

Published by Bruce Pelz
15931 Kalisher St
Granada Hills, Ca 91344

for the 191st mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Society

May 1985



AN EASTERN EXPO SURE

It is all Lex Nakashima's fault, although I suppose I have to admit that the seeds of insanity he scattered about did fall on ground that was already fairly well tilled and ready to receive them.

He and I were driving to San Diego the first weekend of March, to attend Conquistador II, and one of the subjects of conversation during the hour and a half drive was the social schedule for the next month or so -- conventions, parties, and the like. Lex said he would have to be gone for a week or so in early or mid-April, going to Japan on business. He wouldn't mind having fannish company on the trip. He wondered who might be interested.

If he'd been planning to go in early March or before, or in late September or later, I'd have shrugged and changed the subject. But from March 17 to September 16, there was something in Japan that I was particularly interested in seeing: EXPO '85, in Tsukuba Science City, a bit north of Tokyo. Hmm... Ever since "Shogun" ran on the TV a couple years ago, Elayne had been at least somewhat interested in going to Japan; perhaps she could be talked into going for a week or so... .

Elayne was somewhat dubious -- she would like to go to Japan after she made an attempt to learn the language, which would certainly would be a number of years in the future, not during the next four weeks. But Lex had talked Larry and Fuzzy Pink Niven into going, as well as Michele Coleman, so we would be a party of six, and could at least talk to each other. And Fuzzy Pink has about as much interest in eating fish-infested cuisine as Elayne does (i.e., next to no interest at all), and I have only a small bit more, so there would be company on forays in search of non-fish provender. Plans were made.

Lex's travel agency in San Jose could get a good deal on air fares to Japan via JAL, and they would also take care of the land arrangements such as hotels and rail passes. We had a scheduling meeting to decide how many days we wanted to spend where, and Lex set the agency to work. He himself would be leaving a couple days earlier than the rest of us, so he could take care of his busi-

ness before we got there, and could then tour around with us. (Lex, a Sansei, speaks maybe twice as much Japanese as I do, and I know maybe a dozen words.) He left things in the hands of the agency and took off for Lunacon and other points in the East, where he would be basically unreachable until he returned to L.A. the Tuesday before he was to leave for Japan on Wednesday.

Those of us who didn't have valid passports got them. Visa applications from the Japanese Consulate were obtained through Robbie Cantor, who works at the reasonably-nearby Canadian Consulate, and we puzzled over them a bit. Michele tracked Lex down (by phone) in the wilds of New Jersey and got the travel agency's phone number, then got information on how to fill out the visa applications. Fuzzy took all five passports and visa applications downtown and got our visas en masse in about five minutes total. Lex zipped into L.A., said "See you Saturday," and zipped out again. I bought a couple Japanese language cassettes and a cheap pseudo-Walkman to try to learn at least a few rudiments of the language. It didn't work any too well.

Lex had suggested that we get to the airport three hours early -- 0700 -- in order to get good seats, so we did. Of course, the check-in counter didn't officially open until 0830, but they unofficially checked us in and did give us good seats (in Executive Class, for some reason, though we were flying Economy Class). The luggage off our hands, we headed off to do last-minute errands: register cameras and other non-U.S.-made stuff that had serial numbers, change currency, buy junk to eat (or to read) for the flight, and eat breakfast. (Elayne and I already had \$600 worth of Yen -- slightly under ¥150,000. -- to start the trip, as Elayne had bought them at a bank a week or two before.)

If there were more than a half dozen Round Eyes other than us on that plane, you couldn't tell from where we sat. The trip was pleasant enough, but long: 11 hrs 15 min. We began to accustom ourselves to Japanese cuisine: several of us left about half of our lunches untouched (including the part that stared back at us); the tea-drinkers began to distinguish between "ocha" and "kocha," where the former is Japanese Green Tea and the latter black/American/English style tea; the cola drinkers gave up on requesting diet cola. (There is Diet Coke in Japan -- called Coke Light -- available mostly from omnipresent vending machines for the equivalent of \$.40.)

Elayne did needlework; Michele talked with the Japanese woman who was her seatmate, and found out all sorts of useful information, none of which I can remember; Fuzzy did needlework; Larry read; Fuzzy and Michele played Scrabble on a portable gameboard; I slept. (So much for trying to use the time for further attempt to learn the language from cassettes.)

In good time -- and after about half an hour of bad time just off the coast of Japan, when the plane tried to emulate a roller coaster -- we landed at Narita Airport. Customs and Baggage Claim were both quick and easy. And we tumbled out into the main wait-

ing room to be met by the Larry Niven Appreciation Society, Japan Branch.

Takumi Shibano, SMOF/J, who has been ill recently, had written Larry that he might not be able to meet us at Narita, but there might be someone else there to do so. So there were half a dozen Japanese fans with a "Welcome Larry Niven" banner, to guide us through the airport and to our hotel in Tokyo. They duly reported that "Mr. Shibano told us you were coming."

About that time I realized my camera wasn't visible. I remembered putting it into the overhead compartment of the plane when we got on, along with our carry-on bag and coats, and Elayne had taken the bag and coats out of the compartment when we landed. She had apparently missed the camera; it would be small enough to be out of the line of vision. There was a 45-minute wait for the bus to the hotel, so I went to JAL's information desk, which sent me to another desk, which found out that the plane was no longer at the landing slip, and sent me to the baggage claim office. The office sent someone to find the plane and check the compartment, which took a bit of time -- Narita is not a small airport. The compartment was empty. Oh #S%&!! well... I could buy another Ricoh idiot's-delight camera while I was in Japan. The rest of the crew had taken all the luggage and retired to a coffee shop upstairs -- a Japanese/German place called Tuchman's, and Elayne and I joined them and retrieved our bags. I picked up the carry-on, and a misfiled piece of memory returned. I checked the front pocket of the many-compartmented folding bag. Contents: one camera. #S%&!! Stupid Elephant... Strike One. We advanced to the bus line, and I unlimbered the errant piece of machinery to take shots at the motley crew. Eventually, under the somewhat gloomy Tokyo skies, we lumbered away to the New Otani.



Takumi and his wife Sachiko were waiting for us at the hotel, along with their daughter Miho and several more fans. It was good to see the Shibanos -- almost the only fans I actually knew in Japan at that point -- and everyone spent a while in greetings and discussions of schedules and plans.

Lex was already checked in, and the entire group was listed as Mr. and Mrs. Nakashima and Party. Michele was "Mrs." and the rest of us were "and Party." (Elayne and I volunteered to be "and" and let the Nivens be "Party.") It was the first of three times we would be checking into the New Otani during the trip, and things went quite smoothly. (The Bellman even refused a tip after carting a dozen pieces

of luggage up to the 15th floor of the Tower. "Everything is included." How nice.)

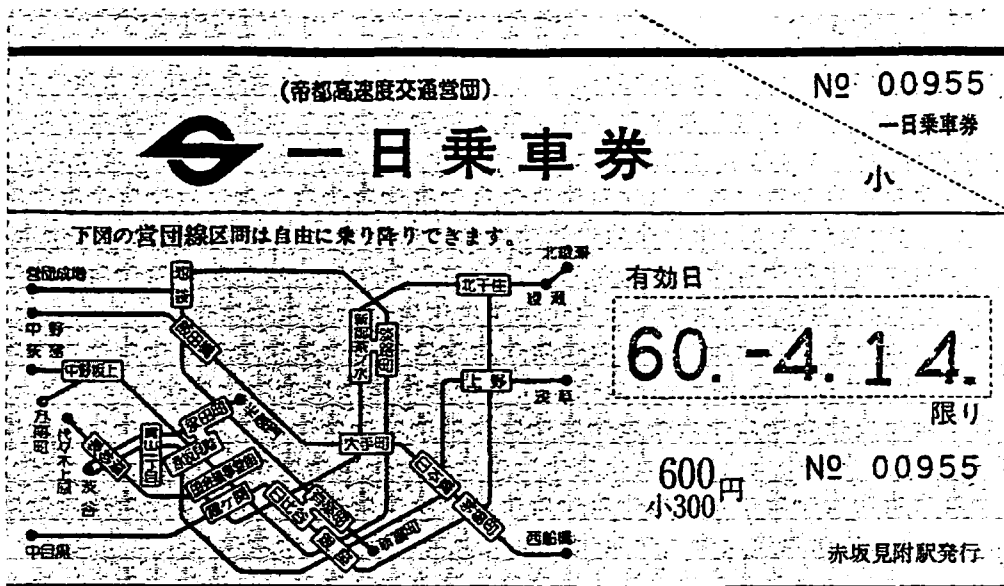
Elayne and I had a corner room with quite a lovely view. From one window we could look down into the New Otani's gardens, which are really very pretty by day or night, and from the other window we could look out onto the expressway into Tokyo and onto the modern Tokyo buildings behind it (which is very pretty by night; I'm not so sure about it by day).

Nivens went out with the Japanese fans for a tempura dinner, from which the rest of us begged off and lay around our rooms relaxing a while. We also did a little exploring of the hotel, which is very large and very bicultural, discovering the various shops, services and routes from one place to another. We also sought out the important things: a breakfast brunch was served in the Top of the Tower restaurant from 7:00 a.m. every day; and the soft drink machines had Coke Light cans at ¥200 (\$1.80). And eventually we set out to find some dinner ourselves.

Lex led us through the streets of the Belle Vie area (Akasaka District) in search of dinner which was neither fish (which Elayne won't eat) nor pickled (which I won't eat). The target was someplace which served yakitori -- skewered bits of chicken with various sauces, vegetable additives, etc. Lex, who had been in the area twice before, was sure such a place was "right in the next block." We were close to giving up and going (a)back to the hotel; (b)to a Western fast food place we'd passed; or (c)to stuff ourselves with pastry at a bakery we'd passed, when we actually found a (if not "the") restaurant that had what we were looking for. (I have no idea what its name is; read it yourself off the matchbook cover.) It was a little tiny place, with no more than three other customers at the time. Would we like a table or would we like to sit at the counter? We asked for a table, and a sliding door was pushed aside to reveal the mats-and-benches set-up of a standard Japanese restaurant. Shoes came off on demand (picture of Elephant trying to remove velcroed walking shoes in a tiny space, without bumping into anything or anyone...). The food was very good, and about an hour later we wandered -- via the aforementioned bakery and an outdoor vending machine that had Coke Light for ¥100 -- back to the hotel.



Sunday the 14th was tagged for shopping in Tokyo. We started with the Top of the Tower brunch, which was excellent, especially for ¥2100 (about \$8.40). Most of the food was standard Western fare -- possibly superstandard, considering the juice-and-liquor bar -- with only a few chances to experiment with Japanese breakfast items. (Rice soup is generally tasteless without the small additives provided, and the stuff that looked like diced apricots was pickled kumquat; back to the sausage-and-eggs-and-sweet-rolls routine.)



After breakfast, Sachiko and Miho, accompanied by four of the Fan Brigade, met us at the hotel to guide us around.

First stop: the subway station, for all-day passes (¥600); then off in search of silk, electronics, netsuke, pearls, and miscellaneous tourist junk.

The National Arcade near the Ginza has lots of pearls and silk shops, and Miho had an (ex-)employee's discount at one of them. Fuzzy, Michele and Elayne shopped, I wandered and explored the other shops, and Larry read or talked to the Japanese fans. Next came an antique store for netsuke (and certificates of provenance that will allow them to be brought into the U.S.), another arcade for swords (nothing worth the price for us non-fanatic collectors), and a walk to the Ginza itself. The Ginza, the main street of the main department store shopping district in Tokyo, is blocked off to traffic on Sunday afternoon, so that shoppers can wander up and down the street without worrying about cars. So can miscellaneous pushcart-style vendors. It was vaguely reminiscent of Sixth Avenue in New York with a street fair going on -- though nowhere near as littered or hectic.

Most everyone opted for lunch; Elayne and I opted to wander and shop, and meet them back at the restaurant in an hour. I headed us in the direction Lex had said there was a large toy store; we didn't find it. We did find a curbside setup where someone was haranguing anyone who would listen about something or other having to do with Communists. We went through a small department store and headed back for The Ginza, ending up at a large department store, Matsuya. The toy department is on the 5th floor. They have an apparently complete collection of Zoids, the put-them-together-and-wind-them-up plastic monsters which are lots of fun to assemble and set out wandering over the floor in their various lurching, hopping, etc., gaits. At ¥580 or ¥780, I bought a half dozen of the things, with the intent to bring one out at each of the next half dozen parties for people to put together and play with. (Lex first brought a couple of the things back from one of his previous trips to Japan.)

We rejoined the group, which proceeded toward Matsuya but got sidetracked by a small toy store with a couple demonstration tables outside and hardly any room at all inside. Fuzzy picked up the ten Godzilla cigaret lighters that Craig Miller asked her to bring back, Elayne bought two sets of 5 metal minimonsters that can be rolled across a table emitting sparks from their mouths -- gifts for people at work -- and I added six more Zoids to the collection. I could just envision the Customs Declaration: 12 plastic monster kits, 10 spark-breathing monster toys... (and it got even better as the trip progressed). At Matsuya Elayne and I took a different route to reach the 5th floor, and wound up in the stuffed animal section. Result: one silly looking stuffed owl whose primary attraction -- besides being reasonably cute and very pettable -- is that it bounces amusingly when you pound on its head, is now part of our Stuffie Collection. I have about come to the conclusion that half the toy manufacturers in the world would go out of business if all fans ever grew up.

After toys, there were a few other departments of interest, but eventually Miho started glancing at her watch -- if we were going to get to the electronics section of the city, we'd have to get moving. We pruned Fuzzy loose from the needlework section before she bought them out of silk thread, and headed for the subway.

Akihabara, Tokyo's Electronics center, is full of sales, bargains, and discounts. There are whole stores catering to tourists who will take their purchases out of the country and thus not have to pay duty on them. The only problem seemed to be, at least as far as consumer items were concerned, that the things we looked at didn't really seem to be enough of a bargain to lug them back with us. We bought a few minor items for gifts. In electronics parts, however, it seems to be a different story. Lex found a laser diode that was (apparently -- what do I really know about such things?) a bargain at ¥40,000, so he bought it. The rest of us decided, waiting outside the parts arcade for him, that it was getting slightly late, rather cold, and very tired out. Once more to the subway, and back to the New Otani.

At 8:00 we were to meet the fans who would be our guides the next day in Tsukuba. In the meantime we spread out through our room and Lex's, which had a connecting door. Sachiko, Miho, Elayne, and a few others tried to figure out schedules for the later parts of our trip -- Kyoto, in particular -- in our room, and I talked conventions and such stuff to Hiroshi Murayama and some others in Lex's. (There is definite interest in having a Worldcon in Japan, but there is also realization that it will not be any time in the near future. Many of the Japanese fans were at L.A.-Con, and will be at Aussiecon and Confederation. Japan seems to have the largest active fan population outside the English-speaking countries, and some of the stateside convention planners should probably keep this fact in mind... .) Hiroshi also gave me a copy of his fanzine PALANTIR -- a special issue on new writers of the '80's and on the 1984 Nebula and Hugo winners. It has 122 pages, with xeroxed pro photos, article headings in English, and Japanese text. I'm glad to have it for the collection.

8:00 came and went, and the guides hadn't appeared. People were getting hungry. Most of the fans went home, and Sachiko and Miho led the tourists to a restaurant which served shabu-shabu (thin-sliced beef cooked by dumping it in a pot of boiling water at the table, then ~~fished~~ lifted out and dipped in a soy sauce).

The guides arrived: Takashi Sugawara, generally known as "Tamasan," and Yuichiro Hanawa (Yuki). Yuki, who had lived in the states for five years or so, spoke excellent English, and Tamasan spoke English quite well enough to communicate, but tended to get flustered when he was in the company of any of the Japanese fans who had more English. I was delegated to discuss our plans for Tsukuba with them (since it was alleged that I had a more definite idea of those plans).

One of the first things they asked was: Where were we staying in Tsukuba? When I said "Space Cabin Village" Tamasan almost had a fit. We couldn't possibly want to stay there -- did we know what sort of a place it was? We knew it was a Japanese-style hotel (Ryokan), not a Western-style one -- tatami mats on the floor, futons and quilts to sleep on/under, and not the height of luxury. But the reservation said "with bath," so how crude could it be? Tamasan still didn't think we knew what we were letting ourselves in for, and we would surely get a bad impression of Japan. We assured him that we were quite capable of "roughing it" at least to this limited an extent. He went off to make a phone call. When he came back, he was somewhat calmer about things; maybe Space Cabin Village wouldn't be a total disaster. In any case, he would meet us at the New Otani in the morning and travel with us to Tsukuba, where he worked at the Expo, in the UCC Coffee Pavilion. He would guide us Monday and Wednesday; Yuki would be there Tuesday, and a few other fans would join us ad lib during the three days. We finished dinner, gave up the futile attempt to get Sachiko to let us pay for it, and retired to pack for Tsukuba.

Elayne and I managed to get all we needed for the three-day jaunt into one folding suitcase and our carrying cases. The others did their best to economize on space too, and in the morning the mob took the ten or so pieces of luggage that we wouldn't be needing and checked at them with the New Otani, since we would be coming back there Wednesday night. When Tamasan arrived we all piled into two cabs and headed for the Tokyo station of the Japan National Railway, to exchange our Rail Pass orders for actual rail passes.

Taxicabs in Tokyo are quite inexpensive, and even a couple thousand Yen, at \$4.00/thousand, is insignificant split three or four ways. But Elayne and I have never got used to taking cabs except in cases where there was no other reasonable choice from the standpoint of time/schedule or whatever. In Japan, when with others, we took cabs. (When we were by ourselves, it was a different -- and several days later -- story.) There was also the Tokyo traffic problem, which gave one the impression that walking

No 0603

JAPAN RAIL PASS**GREEN**Valid for unlimited travel on all lines of the
JAPANESE NATIONAL RAILWAYS (JNR)**国鉄全線** (グリーン車船室用)

FIRST DATE

(有効開始日)

60.4.15

JAPAN YEAR MONTH DAY

LAST DATE

(有効期限)

60.4.21

JAPAN YEAR MONTH DAY

Name (氏名)

Country (国名)

Passport No. (旅券番号)

Price (料金)

Date of issue (発行日)

Issued by (発行所)

might be faster, if one only knew where one was going.

In any case, the cabs did get us to the station, Tamasan located the Travel Service Center where we could get our Rail Passes, and we went through the paperwork involved. Then, passes in hand, we headed for the train to Ueno, a main rail center in the northern part of Tokyo, from which express trains (as well as others) go to other cities -- like Tsukuba.

In Ueno, while waiting for the Express, the rest invaded a small coffee shop for lunch, while I bought an ice cream cone -- "aisukuriimu" is an easy translation -- and explored the railway station. There was a stand with all sorts of tourist-bait packages of fruit and pastry-like objects, and I stared at the latter with fascination wondering what they

were. Some were in the shapes of either cats or raccoons, and were filled with what looked like red bean paste (which I like very much). Others were totally unguessable. I decided I didn't want to experiment at the time, and wandered back to join the rest in time to catch the Express to Tsukuba.

From the station at Tsukuba we took cabs to Space Cabin Village, and discovered why Tamasan had been worried. When you arrive at this establishment, the first thing you see are several dozen huge Christmas Trees. With windows. And ladders leading up into them. In fact, these are the recognition symbol for SCV -- permanent tent-like structures, with the same tatami mats and futons and quilts, but with no heaters, plumbing, or any other such amenities. (There are communal facilities several minutes' run away.) However, though the fact isn't obvious from the roadside or from casual information about the place, SCV also has several standard buildings, with plumbing, heating, lights, and even TVs in each room. And we weren't staying in the Christmas Trees.

(Though a couple of us thought it might be fun... I took a couple pictures of us furriners poking our noses into one of the things.)

With Tamasan running interference for us -- the clerks in the office had little or no English -- we stashed our luggage at the office and commandeered yet another set of cabs. And somewhere around 3:30 p.m. on Monday, after walking from the cab dropoff -- as close to the West Gate as they were allowed to go -- through several blocks of roadside shops selling junk and munchies of extremely varied description, we arrived at Expo '85, The International Exposition: "Dwellings and Surroundings - Science and Technology for Man at Home."



We decided to buy tickets for the entire 3-day jaunt -- which may have saved us all of ¥300 total -- then traipsed merrily through a gate whose cute attendant was vehemently

urging us toward her. She happily took our tickets, and bade us -- in English -- enjoy the Expo, which we promised to do.

Tamasan took us first to the Suntory Pavilion, and through the VIP entrance (thus avoiding a line that would have taken from 45 minutes to an hour) into the theater. All of the major pavilions at Expo have film presentations -- generally very large, very impressive ones. Suntory's "Skyward" film, in keeping with its theme of "Today Birds, Tomorrow Man," used an IMAX projection system and a screen 26x35 meters. The film followed a family of Canadian Geese, and made comparisons with airplanes, boats, and various other zoom-alongs. A very nice start to the Expo.

After the show we went through the rest of the pavilion, and sank into the souvenir shop. There were T-shirts, buttons, all sorts of junk. They also had a medal, in a little commemorative folder, on which you could have your name and the date engraved. Elayne and I got one and had it engraved. It turned out that most of the large pavilions had such medals -- each picturing their pavilion or something appropriate to it, and after the second medal we stopped getting anything engraved on them. Looks prettier pristine.

They also had, as did almost all the pavilions, large and small, a commemorative rubber stamp which visitors could use for free to stamp in their guidebooks, or on the pavilion's giveaway brochure, or in special Passport books that were being sold at the junkie stores on the fringe of the Expo. The cheaper ones were just a standard stamp with a stamp pad next to it (both tied down, of course). The more elaborate had self-inking multicolor stamps, and the best of all had small machines that didn't let you get anywhere near the actual ink, just insert whatever you want to stamp, press a button, and a light flashed until the stamping was finished. Nifty gadgets. (Elayne and I ran into this idea of commemorative rubber stamping when we went to the New Orleans World's Fair last November, but I didn't realize that it might be a standard thing! I'm all in favor of it -- it's fun to collect the things.) I stamped my guidebook with all three machine-stamped Suntory stamps.

We had set a time-and-place for meeting later, so Elayne and I wandered across the "street" to an odd-looking pavilion that seemed to be faceted with various ancient statues of different cultures. Shueisha Publishing Co. was featuring "Song of History, Saga of Man," and their film, in 70mm Cinema-U (?) with a screen six storeys tall, toured us through various antiquities of construction and custom in Java, Egypt, Greece, Mexico, Japan... I could have used some English interpretation to better figure out what they were trying to show, but it was, again, very impressive. (There was an English-Language brochure. Most of the pavilions had a few English brochures, which they kept on the bottom of the stack they passed out to visitors, and when an obvious Round Eye appeared in the line, they handed him one. Poor Lex -- he, of course, kept getting the standard Japanese brochures!)

I stamped my guidebook, bought a medal and another button, and decided to take a picture of the pavilion itself. (The statues are such things as the Gandara Buddha, the Mexican Colossal Olmec Head, etc.) The camera wasn't in its bag. And this time I couldn't have put it elsewhere. It had to have been dropped either in the Suntory Pavilion or between Space Cabin Village and the Expo. I wasn't up to tackling the attendants at Suntory, so we turned in a report at the Lost and Found. Maybe it would turn up. @#%&! Stupid Elephant. Strike Two. Well, maybe there would be professional slides of the Expo I could buy... .

The Expo is divided into 8 lettered sections, and we had begun in the G Section. We decided to try to see the rest of G before the Expo closed at 7:00 p.m., so we went to the Midori Pavilion ("Biotechnology Opens the New Century"). They had a film on "A Trip to the Planet Bio" a cartoon on a "five-plane multiscreen" stretching a total of 94 meters side-to-side and top-to-bottom. The film showed that biotechnology would cure all physical problems --- and therefore, subsequently, all social problems.

The line for the NEC Pavilion was humungous, so we headed for the various pavilions of other countries, starting with Sri Lanka.