

APD-500 San Francisco

November 24, 1949

Dear Fran:

"Early start - no tea - no conference - lets get out to the woods". Those are the daily instructions to the Japanese on the "field" trips. So what happens? We shove off at 9:30 AM on the best days. Teas and conferences are arranged at all the crossroads, and there are many in Japan. Finally, we drive for miles and miles through rice fields and villages, seldom getting near the woods.

About those woods, a somewhat peculiar condition exists. The national forests have been largely clearcut, the policy being to log "selectively". They select an area and then clear cut it, then all the mulch and twigs are raked off with bamboo rakes. Thus the area is put in prime condition for erosion to set in, and it usually does. There are some classic examples of erosion - whole mountains being washed away.

When the erosion gets well started, an erosion control program is initiated. Great hillides are terraced and the valleys are filled with dams, one right after another. Yesterday we saw a good example where the mountainside had been stripped of trees; a great effort had been made to terrace the slopes but unsuccessfully. Practically all that was left was the country rocks on the mountain sides and great boulders ^{in the valleys.} In the valleys dozens of large dams had been built (all by hand). These dams were all filled up and the rocks were waiting for the first freshets to roll them down to the rice fields.

In contrast to the national forest land, the private forest land that we have seen has been in fairly good condition. It is held in very small tracts, usually by farmers. The farmers spend most of their time in the rice fields, but they don't neglect the forest, for they urgently need wood which they use for many things. They harvest the twigs and branches and, whenever a tree dies, they cut it and drag it to the valley where it usually finds its way to a charcoal kiln or a small sawmill.

I'm constantly impressed by the fact that Japan has a wood economy. Next to rice, wood is most important to the Japanese. They have over 1000 species of trees, many with very beautiful wood, and they are extremely expert in using these woods. My great regret is that I will be unable to bring back some examples. I would very much like to furnish a room in Japanese style such as one finds in the better homes and hotels. (Some of my spare time is spent admiring the furniture in some of the large department stores).

The day before yesterday we spent part of the day examining log yards and sawmills in Osaka. The mills are all very small and inefficient. Everything is done the hard way - by hand - but somehow or other the lumber finally comes out and in due time it is worked up into a great variety of beautiful things. But to get back to that lumber, it doesn't come out in boards as we know them. Rather it comes out in chunks and slabs. The thickness is highly variable and the sides are not parallel.

The more expensive wood goes to an auction center where the pieces are individually auctioned. We saw such an auction. The auctioneer might have been selling tobacco or

cotton. It all sounds the same whether in Japanese or English, but the bidding is different. Here the auctioneer takes a breath - it may be long or short - and then begins his chant. The bidders use their fingers and the last one to bid, before the auctioneer's breath gives out, gets the bid. Thus the bidding moves right along. There was a big chunk of camphor wood that I would have bid in on at about 4000 yen but, since it would have exceeded my 125-pound baggage limitation and furthermore would have been unhandy to carry in my lap for three days, I refrained.

Speaking of white elephants, I still have a problem. That Christmas gift, which happens to be a low table beautifully figured in burl, probably is somewhere between Osaka and Tokyo. Whether it will ever reach Portland is very much of a question. The problems started when I had to raise the 5800 yen ($\$16.00$) to buy the table. That was arranged as was the transportation to our hotel room in the new Osaka. Then there was the problem of crating. That was done by the Japanese porter through Mr. Shimomoto (Osaka saki man number 1). At the APO I was informed that the package was not mailable - too large. At the American Steamship Lines office I was informed that the deal was beyond them. At the RTO (Railway Transportation Office) I was informed that the package could not be checked to Tokyo and it could not be sent by express. They thought it might be sent by freight but there were uncertainties. Finally Mr. Shimomoto volunteered to make arrangements for getting the table to Tokyo by Japanese train (distinct from the RTO system). That's where matters stand. Whether I can get a shipping

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permit in Tokyo remains to be seen. If not, I'll hold an auction and apply the proceeds to a smaller gift.

The table isn't the only problem. We arrived at Tokyo Central loaded with presents and various purchases of our own. My loot is under the bed and I'm wondering what to do about it. We visited four prefectures and the governor of each gave us a present. In addition there were various other gifts plus some things we bought in the shopping district at Himeji. It all stacks up into quite a pile. In the next few days I'll try to get some of it shipped but none of it will arrive before Christmas. November 15 was the shipping deadline for Christmas.

On Monday morning, November 21, we checked in with Civil Affairs Team in Osaka (occupation force) and made our presence and desires known. If anything, that outfit got less done in a longer time than the Japanese. After spending part of the morning examining lumber yards and trying to solve the table problem our delegation headed out in cars for Himeji. The route is along the Inland Sea - all very scenic. We arrived in late afternoon and put up a commercial type hotel in the shopping district. (The Japanese had things all lined up for us to stay at a warm springs hotel in the mountains. We saw the hotel next day - all very beautiful and expensive, but nowhere near the working area).

Monday evening we had a guided tour of the shopping district. They're all much alike with narrow alleys bordered with small, open, dimly lighted stores that sell everything. They stay open until about 7 P.M. after that they're actually boarded up. Then, since there are no street lights, darkness really sets in. The Japanese seem to be great shoppers, at least

the ones who accompanied us were. They bought more than we did, and that was plenty. I'm concentrating on wood products and prints.

At Nimeji there is a very large castle (formerly the property of a feudal lord but now the property of the city). It is said to be the tallest in Japan - 5 stories. It is open to the public but we didn't have time to enter it. He did take several pictures and consequently lost the rest of the delegation for two or three hours.

Our driver was dumb and the district forester was similarly inclined. Between the two of them we traversed alleys and lanes where no car had ever gone before. It is a constant source of amusement to me that these foresters have no idea of how to get around in their districts. When the driver doesn't know the way, the expedition stops down completely. Then there is great jabbering with any and all who happen to be around, and in Japan there are plenty around at all times. At lunch time we miraculously all got together and presently there were tea pots, mats, apples, etc coming in by bicycle from all sides. Arrangements had been made. Perhaps they had been made to get us lost.

Just before lunch we had a demonstration of how the Japanese "spot" bug trees for treatment. It was the damnest performance I ever saw. Since it is a technical matter, I'll not go into the details. It's all down in my notes, but needless to say not for adoption upon my return to the States.

after lunch we decided to change drivers. That nearly broke up the party. We suggested that a couple drivers change cars. What a commotion! It seems that just isn't

done. Each driver sticks with his car and that's that. We had to take out all the baggage and, since the new lead car was much smaller, we just sat on the baggage. The driver seemed happy and we didn't get lost again.

Now I'm back at the Dai Ichi. The next field trip - to Kyushu is scheduled for early December. Colonel Donaldson and Colonel Schenk, among others, will be along. It is a 2-day trip by train and no doubt new and interesting things are in store. The train passes through Hiroshima, and we will be staying in Nagasaki for a day or two.

This afternoon I'm having Thanksgiving dinner at the Wises' and will be thinking of you.

I have taken only two rolls of color and have sent them to Los Angeles for processing. Since the service is good, I'm having them sent here so that I can inspect them and profit by my errors. This may be the dry season, but it looks like Portland to me. Rain on the weekends and holidays has cut down on the picture taking. Today is an example.

My third round of shots is due. The second, taken in Honolulu, was even better than the first, so I'm anticipating a quiet weekend with a sore arm and a fever.

(and Jackie's of Nov. 10)

Your letters of November 10 and 14 were here when I got back to the office yesterday. I was glad to get them and learn about your doings. I'm a little in a quandary about where to send this letter but have decided to send it to Portland, since you state that Dorothy is forwarding your mail.

Love from
Bob.