

Bad start, good finish (hopefully!)

Pasha Ponomarenko

Now, you will probably be surprised to learn that my major feeling during the first month in Nagoya was an utter frustration. Why? Because I love Japanese cuisine, nature and culture, but... There is always a nasty “but” to every good thing. Here is the one: on the second night after arrival, I started to feel my back a bit sore, and the mere soreness promptly developed into a full-scale lumbago. For the next two weeks I was moving around like a retired infantry general: very stiff, slow and with a permanent air of disdain and sorrow towards the world around me. But this was not the end of the story. When my back started to behave marginally better, I was taught yet another important lesson: if you want to shut a sliding door then apply pushing, not pulling! The doctor summed it all in one utterance: “Fracture!” So, the next two weeks I had to operate with the index and middle fingers on my right hand being tightly tied to a “gipusu” strip. Besides continuous and fully unappreciated game of cat-and-mouse with an un-cooperative computer mouse (pun intended!), it was rather embarrassing to use a fork instead of chopsticks while dealing with a bento box in front of my colleagues during lunch breaks. Fortunately, there is always a positive side to any problem: the above-mentioned embarrassment was fully compensated by the joy of proudly playing guitar with the remaining fingers at the newcomers’ welcome party. The party was appropriately scheduled just the next day after the vicious balcony door caught me off guard. I promised to play at the event well before the accident, so it was a matter of honour to keep the promise (well, actually I suspected that 切腹 was the only other alternative). People around had lots of fun watching and, hopefully, listening!



Also, I am very grateful to my misfortune and a gentle persistence of Nishitani-san for being introduced to the fascinating art of shia tsu, the thing I have known about since my childhood but to which I have never dreamt to be exposed. Now, every Tuesday and Friday night the whole clinic’s personnel work hard on gathering their collective English to make sure that the crazy gaijin understands which procedure is next.



The way the researches operate in Japan seems to be fundamentally different from what I saw in Canada, Australia, US and other Western countries. I would call it a perpetual meeting style, and I believe I have a very good case. During the three months of work, I have to make eight presentations at conferences, workshops, seminars and group meetings. Add to it a five-day field trip to a new radar site on Hokkaido. For comparison, my annual load in Canada is usually limited to one or two conferences and two to three seminar talks. So, which style is better? I guess, a Zen follower would observe: “When in Rome, do as the

Romans do”. So, I just philosophically wondered along the path laid before me and observed the world around:

19 September – seminar at STEL

Presentation title: “*Expanding diagnostic capabilities of the Super Dual Auroral Radar Network*”

First signs of a severe back pain...

03 October – Space Weather Workshop, NICT, Tokyo

Presentation title: “*SuperDARN as a monitor of HF propagation conditions at high latitudes*”

My first impression from Shinkansen: (a) it moves too fast to make good photos of the landscape; (b) you are actually allowed to drink beer on-board!!!

The icing on the cake was a fully unexpected meeting with my old university friend who happen to travel through Tokyo on the same day. We duly emptied our glasses of Kirin to celebrate a third decade passed since our graduation.

22-25 October 2014 – field trip to the radar site in Rikubetsu, Hokkaido

My major contribution to launching Hokkaido West was hammering copper grounding rods into the ground around the radar building.

A nostalgic string was touched while stopping for a coffee at Abashirikoso hotel, the venue for the SuperDARN’07.

I was treated by an impressive sight of still smoking Mount Ontake on the return flight.

31 October – 3 November 2014 – SGEPS conference in Matsumoto

Presentation title: “*Morphology and possible origins of close-range echoes*”

Second sighting of Mount Ontake, this time from the train: 5 photos in 10 seconds.

What would you make of an 8:30am visit to Matsumoto Castle?

Local food: have you ever tried horse meat sashimi?

10-14 November 2014 – 12th International Conference on Substorms, Ise-Shima Hotel, Shima

Presentation title: “*Ionosphere-ground transition of Pi2 polarisation near the plasmopause*”



Every sixth person at the meeting was Russian.

Ama divers still operate!

There was yet another hammering exercise, now with mochi pounding.

No-one knows what substorms are, even Akasofu-sensei!

17 November 2014 – Hokkaido radar workshop, STEL

Presentation title: *“Improving quality and reliability of Hokkaido radar data”*

Sometimes it is good to have a break from travelling...

Just one more conference left...

