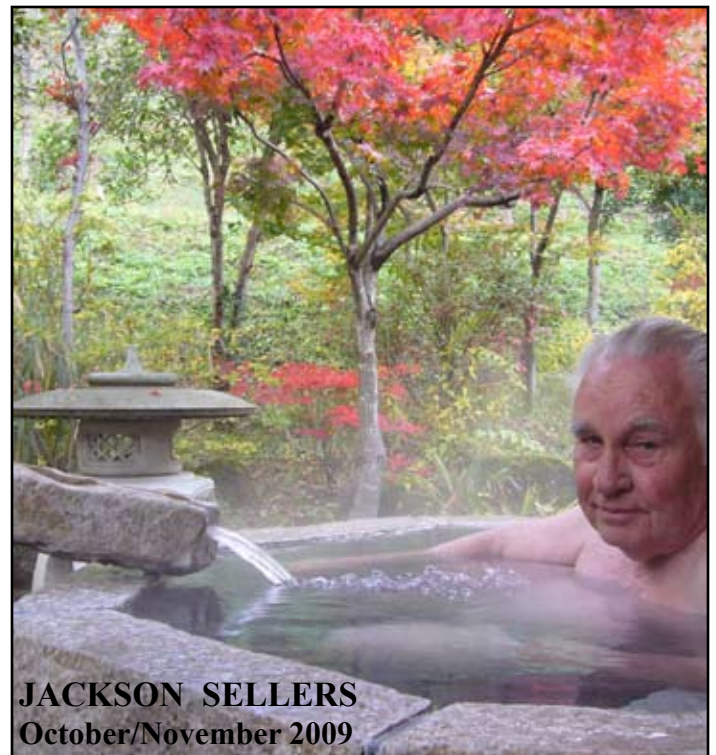


Private Bathing



AT Japanese inns, we usually bathe with other naked people, strangers who have also come to soak in the hot mineral waters that spew up from deep in the earth. All guests at the inn use these “public bath” facilities. If our suite has a tub, we mostly ignore it, because it often is no different than a normal bathtub, offering just plain heated water with none of the special benefits of mineral water. On our tour of the Tohoku region in northern Honshu, however, three inns provided us with

private tubs into which hot mineral water was continuously flowing and overflowing. Soothing soaks were always available inside the suite or just outside in our garden. At top here, I soak at Ichinobo near Sendai, while soaking-wet Yoshi poses on our garden deck. Below, at Miyakowasure in Akita Prefecture, left, and Meigetsuso in Yamagata Prefecture, it’s just me taking the private waters. Miyakowasure, deep in Akita’s mountains, translates appropriately as “Forget the Big City.”



JACKSON SELLERS
October/November 2009