

MIXED MATCHES

The whole package: a couple's lifetime of love

By KAZUAKI NAGATA

Staff writer

In 1988, Yuki Takai, a native of Kyoto, and Jonathan Nordhausen from St. Paul, Minn., met in Atlanta while working for Yusen Air and Sea Service Co.

Being in the delivery business, a lifetime of love and happiness might have been delivered to both Nordhausen, then an export manager, and Takai, who worked in sales, when they married in Georgia in 1994.

Their journey has now taken them to Tokyo, where they moved

from San Diego with their 13-year-old daughter, Gretchen, in January. Takai works as managing director for business development for United Parcel Service of America. Nordhausen, who has worked for several freight forwarders, takes care of their home in Japan.

What did you find surprising or interesting about your partner's country?

Yuki: The distance, like going shopping for 20 miles (32 km) is nothing (in the States). But in Japan, 30 km is a big deal. Back in the U.S., when I go to Los



International package: Yuki Takai and Jonathan Nordhausen pose with their daughter, Gretchen, at Takai's UPS office in Minato Ward, Tokyo, earlier this month. YOSHIAKI MIURA PHOTO

Angeles (from San Diego), it wasn't a big deal. It's an hour and a half. Over here, an hour and a half from Tokyo, you can go to Nagoya (by bullet train). It's a big deal, right?

Jonathan: It's not much of a surprise but I don't miss my vehicle. Back in the U.S., I would miss a vehicle, but here, it's great not to have it.

What's your favorite and least favorite food?

Jonathan: Pizza. It's quick and easy.

Yuki: In Japan, he likes curry. He never wanted to eat curry when he was in the U.S. He likes Japanese curry. Me, I like any Japanese food as well as smelly food, like "natto" (fermented soybeans), "mentaiko" (marinated pollock roe) and "shiokara" (salted, fermented seafood viscera).

Jonathan: That's when we eat separately.

Yuki: He wanted me to buy a separate refrigerator. He didn't want me to keep my food in the same one because when you open it, it smells.

What was your first impression of your partner?

Jonathan: I thought she was a smart lady from the way she worked. She was sharp and quick. For instance, we had to take on in freight-forwarding so many different subject matters, like dangerous goods or whatever. But she would jump in and help out.

I was in exports and she was in sales. I was like, with my mouth wide open and asked, "How did you know all that?" She said, "I was a chemical major."

Yuki: I went to college in Iowa, and he is from Minnesota, the Midwestern area, so he looked familiar to me, his blonde hair and accent.

Where do you often go together, or used to go together?

Yuki: Here, we often go to the Omote-sando area. Meiji Jingu is his favorite place. Anywhere we go, we walk. We walk around and go to this particular cafe

to look at the cat there.

In America, we went to do biking and went to the beach.

Jonathan: When we lived in Atlanta, we lived right down (by the) Chattahoochee River, which is like whitewater. We had our own raft and would go rafting all the time.

Yuki: In California, they (Jonathan and Gretchen) went surfing. So, we do a lot of sports.

What do you like and dislike about your partner?

Yuki: He usually sets me straight and gives me ideas of what to say and do sometimes. He is a good part of me. He's like my Jiminy Cricket. He is a good counselor.

The thing I don't like about him is the way he cleans up the house because it doesn't seem thorough to me. But I think he is doing a good job.

Jonathan: I like everything about her. (I dislike that) she has to work until late at night, Japanese time, (when) you come home at 9 p.m. But that's one thing we always talked about back in Atlanta.

I would go back to the office after 8 p.m. and be there until almost 1 a.m. She says now this is payback.

What's the biggest difficulty being together?

Yuki: To get him out from the shell. He's got his own comfort zone. But once he is out, he really enjoys that. (For instance,) once he likes curry, he really wants to eat it.

Jonathan: I can't speak to her in Japanese.

What are some bad things about having a partner from a different country?

Jonathan: If you have a fight, you can't express yourself correctly, the language problem.

Yuki: Sometimes, I can't speak English when I am too tired. And then we get in a fight, and what we do is we don't talk to each other for four or five days. Even though he is nearby me, I'd ask Gretchen, "Can you tell Toto (Jonathan) to do this and that?" Then he'd say "Gretchen, can you tell mom?"

What are your goals?

Yuki: I'd like to go back to the U.S. and retire in somewhere like Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and we want to have a farm with horses. And make sure Gretchen goes to a good school.

Jonathan: The same thing.

Which language do you speak to your child?

Yuki: I try to teach her Japanese. We now speak 70 percent English and 30 percent Japanese because she is picking up more Japanese.

What would you say is the greatest pleasure of being together?(Both look at Gretchen and smile).

Reader participation is invited for this series, which appears every other Saturday. If you wish to be featured, please e-mail hodobu@japantimes.co.jp

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