



## Another trip to the airport ...

Another trip to Narita airport, another tearful farewell, and another subdued train ride home. Years ago I lost count of how many times I have played this particular movie scene. In the years immediately following their move to Canada in their early teens, my two daughters returned for holidays at least once a year, but since they became adults the visits have been few and far between.

So I was especially excited when my eldest daughter Himi suggested a few months back that she come over for a while this summer, bringing my two grand-sons for their first ever visit to Japan. I had to tell her honestly that I wouldn't be able to be with them 'full time' because there is a huge amount of work on my plate just now, but she wasn't so concerned about that. She was ready for a break from the daily routine of family care and her own work, and didn't expect me to be a babysitter.

As it turned out, I was able to spend plenty of time with them, and we did the sort of things that grandsons and granddads are supposed to do: we went to a wonderful aquarium, visited a local train museum, spent a day in a giant park where we rode tandem bicycles for hours, and of course just generally goofed off around the house. And the small river behind my workshop was of course a big attraction for them, especially in this extremely hot summer we have been having.

I have to admit though, that none of us will be describing this visit as having been peaceful and relaxing. This has been my first experience at having two young - and very rambunctious - boys in the house. I myself had girls, and although they too were full of life and energy, there is no question that the overall noise level in our house in those days was an order of magnitude lower than what I have experienced this summer. This is not to complain of course; I knew what I was getting into when Himi made her plans, and overall I am happy to have had the opportunity for them to get to know their grandfather even just a little bit better.

I myself never knew either of my grandfathers, so I am quite curious about what kind of 'image' these boys hold of me. Am I just a slightly 'funny guy' with a white beard, who occasionally puts on a stern voice to try and get them in line, or am I an actual family member to them?

I think it is a bit early to answer that, and the way that we manage our communication over the next few years will be important in determining such things. What I hope is that they will come to think of my home as being 'that place where we do all those neat things with grandad' - making a stop-motion movie with the Lego blocks, doing science experiments in the river, taking moonlight hikes in the hills behind the house, and all the other plans that I have been saving up ...

This year though, they were still too young (and still too wild) for that kind of thing, so I'll have to bide my time. But if we wait too long before the next visit, I'll end up being disappointed the other way around. The pair of them will be too old to play with grandad that way, and will spend most of their visit downtown somewhere, looking for dates!

And this has already started, as every time we went out on the train this summer, they received plenty of winks and 'kawaii!' comments from young women. I suspect that I may have a rather slim window of opportunity!

**David Bull**  
**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
**Tokyo Japan 198-0052**  
**<http://astoryaweek.com>**