

Tokyo
7 November 1949

Dear Fran:

It's tomorrow heretoday and things are different.

I arrived via MATS (Military Air Transport Service) at Hanada airport, Tokyo, last evening at 7 p.m. Tokyo time and found refuge at the Dai Iti Hotel. The trip from Honolulu to Tokyo with stops at Johnston Island, Kwajalein, and Guam was according to schedule. At no time until arrival in Tokyo did I need either the topcoat or suit coat that I was carrying.

Johnston Island, elevation 7 feet, with coral all around is about the size of an aircraft carrier and a desolate spot if I ever saw one. I have a fossil specimen from there for your collection.

Kwajalein, nearly twice as high as Johnston island and much larger, fills the usual conception of a tropical island - palms, white sands, tropical breezes, and high humidity. We arrived and left in the middle of the night.

Guam is higher, larger, and, if anything, still more hot and humid. We were there at mid-day and stayed for about 4 hours which was long enough.

One thing that struck me in the tropics was the prevalence of clouds. From Honolulu to Tokyo clouds were seldom, if ever, out of sight - big billowy ones. I was told that this is the usual thing.

Somewhere between Guam and Tokyo the tropics left off. Here it is topcoat weather.

I haven't seen enough yet to get much of an idea about the country but I have a few impressions. Coming in over Tokyo Bay I was impressed by the tremendous expanse of dim lights making up Yokahama and Tokyo.

We came into the airport that is used by Pan American and Northwest Airlines. There were numerous tourists, mostly women, making customs declarations. We weren't held up on that score. About all that was needed was another copy of the travel orders. (One doesn't go anywhere or do anything without travel orders in Japan, or anywhere enroute when traveling with the military.)

Incidentally, after leaving Honolulu, we traveled in Army DC-4's. The one used between Honolulu and Guam had just been transferred from the Berlin airlift. It was outfitted somewhat along the lines of a commercial airlines plane. From Guam to Tokyo we had a bucket seat job - quite airworthy but not particularly comfortable.

My traveling companion from Honolulu was Mr. Kowakami, an American-born Japanese stationed in Tokyo. He was more talkative and more interesting than the sargent. He gave me some idea of what to expect. A lieutenant who is concerned with the mining activities in northern Honshu also gave me a few pointers.

Here at the Forestry Division, Natural Resources Section, it seems like home. While I knew none of the men personally, they know many mutual friends in the States.

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To getback to the impressions of Tokyo. It seems to be a city of dark streets, small shops and perfectly terrible drivers who by custom drive on the left side. There seems to be a sort of sport to see how close one can come to pedestrians without actually running over them. Among other things in the shops, there are carrots two feet long.

This is written between briefings, so I'll close now. More later.

Love from

Bob

P.S. -

It seems to have disconcerted the local military that I arrived unannounced. Apparently someone should have met me at the airport.