

NAGANO * TOKYO * HAKONE

April 12 - 19, 1960

Tuesday April 12th was such a hazy day, but otherwise nice. Paul and I caught the train in Kiso Fukushima at 7:55 a.m. for Nagano, a place we had never been before tho had been as far as Matsomoto on the same line. At that time of day the train had only third class coaches and the seats get pretty hard after three hours of sitting. We arrived in Nagano about 11:0'clock and had an hour and a half before our train left for Tokyo, so got a taxi to take us up to a fairly modern temple overlooking the city. Then we went down to the Joshinji Temple - one of the oldest and most famous in Japan, built in 1264. We found it to be so huge and so many buildings that we could not begin to see it all. We did go into three of the most famous buildings where there are golden buddahs and these temples are called the Zenkoji, built in 664 and it is said the gold buddhas were made by Buddha himself!

Nagano is lower in altitude than we are and it is warmed by the Japan Sea, so the cherry blossoms were already coming out and plum and peach were in full bloom. It was a lovely sight and we were so disappointed that the weather was not more perfect for taking pictures. It is one of the places I would like to go back to and spend a whole day, and will if the time is available.

Our train to Tokyo was a nice one which had second class coaches (no first class on any trains except two on the main Tokaido line). We passed close to the foot of Mt. Asama which is an active volcano and we saw it erupt from further away two years ago... Not far from Mt. Asama is a lovely city - Karuizawa which had the first American colony in the Japan Alps. It is one of the most famous summer resorts because of the lovely scenery and the even, cool climate... There we changed engines to an electric cog one as for five miles the grade is very steep and goes thru twenty-seven tunnels, all short, but just in and out!! Between tunnels we had brief glimpses of very deep, beautiful gorges!

In Tokyo we arrived in a new station to us, Ueno Station, and were glad to be met by our good friend Mr. Yamamoto, and Mr. Tsubouchi from the New Grand Hotel in Yokohama! It was only thru the latter that we were able to get a hotel room in Tokyo as everything was jam-packed with tourists! He had a friend who was the desk clerk at the New Japan Hotel, just opened the first of this month and is a lovely place. We went there by taxi and Tsubouchi-san saw us established in our very fine room then had to go back to Yokohama. Mr. Yamamoto stayed for dinner with us and when we were in the lobby seeing him off we saw Arthur Godfrey. We had quite a long talk with him, and he was so cordial and pleasant. He told us about his wonderful trip to Laos to see the famous Dr. Dooly. The next night when waiting for Paul, I saw him again and he spoke so pleasantly and called me by name! I guess that is one of his charms!

Wednesday was such a rainy day, but we had business to attend to so had to go in it anyhow. Had to go to the Bodwell Travel Agency to see if they are having any luck on our reservations, but nothing is definite yet. The manager is a Mr. Giouliss - an American with a Greek name. He is very nice and is anxious to get our Sachiko-san to work for him as a cook-maid when we leave. He had met her when she was in Tokyo two weeks before, and we had her go by to see if they were working on our trip. He is a widower with a boy of 12 and daughter of 14 and he lives in Yokohama. We are anxious to see Sachiko get a good job before we leave Japan, and this seems like such a good opportunity... Will take time here to tell you of such an odd thing that happened about our efforts in her behalf... I had seen an add in the Japan Times for a maid which sounded good, and on the Sunday before we left, Paul called the number given which was in Y'hama. And of all the people it could have been, it was a man Paul knows well, the Vice Pres. of the Japan branch of the F. & H. Shovel firm which supplies much of the heavy equipment for the job here!! Mr. Gundersen is his name and he wanted to talk to us in person about Sachiko and said they would even be willing to wait until we leave to be able to get her. They have two other maids

and four small children, but the pay is high even for foreigners. We were all torn between the two fine chances for her, but on the 18th when Paul talked to Mr. Gundersen he said he had just been told that he and his family could have "home leave" of three months and would not be back until September. He said he would like to have her when they return, but of course she has to live in the meantime. I think she will be very happy working for Mr. Giouliss anyhow and tho the salary will not be as high, she will not have the conflict of other maids. Now Mr. Giouliss had better get busy and get reservations for us!

Wednesday night our friend Stanley Hinckley came up to Tokyo to have dinner and go to a show with us. He caught his ship in Kobe, and it was in Yokohama for a few days before leaving for the United States. We saw a wonderful show similar to the Music Hall in New York, with 150 girls in it singing and dancing, and the lighting effects were the most spectacular I have ever seen.

Thursday morning we left for Yokohama, or rather went straight to Yokosuka where I took all my summer dresses to be altered to fit me, and then shopped at the commissary and exchange, then back to Y'hama for the night at the New Grand Hotel.

Friday morning I had my hair done while Paul went to Yokosuka to see the dentist. When he returned we packed and left for the Fujiya Hotel in the Hakone Area near Mt. Fuji. We made the trip in a car so we could see more and it took us nearly two hours over a lovely, steep, well paved road into a very mountainous section. It is very famous for the hot springs, so hotels are thick and every place there so crowded too.

The main part of the Fujiya Hotel was built 80 years ago, but they have a nice new building too. The grounds are beautiful and spacious, with waterfalls and typical Japanese gardens. The cherry trees were in their prime and added much to the beauty. There are swimming pools, family baths and private baths fed by the medicinal hot springs.

Saturday morning we caught the "tram" behind the hotel for a 20 minute ride to Gohra. There we took the cable car for 10 minutes to its terminal and caught the newly opened aerial cable car for a 15 minute ride across a deep, bleak valley where steam shoots up all the time and it is called Big Hell! Well named as far as I could see! The terminal is a big round building with a revolving top floor where one just sits and watches the view go by! We were lucky to have a fine view of Mt. Fuji on one side and Lake Hakone on the other... From there we took a bus down to the lake and then went by boat to the far end of the lake and had lunch at the lovely Hakone Hotel, owned by the Fujiya Hotel management. Then we caught another bus and went back to our hotel.

Many people ask us if we are not worried about traveling around on our own like we do, but we have always found it quite easy. If our meager Japanese, gestures, and their English do not accomplish our needs, we have found that most of the ticket stations, bus, train or boat, have people who can read English, so we just write it out and have had no difficulty at all, and thereby seeing many things and places most travelers have missed. Besides it is always such fun and the people are so friendly and helpful.

Easter Sunday was quite cloudy, but we hired a car to take us to Long Tail Pass which has one of the most spectacular views of Mt. Fuji in Japan. Again we were greatly favored, as the clouds broke when we got there and we had a marvelous view even tho the skies were grey. We stopped at the hotel golf course on our way back to eat our lunch which we had taken. The place was packed, but the very nice manager had us go into a small private dining room and had us served coffee for me and milk for Paul. We had a lovely view of the cherry trees and the fine golf course. After lunch we stopped to thank the manager and he took us on a personally conducted tour of the oldest house in the area, part of which is now used as a hotel for golfers. I have never seen such beams in a building,

huge, and made of a very hard wood and polished until it looked and felt like marble!

Back at the hotel, we decided that we had time for a hike before Paul had to leave for the hospital in Yokosuka. So we went almost straight down to Dogashima on the river far below. It was a paved path, but our legs were trembling when we reached the bottom! The village there is entirely Japanese spas and very interesting. We found that a cable car ran up and down to the village, so were very glad we did not have to hike back up. It was a steep ride and beautiful, but scary!

As Paul had to have his tests at 8:a.m. at the hospital he had decided to stay there over night and the doctors thought it was best for him to do so, therefore I did not go with him. I had dinner all alone and went to bed early and read as I was pretty tired... Next morning was a rainy one, so I took some pictures with flash in the hotel and shopped in all the little shops. After lunch the rain had stopped so I decided to go for a hike up Mt. Sengen which is right behind the hotel. Fuji View Stand is on top of the mountain at elevation 2600' and the hotel is at 1377' and the distance is only a little over a mile, so you can see I went nearly straight up! It was a rough mountain trail like I am used to here in Mitake and I seemed to be the only person on the mountain. When I got to the top I rested quite awhile. It started to rain a little, but then the clouds broke and once again Fuji-yama showed its beauty to me!! I took a couple of pictures before it again disappeared from view and I started on my lonely way down. The descent was easier, but I had to be careful because of loose stones and it was slick from the rain in places... Going down makes my legs tremble more than going up and they were sure knocking out tunes by the time I got down and how glad I was to get into a good hot tub!!

I waited quite awhile for Paul to return, but was so hungry that I went ahead to dinner. He came when I was eating my desert... The doctors thought he was improving, but couldn't read the x-rays until later. They said they would call him at the hotel if they found anything wrong and as they didn't, we assume everything is all right, tho he has to stay on his diet and medication.

Tuesday morning early we had breakfast and left by car for Odawara on the main train line from Tokyo to Nagoya. Got off the train at Fuji in about two hours, and there caught an electric train to Kofu, about a three hour ride. It was new country to us as we skirted the west side of Mt. Fuji along the Fuji River valley. Very interesting, but don't think we want to go that way again.. At Kofu we caught our Chuo Line train to Shirojiri and then on down to Kiso Fukushima where we were met by Sachiko-san and our driver.

We had a wonderful trip, but it is so good to be home!! As I write this and look out our front porch at our big cherry tree in bloom now and others all up and down the valley, and the mountains starting to get green, I wonder why we travel to other places! This is still the most beautiful place I have seen in Japan, and far away from the swarms of people and cities! The air is clear and unpolluted and everything so quiet and peaceful... so it is mighty good to be back to "Tanoshi tomo tanomoshiya" - Home, Sweet Home!!!