

TR-9a: TRIP TO JAPAN 1979 SUMMARY

Jack had been invited to come to the Univ. of Nagoya in Japan to teach a course on crop evolution. It was to begin Oct. 21, 1979 and run until the end of the year. He invited his wife, Jean, to come with him on the first part of this trip. On this excursion Jack was very impressed by the Japanese and their hospitality. I looked this up and it is called Omotenashi.

What is Japanese 'Omotenashi'?¹

By Muneyuki Joraku

"I think it's about creating a non-dominant relationship between a person who's offering the service and a person who is receiving it. It could be the CEO of a big company, a famous star or an ordinary housewife, but there's only one simple relationship between host and guest. An example of the best Omotenashi is when the host anticipates the needs of the guest in advance and offers a pleasant service that guests don't expect. They should not wait for instructions from their guests, as guests who make their requests directly are considered unsophisticated in Japan."

We can see Omotenashi operating throughout this trip. Jack fell in love with the Japanese people. "They are so sweet," he said on more than one occasion. We have to couple this with the fact that Jack R. Harlan has become something of a great and famous American plant scientist and he is visiting the university to teach a course in Crop Evolution. He has some status in their eyes and they treat him and Jean with a little extra Omotenashi.

The Trip: So they departed from Champaign on September . 22, 1979 and flew to Tokyo. They spent the night and took a train to Nagoya. They were met first by Takashi who took them to see Roland Dance of U. Grenoble, "a visiting prof. for a month in Akazawa's lab. Met with the President of N. U. and signed the contract." After a long day: "Jean had had visitations all day long & was ready to jump out of her skin." Evidentially they settled into some kind of apartment, because he says that Jean was learning to cook Japanese breakfasts.

Over the next few days they do some shopping, they visit some temples; that sort of thing. A typhoon was approaching so the weather was not very good. Jack met with some people regarding his work and spent some time getting ready for his course. There is an American, Roland Dance, who they team up with some times. They go to some very nice shrines and saw the female pearl divers, etc. Then on October 13 a student of one of the professors he has met gave them tickets to a really great experience in Gifu, where they do the Cormorant fishing. They have a room in a nice hotel right on the Nagara River, so that they can look out the window and see all the boats gathering below. They go down there and present their tickets and they are escorted onto one of the boats. A fisherman explains how they do the fishing and off they go. Later there is a great fireworks display (look this up on the Internet. It is something.) and it is very impressive.

Then they go off to Kyoto and stay at the Kyoto Hotel and go to a very nice, new museum. Jack said in his notes that he thought Jean was bored but he thought it was great. He met with some scientists at the Plant Germ Plasm Institute at Kyoto and later came back and took Jean shopping then they went back to the hotel. At about 4:30 there were some big squalls and sirens went off. They looked out the window and saw a great shower of sparks a few blocks away. "Jean panicked, dressed and was going to leave the

¹ <http://www.wattention.com/archives/omotenashi-the-heart-of-japanese-hospitality/>

place. I dragged my feet until the sparks & smoke subsided & we went back to bed, a bit excited but no peril.” (I wonder if mother wanted to go down to see what the disaster was all about.)

The next day, Oct. 17, they went out to the Imperial Palace and then into the country to a pleasant valley and hiked around. In the midst of his other notes he says: “The Japanese terrified of their own bureaucracy – which hasn’t been that bad for us.” At 2:00 PM they took a tour. “It was very impressive. The conception & execution apparently to arrange nature in better order than it is. Every tree, every leaf, every rock & every building set among ponds & hills to the best perspective....” (THERE IS MORE TO THIS – A GOOD QUOTE) Back at the hotel they stroll around and have another great meal. “back to hotel & TV plus notes.”

Oct. 18 “In aft Sakamoto² took us to the Zen Garden of Ryranji Temple” (featured in NatGeo mag.) Very impressive: “carefully placed rocks w. moss. Seen from any angle one rock is hidden.” Really great and peaceful, except several thousand school children same swarming in. The rain messed up Jean’s last night in Japan.

So, thus it goes. This is a nice vacation, but here comes Typhoon Tip, which went on record as the largest most intense cyclone in history. A U-Tube of the satellite imagery shows that the eye came very close to Nagoya on Oct 19, but the eye was already breaking up by then. It had run into a cold front and was moving rapidly to the northeast and breaking up when it passed Japan. Where they were it rained some and blew some, but it was not anything catastrophic. Jean was due to leave out on the 18th, but her flight was cancelled because of Tip.

Jean departed on October 20, 1979 and immediately Jack digs into the course he is going to teach and into meeting the various people in the crop sciences field in Japan. He meets quite a few people and gives their names in his notes. He is wined and dinned. I should say saked and dinned. There are a lot of parties, especially as Christmas grown near. I do not know how much Christmas had to do with this, because the time was also drawing near of Jack’s departure. Jack Harlan is enjoying the benefits of a left well lived. He returned on Dec. 24. Let me let him describe what happened: Takaki helped him get his stuff to the subway. 5 parcels: suitcase, attaché case, brief case, slides & wedding present. “Rush hour crowd dense but not too bad. At Nagoya Station Yasho met us with my ticket & they went up to see me off. The last ride on Shinkansen (bullet train) 2 hour to Tokyo Station. No red caps & one hell of a struggle by myself & back painful & threatening to give way altogether...” So he describes the typical ordeal at the airport. Eventually he gets back home to Champaign and “it is Christmas and dinner with Mildred and then go on to Macon. This should end the 1978 story” then on next page he lists some of the great people he met in Japan.

² There is a professor named Sadao Sakamoto who, practicing *Omotenashi*, was always there to see to their needs. He as a university Professor and was very kind to them. JRH called Sakamoto “old faithful” because he was always there to help them.