



Boys Will be ...

As was the case last week, this story too has been prepared 'in advance', because I am still in Canada on the family visit. (I'm heading back to Japan tomorrow ...)

In recent years, with all the members using computers, our family has had more communication with each other than we ever did in times past. Throughout my twenties, years would sometimes go by without any contact with my parents, and in the case of my brother and sister, I think there was a span of around ten years or so during which we had no contact with each other.

Lest you think we were particularly hostile to each other, I hasten to add that this was not the case at all. I think our behaviour simply reflected our background: my parents were emigrants who left their home country and never expected to go back, and we perhaps picked up the same attitude. It wasn't until I had children of my own that I began to keep in contact with my parents again, and we got into the habit of sending them a monthly letter, along with photos of their grandchildren.

It was when the internet arrived that we really all got 'hooked up' together again. Most of us - including my parents - have been using email for about fifteen years now, and when our computers gradually became capable of it, I pushed everybody towards using video telephone software. It's a very rare week now during which there aren't half a dozen face-to-face conversations one way or the other between Tokyo, Germany, Romania, Thailand and Vancouver.

And as an example of just how far this has progressed, my brother is using an iPad (which is mobile of course), and recently calls up to chat while sitting in the park, or riding the bus to work. I sit at my bench here in Tokyo, and watch the scenery slide by the bus window in Germany ...

But the reason I brought this up today is to mention that there is still one 'hole' in all this criss-cross of communication going back and forth. I'm getting almost no 'face time' with my two grandsons!

It's not that they are being kept away from me; it's simply a combination of circumstances. They are of course still very young (five and three) and their parents are being mindful of how much time they spend with such things as television and a computer. Using 'real world' toys and playing together outside are more important parts of their daily life, and as this approach is one with which I heartily agree, I am in no position to complain about the lack of chances to talk to them.

If they grow up as typical kids of their generation, I think they will soon begin to spend quite a lot of time on computers of one sort or another, and the opportunities for communication will widen considerably.

The question will then become one of whether or not they *want* to talk to their grandad! Well, that'll be up to me; if I have presented myself to them as somebody 'interesting', then they'll perhaps be receptive to communication. So when I was preparing for the trip to Vancouver this time, and thinking about what I should take for them, I decided not to go with any kind of purchased toy (as I did last time when I took them a whiz-bang robot goodie!). This time I'm taking a bag full of 'junk'. It's full of odds and ends - things like straws, popsicle sticks, glue, some old CDs and bits of plastic stuff, rubber bands, a few magnets, some wire, batteries, and etc. and etc. *This* is what grandfathers are for!

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I'm praying for rain!

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