

Japan Disaster Relief trip, December 1 to December 17 Marumori Japan

Sunday, December 1

5AM. TSA checked my lunch, but not the 3 large DeWalt batteries.

Lots of knee room to Detroit, crowded

3 Hr. layover in Detroit, went to the Freedom center (Similar to the USO)

14 hr. plane ride to Tokyo airport

No one next to me. Then went to the back and could lie down over 3 seats. Great ride. Fed us well.

3 hr. layover to get flight to Sendai. Arrived on Monday night, 9PM

Woody Lauer and Bill Looft, from New York, were waiting for me at baggage claim

Drove 30 minutes to the Nazomi Relief center in Yamamoto. I had spent one night there on the last trip back.

Our room had 2 bunk beds, the other had 6 bunks. 2 bathrooms so we each took one.

Tuesday, December 3.

8 hr. sleep. 3 eggs and white bread for breakfast

Woody drove us 30 minutes to the volunteer center where Open Japan had headquarters for the area.

No work today, just planning things out.

John took us out for 2 hours touring the area. Marumori Japan

On October 12, at 10 PM during a typhoon, the landslide hit with hurricane water coming from the hills.

Mud was up 6' on some houses. Left trees, mud, rock, etc everywhere and washed out much.

Clean up: roads need repairing and mud removed.

Houses need floors taken up and mud in crawl space cleaned out and some wallboard removed.

We then looked at 3 houses that we will be working on.

Have plans so drove back. Woody took us grocery shopping. Dinner at Woody and Laurie's house.

Went to hardware store to pick up wood for tomorrow.

Wednesday, December 4

Met at the volunteer center, then off to the first house, by the barber shop.

2 Japanese carpenter and the 2 of us started.

Plastic on the floor, Styrofoam between the 2x2 joists, then ½" plywood over the joists. Floors sag but they don't have heavy furniture on legs, (tables and recliners) and they lay down a 2" grass mat

Finished only one half of house, was all they wanted to done. Went to the 2nd house.

Laid down plastic and insulation.

Home, Woody and Laurie went to Cosco and bought pizza and wraps.

Thursday December 5

I'm the driver in a small (50MPH) vehicle. Met John at the volunteer center

3 carpenters went to the second house. Finished by noon.

Went to the 3rd house. Cleaned joists.

Home early. Rice, onions and gravy waiting for us. Added chicken and a salad.

Friday, December 6

Cereal and oranges. Drove without directions or GPS. Met at 8:15. Now our usual start time.

They all gather in a circle, and include us, and discuss assignments. We introduce ourselves. Good for us to be there as they see 2 American carpenters every day for 2 weeks.

Had a ½ hour interview with Japan public TV, NHK. They had been at the 3rd house and filmed as we discussed the procedure. She, and the camera man, and sound man went to the house and filmed us until noon. Finished two 12x12 rooms by ourselves. Talked about the kitchen, mess. Looked at the bathroom, would take a lot of work.

Saito and mother were extremely appreciative of the work we were doing. Thanked us a lot. Finally had to leave: enough thank yous.

Woody took us to the grocery store again. \$90 for a hand basket of food.

We are on our own now. Hamburgers, fries, salad.

Saturday. December 7

There is heat at the Nazomi Center, but the idea of heat in Japan is to heat the person, not the room. Hence the rooms are cold when we get back or when we get up in the morning. Takes a while for electric heat to get warm. There was a kerosene heater which is flueless and heats faster.

We make sandwiches for lunch and take oranges. Would wear a sweater when working and add a coat when not. Haven't spent any money yet.

Took a bag of my tools: hand tools, hammer, level, pliers, wrench, knee pads, head phones, tool belt and most of my DeWalt tools: 6 of them. Wish I had my DeWalt 20 Volt circular saw. Borrowed a small one.

I sleep 9 hour a night. Face time at 9PM = 6AM. And again at 7AM = 5PM the night before.

Saturday morning I had eggs and toast. Bill has white bread toast only. Tangelos.

Volunteer center, then to Saito's house. Saito was concerned about the bill. Can't afford much. John insisted that it is free. Finally he said he would charge 1 Yen. Woody said that is too low. He doubled the bill!

We floored the 3rd room. Woody took out the 2x2 joist in the kitchen. Rebuilt the joists. Plastic, Styrofoam, plywood. Enough to reach to the cabinets and sink. Project for Tuesday.

They had plenty of snacks for us. Tea Time. Coffee time. Break time. I'm ready to go to work. But it is important to visit with them. Woody or John would interact with them. Ramen Noodle soup for lunch.

Sunday, December 8

Church at 10:30 in socks. Slippers don't fit. Played with 2 Japanese boys before service. Didn't stay.

Arthur simultaneously translated the service for us. 5 local people, 3 Lauers, and 2 of us.

Then tea: broccoli casserole.

They took us on a tour of the area. The damage was from 8 years ago and not from the hurricane.

Went to Sendai to Murry Uamoto's church for the evening. Was at his house. 12 people. In English and Japanese. Murry was my 6th grade classmate in Philadelphia.

We looked at the church: 2 side by side stair cases for 2 attached buildings. Decided to make one upstairs an office and study and the other a living quarters. Other idea was to take out both staircases and add one on the far side. Then take out a doorway and join the 2 areas.

Monday, December 9

Cereal. FT with Patti, Joel, the conference call with Glenn and Randy and Wilma.

Back to Saito's house. Finished 4th room. The got the sink cabinet and the stove cabinet out. Floored it and replaced it. Started on the bathroom. Saw extensive wood rot, not from the flooding. Needed evaluation before going further. Supervisor was there filming for Keen Shoes.

Morning tea, 11 AM instant coffee, 1 PM lunch. Home by 3:30. Bill made steak and potatoes

Tuesday, December 10

Eggs and toast and tangelos. Made peanut butter sandwich and orange

Drove to volunteer center then to a rice farmer. (Picture in disaster book).

6' of water destroyed all farming and rice drying equipment and machinery.

Took out small mud wall. In work room took out wet (still) insulation and dry wall. Everything was separated in small bags: bamboo, insulation, sheetrock, dirt.

Drove to another house (5th). Cleaned joists and cleaned left intact wood floor with scrub brush.

Took another way home at 3PM. Visited with Woody and Sara for a while. Alfrado noodles and salad

Wednesday, December 11

Cereal and oranges. No variety. Drove directly to Saito's house.

Took out joists, medicine cabinet, 3' of walls. Cleaned. TV reporter was there. Not much TV worthy.

Drove home. John followed. Then took us to Matsushime the 3rd most beautiful place in Japan. (Bill and I had been there, separately, 8 yrs ago as we left Ishinomaki.) Took a 1 hour boat ride among the 250 islands. Dinner on the 4th floor overlooking the bay. Went through the Zuiganji Temple

Thursday, December 12

Drove to the volunteer center, as usual. But the TV camera crew was there waiting for us. Filmed us driving in, getting out of car, going into meeting, at the meeting, etc.

They left first so they could see us arrive at the job site. Discussion. Too wet, too political at the fire house. Not much for the TV crew to do.

Went to the next house. They wanted to have temporary flooring. Right now plywood was scattered over floor, overlapping, no screws. They said they were going to demolish the house in the spring. But we still do a good job. Maybe they won't be able to rebuild or want to rebuild next year.

We piled up the flooring and in order laid down the flooring properly, screwing in. Nails can pull out. Not to code with nails. Always trouble spots but that is what we do, solve problems.

TV crew stay all day filming us. Especially the very last piece. I cut it just right, and it went in perfectly. Good shot. Then they interviewed us: 'How did it feel...?'

Lauers took us to Sendai for a buffet. Good timing, no snacks during the day, long heavy day.

Cooked you own meat at the table. Just finishing a large bowl of ice-cream (the 1st). Woody said we had to leave. Our 1 ½ hours were up.

Friday, December 13

Meeting, then Saito's home again. (The thank-you people). He would always work right along with us as he was able. Screwed flooring, cleaned, picked up, even cut if accuracy didn't matter. That is what I like, someone who will not simply just watch.

The head carpenter wanted the wall rebuilt one way. My way was different. So he sent another Japanese carpenter along. If I could convince him of how it should be done we could do it my way. I won! Good solid foundation in bathroom. Then plastic, etc. Then the walls with another material. All day in the bathroom, 3 of us. Asked if he wanted to go to church if we picked them up. Silent No. He has many gods in his house. Sometimes a god for a month. (What happens to the month old god?)

Saturday, December 14

Up early, eggs and toast and tangelos.

Left the house by 7am. TV crew came out and asked us to go back inside and come out again when they were set up. We did. Got in the car and left. Then backed up and picked up the reported. She rode with us to the volunteer center doing some filming and interviewing on her iphone. "What is it like to drive on the left side of the road?"

Arrived at the volunteer center. She asked us to wait to get out until she did and the camera crew was set up. Filmed getting out of car and going inside. Short 10 minute interview. It was Saturday so there were 50 in the circle plus many other volunteers. They filmed the meeting. Then went outside. Easier to hear. She interview us for ½ hour. Woody would translate as needed. I'm thinking there will be subtitles to our voices. Went well. I mentioned the Nazomi Relief Center a number of times. Mentioned church

and once, Presbyterian Church. John had told us they would edit out the mention of Jesus so had to go another way. Didn't say God because they have many gods.

Plans changed, (again). Were not going to put a sub floor down but tear one up. I said it doesn't make as good of TV footage. She did not come. At the end of the day they showed up and stated that filming is finished. This will be broadcast on December 26 on National TV! Probably 10 minutes all together. We are known as the celebrity carpenters. TV was doing a segment on Open Japan who organizes the work. When they saw 2 American carpenters come they thought this would make a nice angle, hence the project.

We went to a farmer's house on a hillside. The hill washed down and into their living room. Many Japanese were there with wheel barrows removing dirt. 3 of us plus one girl were taking up the flooring and laying 6 sheets (3' x 6' of 1/2" plywood) down.

At 5PM there was a teen Christmas party, games, cookie making, message and pizza. 10 teens were there. A large number. 1/2 had never been exposed to the Bible and didn't know where Genesis or Matthew were. First time hearing the gospel. Annie, Woody's granddaughter is more fluent in Japanese than in English. Many were her class mates.

Long day mentally, physically with TV, tearing up floor, socializing etc.

Sunday, December 15

Church at 10:30. 3 Japanese people at church. 4PM second service. Joint service with Murry and some from his church. Visiting, food, short phone interview with TV reporter.

Monday, December 16

Cereal, orange, conference call with Glenn.

Could not find work for us at the center. Saito came by to say goodbye. He also mentioned that there was a 4th room that needed flooring taken up. So we went there as we needed a shorter day. Pulled up the flooring. Cut the 2x2 rafters and laid them on their sides, smoother, and refastened them. Cleaned the floor and the wood. Let it dry before the floor goes down later.

Went to John and Thomas's compound. They have 3, 6 unit buildings and a school for their missionaries and are in charge of 2 very large schools in Sendai. Their group goes around Japan with vans that broadcast 45 second scripture messages. They are known by the police and have a good relationship with them. Thomas is a builder. He made his house out of a shipping container. Since the typhoon was in their city they are very active in helping rebuilding the city. They know many people there

Tuesday, December 17

Bill and I left at 8AM from Sendai to Tokyo then on to USA. Full plane back to Atlanta. Middle seat. A lot of waiting. Waited for 2 ½ hrs. in Tokyo on the plane because of fog. Hard to sleep. TSA took apart my bag with tools in it. Missed our Huntsville flight but they put us on one 2 hours later. Everything arrived.