

YUKI & HER MOM

VISIT

AUNT YOSHI & UNCLE JACK

IN AMERICA



Yuki makes a “Victory” sign after debarking from the airplane and going through customs at Los Angeles International Airport. She and her mother, Misako at center, were greeted by Yoshi.

Prepared by JACKSON SELLERS
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On the way to our Lake Forest home, we stopped at the Mit-suwa Japanese market in Costa Mesa. Yuki slurped a bowl of *udon* noodles and browsed for magazines. Dinner at home was *sashimi*, thin slices of raw seafood. They were tired after many long hours of travel. The day finally ended in front of our fireplace.





Is This Kid Having Fun or What?

Yuki loves animals of all kinds. She even has aspirations of becoming a veterinarian, although she is hesitating now that she knows that the process requires dissecting cute little pigs. At my Lake Forest home, she immediately made friends with Tiger the neighbor's cat and spent quality time with Peko the cockatiel. Within easy walking distance is the community's duck pond. On the first morning, I took her there, equipping her with a paper bag containing two slices of excellent Japanese bread.



With so many begging birds around, Yuki hardly knew which way to toss the bread pieces.



Yuki's mother, Misako, looked like a girl herself as she fed the waterfowl.



Photo by
Misako Hatori



With the Asanos



Harue and Ken Asano are good friends who invited us to lunch at an Italian restaurant called Romeo. But first, Ken gathered oranges and tangerines for us, picking them from trees in the extensive fruit and vegetable gardens behind his handsome Laguna Hills home. We posed for Misako's camera outside the restaurant. Yuki gave her usual V-for-victory sign. I asked her what it meant to her. She didn't know. All Japanese kids do it when their pictures are being taken, she said. Inside the restaurant, I snapped a photo of Yuki, Misako and Aunt Yoshi as they paid attention to something Harue was saying on the other side of the table.



Laguna Beach

Yuki was born and raised in landlocked Shibukawa, Japan's so-called "Belly Button," the geological center of the Japanese archipelago. Of course she has seen the Pacific Ocean often enough in her travels, but she still appreciates it. Here she takes a look from the boardwalk on the lonely white sands of coastal Laguna Beach. The weather on this March day was unseasonably cool and windy. Otherwise, the beach would be crowded with sunbathers, surfers and volleyball players. We dined lightly at a delicatessen and strolled around downtown Laguna Beach. Yoshi and Misako waved from the base of the town's Eiler Larsen statue. I explained to Misako that the bearded Larsen was *sukoshi baka*, meaning "slightly crazy." A Dane who somehow gravitated to the Laguna Beach art colony, Larsen became a fixture by hanging around the Pacific Coast Highway/Forest Avenue intersection and waving at passing cars in the 1960s and 1970s. Eventually the town appointed him the "official Laguna Beach greeter." He died in 1975, but old-timers like Yoshi and me remember him fondly.



Photo by Yuki Hatori



Saltwater Taffy

Above, Yuki gathers a batch of saltwater taffy at the Candy Baron on Forest Avenue in Laguna Beach. This was her *second* trip to the Orange County coastal town. On the first trip, I was the one who insisted on entering the shop and buying some of the chewy and delicious stuff of my boyhood. I can even remember homemade taffy. Pulling and folding, pulling and folding. Yuki was generally blasé. Her ancient American uncle was just doing one of the weird things he does. But when she got a chance to sample the taffy, she gained respect for it, and begged to be taken back to the shop, so she could carry several pounds back to Japan as gifts for her classmates. You see, saltwater taffy is virtually unknown in the Land of the Rising Sun, and this would make a tasty and unique gift from exotic California. As she loaded her basket at the Candy Baron, Yuki added other items of interest. One was a gift for her teacher, a sucker with a scorpion embedded in it. She and I settled on a plan that would show the bug in a photograph. It involved a tiny flashlight that highlighted the scorpion. The results are at right.



DANA POINT



Dana Point is down the coast from Laguna Beach. We went there for dinner at a restaurant atop a cliff overlooking the marina. Yuki likes animals, alive and animated or fake and stuffed, and since it was near Easter, Yoshi purchased a floppy-eared Easter bunny for her. Neither Yuki nor Misako are Christians, but

what difference that make? At the Dana Point restaurant, we ordered entrées from the menu and were shocked at the abundance of food we were served. We couldn't possibly eat it all. Beautiful and frugal Misako piled our leftovers into styrofoam take-home cartons.

Photos by Yuki, Misako and Jackson





Masataka Usami met us for breakfast at a nearby Denny's. There are many Denny's in Japanese metropolitan areas, but the American Denny's restaurants have much more extensive menus. Both Yuki and Misako, however, opted for simple pancake stacks, while Masa and I ate a hearty breakfast. For all previous outings, we traveled in Yoshi's Acura. This time it was appropriate to take out my 35-year-old Datsun wagon. Masa was chief engineer of Nissan U.S.A. in 1972 when I purchased the car. My Japanese language abilities are modest at best, certainly inadequate for explaining complex relationships. So Masa told the story of how he and Yutaka Katayama – "Mr. USA" and

"Mr. K," respectively, during Datsun heydays – became very good friends with a little-known American newspaperman. Our wives, too, are friendly. We dine with each other rather often in Tokyo and California. Essentially the story of our friendship starts with a nostalgic article I wrote for the *Los Angeles Times* about my dear old Datsun. I believe Yuki and Misako were most impressed by Masa's youthful appearance and vitality, not necessarily by our friendship. On the way to Denny's, I had told them he was 80 years old and had recently become a U.S. citizen. They were expecting a doddering old fool. When we left the restaurant, I overheard them chattering in the backseat about how young he was.



At left, Masa Usami is pictured as a young man in a Japanese *manga* book about the Datsuns and Z-cars. Above, my Datsun and me in front of my home.

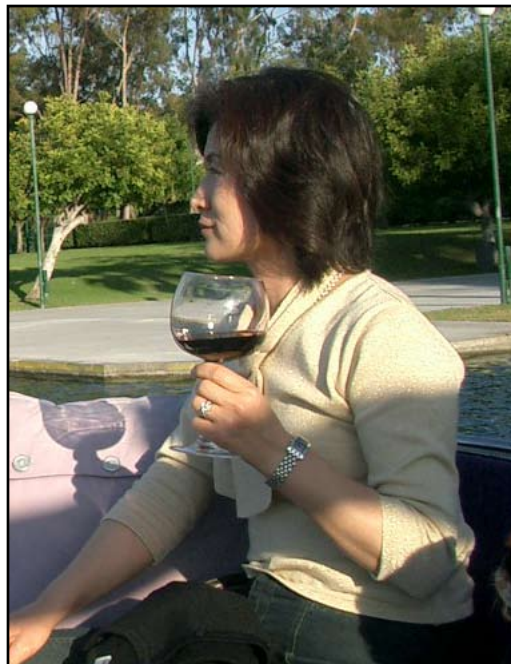
DISNEYLAND



The obligatory visit to Disneyland in Anaheim was abbreviated. We had to get back home while the sun was still shining, because Yoshi had scheduled dinner at a Japanese noodle shop in Irvine. Only two Disneyland attractions – *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Haunted Mansion* – were entered. The rest of the afternoon was spent shopping on *Main Street*. We had lunch, but only I ate a hamburger. Yuki and Misako came prepared with *nigiri* rice balls. If anything surprised me about these two visitors from Japan, it was how faithfully they avoided American food. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised. Yoshi, a U.S. resident for 41 years, eats mostly Japanese food nowadays.

Photos Below and Right by Misako Hatori





Boat Ride on the Lake

Above, Yuki sits next to the captain, Stewart Moore, while Misako sips high-quality wine at the bow, looking regal. All of us were delighted that Misako got a little tipsy as we toured the keys of the large lake lined with handsome homes, one of which belongs to Stew and Michelle Moore. Yuki, an animal lover, was attracted to the Moore pets, Maggie and Augie, who in turn were attracted to her. The Moores once vacationed at Ikaho's iron-rich hot springs, just up a small mountain from Shibukawa, where Yuki and Misako live.



*Snapshots
by
Misako Hatori*



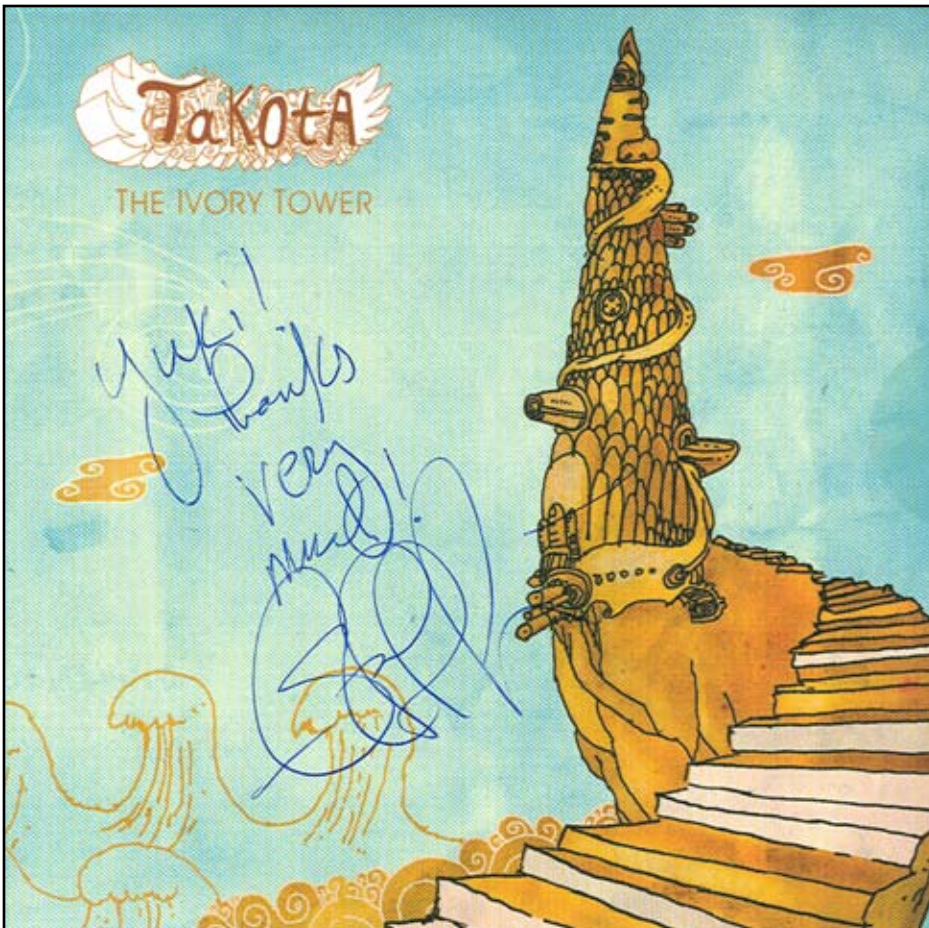
In my professional opinion, the best photos coming out of our Lake Forest boat cruise were taken by Misako. Here are three. Above, lovely Yuki with lovely Michelle on the patio of the Moore home. Underage

Yuki has her 7-Up soft drink and wine lover Michelle has her goblet. Below, Misako catches Stewart and Jackson in serious conversation about something or other. Maggie and Augie, of course, always hold center stage.





Photo by Misako Hatori



Yuki Meets Rock Singer

Grant Arnow, vocalist for a band called Takota, presented Yuki with an autographed CD and let her perch on his knee for a photo. It was all very proper since his mother was seated right next to him. This happened at a *sushi* shop where Grant was having dinner with his parents, Betsy and Fred Arnow, who live in a lake-front home in Lake Forest. Yuki was pleased. It was still another adventure on her first trip to America, and she has the photo and CD to show off to her classmates. Grant seems like a nice young man with a promising career. He not only sings but writes songs, and his name draws many hits on the Internet. Surprisingly for a rock singer, he has classical training. He says his five-member band will soon perform in Japan.