

a disadvantage of not being able to read the Kanji script on the topographical maps. I had learnt the Kanji symbols for river, shima, kaikyo, misaki and hanto but if I ever returned to paddle in Japanese waters I would make sure I could recognize the symbols for a nuclear power station.

I headed for an automatic lighthouse on the tip of Nokogiri Saki but realized it now would be a race against time to reach the alternative rendezvous at Wadahama. By 6:15pm I had reached the lighthouse but there was no sign of Lesley. A six mile paddle remained to Wadahama with scarcely enough time before nightfall to cover even four miles at my usual pace. I had to count on the harbour breakwaters being well illuminated with automatic entrance lights.

Massive sheer cliffs extended westwards beneath a grey squally sky. Visibility was down to under a mile and dropping rapidly with the onset of darkness so I was 'going for it', a New Zealand expression for making an all out effort and paddling hard. In readiness to illuminate the compass and map in the dark, I hung a small waterproof torch around my neck.

A violent squall brought heavy rain and a fresh northeasterly wind and, as night fell, the sea lifted. I had caught a brief glimpse of a low

wooded knoll adjacent to the harbour and took a compass bearing. Unfortunately, through the murk I'd also seen a cluster of rocky islands and reefs. Finding the harbour entrance would not be easy.

A flicker of light grabbed my attention and I turned inshore. A breakwater appeared in the gloom and I pointed the bow for a yellow quick flashing light on a buoy. A second tiny red glow on the end of the breakwater meant a port side entrance light. Apart from the two faint lights, it was pitch black, the rain pouring down and *Haya Kaze* was bouncing over a rotten sea. I reached the end of the breakwater and was relieved to find a narrow entrance leading into a small harbour. In the dark I couldn't see where to land but paddled towards a street light and came in beside a yacht tied up to the low wharf. I climbed out of the cockpit and unsteadily onto the wharf. The driving rain had drenched me to the skin and I began to shiver with the cold. What a night!

There was no sign of the car so I grabbed the radio and called Lesley. She was extremely worried by my non appearance and I could hear the relief in her voice when she replied. We tried to figure out where I was. Our descriptions matched of where we were but I couldn't see the car. When Lesley beeped the horn and flashed the headlights I quickly found her parked only 200 metres away!

A day from Nihon Nikki, 22/7/85 Kyushu – Kagoshima ken – Tengu Hana to Matsugaura.

It had been a hot and humid night. Our tent was pitched by the side of the local shobosha close to the lush subtropical jungle; the mosquitos were thick and annoying. At dawn a light offshore breeze brought mild relief to the muggy atmosphere.

After launching at 6:00am I paddled down to the cliffed headland of Hashima Saki. The breeze was light and the sea was calm. Although I would be pushing into the tide for several hours I decided to go directly across a broad bight in the coast for Noma Hanto.

By 10:00am the wind had died, leaving a glassy sea. In a cooler climate I would normally be pleased when a wind died but here in the sultry steaming heat of the Kyushu coast I longed for a breeze from any direction, even a headwind. I was only wearing a thin pair of nylon jogging shorts and a broadbrimmed straw hat; even so, the sweat was pouring off my forehead and body. For relief I resorted to dousing myself with seawater every 10 minutes. As the beads of sweat dripped off my forehead I would tilt my head to one side to keep the drops out of my eyes; the salty sweat was stinging my eyes. It was obvious why all the local fishing boats had large canvas or plastic awnings over the cockpit areas.

After a 21 mile crossing I paddled into a small gyoko in the lee of Noma Misaki (cape) and landed at mid day. Almost on the verge of heat exhaustion, I fell into the sea to cool down. After lunch and the usual large bowl of kocha I headed around the impressive grey cliffs leading to Noma Misaki, the westernmost misaki I would round during the Nihon Isshu (around Japan) trip.

On a crystal clear azure blue sea I rounded the misaki and pointed the bow for Bono Misaki. A fresh southeasterly breeze came away after an hour, a mukai kaze (headwind), but at least it cooled me down. Off Bono Misaki the sea was choppy and I hit a strong westgoing tidal stream; the combination of mukai shio (tide on the nose) and mukai kaze dropped my speed to a snail's pace. I had to hug the rocky reefbound shoreline to escape the worst of the tide and wind. Lesley and a television crew from Kagoshima were waiting on a cliff edge near the town of Makurazaki but the surge was too violent to land. Tired and with aching shoulders, I paddled slowly into the wind for our evening rendezvous at Matsugaura.

It was pitch dark by the time I neared our rendezvous but Lesley was waiting on a low point with a torch to guide me into a small rocky cove with a sandy beach at its head. We had a system of signals for guiding me through dicky landings; during daytime Lesley used a signal mirror or a red flag if the sky was overcast, at night a torch or the car's headlights. One flash meant proceed in the direction I was going, two flashes go back and continuous quick flashes head directly for Lesley.

At the end of a long tiring day I

was always relieved to see that first mirror flash; a cup of kocha was only half an hour's paddling away.

The beach was ablaze with light from the television crew's cameras and a beach barbeque was in full swing. Almost blinded by the glare of the lights, I paddled slowly shorewards until the bow ran aground on sand. Lesley and I were invited to join 25 Nihonjin (Japanese folk) around the barbeque.

I was really tired and headachy from the day's heat and glare. All I wanted was a large bowl of tea and to catch up on some sleep. The last thing I felt like was joining a rowdy party but, since it was part of our Japan experience, I changed into dry clothes and, carrying my large bowl filled with hot kocha, joined the mob of people around the barbeque.

A generator was providing power for several sets of lights on poles; a metal tray was set over the embers of a fire with niku (meat) sizzling away and there were plates of salad. The smiling faces and laughter were a far cry from our previous contacts with the officialdom of the uninformed police, 'Passporto kudasai?' The mob were all police staff from a neighbouring town and it was the police chief hosting the party.

We sat around the fire, eating grilled niku and onigiri (rice balls) and sipping saki (rice wine). A watermelon was placed on a mat and Lesley was invited to be the first at the game of suika wari, a game of trying to wallop a watermelon with a bamboo pole while blindfolded.

From her experience of driving around Nihon and asking for directions to the tiny ports, Lesley was used to commands, hidari (left), migi (right) and massugu (straight ahead) and was soon in striking distance of the melon. Not familiar with the rules of the game, Lesley crouched down and felt for the melon with the tip of the pole. With great gusto she struck the watermelon and split it in half, to the shrieks and laughter of everyone. A second melon was placed on the mat and everyone had a turn at the game.

When the police chief, with the pole held like a Samurai sword, advanced step by step past the melon, and crushed a large beer container with a good blow the heartiest laughter came from the two gaijin and not from his staff. Even out of uniform that power and control was still in play!

When a young powerfully built policeman stepped by the melon and headed for the seated watchers, we all scattered. Tricks included digging a bear pit in the path of the blindfolded player and removing the watermelon off the mat as the player struck, quickly replacing it before the blindfold was removed.

All the police joined in a circle around Lesley and me, arms around shoulders, and sang a beautiful song as they swayed to the rhythm of the song. Lesley then responded with a Maori canoe action song to bring the party to a close:

Toia mai te waka ne
Kuia mai te waka ne
Ki te takota runga takoto a
Tiriti te mana motuake

We were impressed with the rapid clean up of all the rubbish and said our goodbyes. The police barbeque was a real experience of how friendly the authorities could be out of uniform. In uniforms, no matter which agency, the Japanese men were stonefaced, authoritative and dogmatic but it was so different to mix with them outside of work hours.



Maritime officials were an ongoing bugbear.