(April 14)

Last Saturday Mama’s aunt Haruko visited us. It was a beautiful day, with the cherry blossoms in full bloom along the Kamo river right where we live. Haruko went there with us, and we jumped across the river on the rocks and played with flying wheels.

The next day, we were all invited to a party by an old friend of Mama’s named Ryohei. Ryohei and his wife and mother-in-law live on Tetsugaku-no-michi (Philosopher’s walk) very close to our school. There are lots of cherry blossoms along the road and leaning over the canal, and many people were walking around looking at them.

A man there named Kei-chan played Mahjong with Wally and me. Ryohei had some tiles with magnets on the back. I liked those a lot. All three of us lined up
the tiles in all sorts of ways. Kei-chan showed Wally how to “clean the tiles” by swishing them around with his hands, saying “jara jara”.

Mama and my teachers are starting to talk about how we are leaving soon. It makes me sad, and I think about it a lot. I wonder what kind of new friends I’ll have back in Tallahassee, when I go to school there.

This is the entrance to my school in Japan. It’s called Kinrinhoikusho. I can read the sign now.

There is big playground in the back. We wear different shoes out there than the ones we wear to school.
I feel sad about leaving my friends. Here are Tara-chan, and Akane-chan. They were two of the friends that I share lunch table with every day.

(April 20)

In the middle of August we went on a three day car trip with Ken, Miki and their one-year-old son Ko-chan. In the car we listened to songs from Ko-chan’s CD over and over until I had learned some of them by heart. There were Spring festivals in the mountain areas we went to. At Kutsukimura there was a food fair, and we saw my mother’s old friend Ma-chan and her husband Miyagawa-san.
That evening, we arrived at Shirakawa-go, and had a traditional meal in our ryokan, which had been converted from one of the old traditional houses in the village. The food was delicious, with lots of different dishes of vegetables, fish and meet.

After the meal, we played with Ko-chan. We played sumo with Daddy, and then Wally and Ko-chan did some sumo together. Wally was careful not to hurt Ko-chan, while he put his arms around his waste and tried to wrestle him down. At bedtime Ko-chan wanted to sleep with us in our room.
The second day of our trip was full of new places. In the morning we walked around Shirakawa-go. It is a small village nestled in the mountains. The buildings, some three or four stories high, looked like triangles from one side. They are made with long beams of wood fitted carefully together and tied in place with rope. The roofs are made of a kind of straw called Kaya (which is why the houses are called Kayabukiya). Every 50 to 80 years the kaya need to be re-layed, and these days special workers are collected from all over Japan to do the job. We saw a movie of you they do it. It takes three hours of concerted work, during which the roof is covered with people passing the straw bundles to each other, while others secured them in place. It looked scary to fall, but fun.

Since the village is in the mountains it is still chilly there, and only a few cherry blossoms were beginning to bloom. There was even some snow on the ground! We heard that during the winter the snow gets so deep that people have to go in and out of their houses from the second or third floor!
That day there was a Spring Festival in the village. Men and women dressed in white did a ceremony bringing golden containers to the shrine while musicians played clanging bells and drums.

At Kanazawa we stopped to have a sushi lunch and went to a modern art museum.

After Kanazawa, we drove to Mikuni, on the Japan sea coast, where we stayed the night. Ma-chan had recommended the place, and the owners were very friendly and talkative. They had a nice sounding strong accent that I hadn’t heard before too. The meal they served was enormous with course after course of fishes of all kinds.
At the end they gave us mikan, which Wally loved, and couldn’t have enough of.
I loved walking around on the boulders, and watching the waves. They made me giggle the way they made little ripples as they hit the rocks.

(April 25)

On Thursday, Kevin Yuri Marika and Erina came over for dinner on the balcony. We had so much fun and made so much noise that later on some people complained. At one point Erina gave me a big hug and said “daisuki”, which means “I like you a lot!” It made me happy.
During the weekend, Obachan came to visit and played with us on the balcony. It’s gotten quite warm now, and the bottom half of the mountains are covered with green, while the top parts are still brown.

It hasn’t rained in a while. Wally had a great time pouring water in each of the flowerpots.
Here are some more pictures from Genki-land. It still is one of our favorite places to play. This time Wally made some pretend lunch, which we ate together. Then I cleaned the dishes.

After that we went to Kamo river for a real picnic lunch. Kevin and his family were there, and after lunch we played soccer.