PROPER BOSKONIAN

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Back cover art by Patricia Pierce-Phillips
Interior illustrations by Sheryl Birkhead, Brad Foster, Ian Gunn, Alice Lewis, Joe Mayhew, and Mercy Van Vlack

Official Notices

Proper Boskonian is still trying to catch up to being a quarterly (or semi-annual) genzine of the New England Science Fiction Association. Send contributions (writing, art, and/or letters) to:

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All opinions expressed herein are those of the individual contributors, and may not represent the views of NESFA. One copy of *Proper Boskonian* is free to each NESFA member and contributor; additional copies are available through NESFA for $3.00 each, unless you're nice to me, in which case it's free. Back issues are also available.

The Editor ~~Speaks~~ Writes

by Lisa Hertel

I have a confession to make: I am not a "fanzine fan." While I will read just about anything I come across, I simply don't have time to seek out (or even read) all the fanzines sent to NESFA, which is why I have kept Bob Devney's *Zineophile*. If you would like your fanzine to (possibly) be reviewed by Bob, you can send them to NESFA, or mail them directly to:

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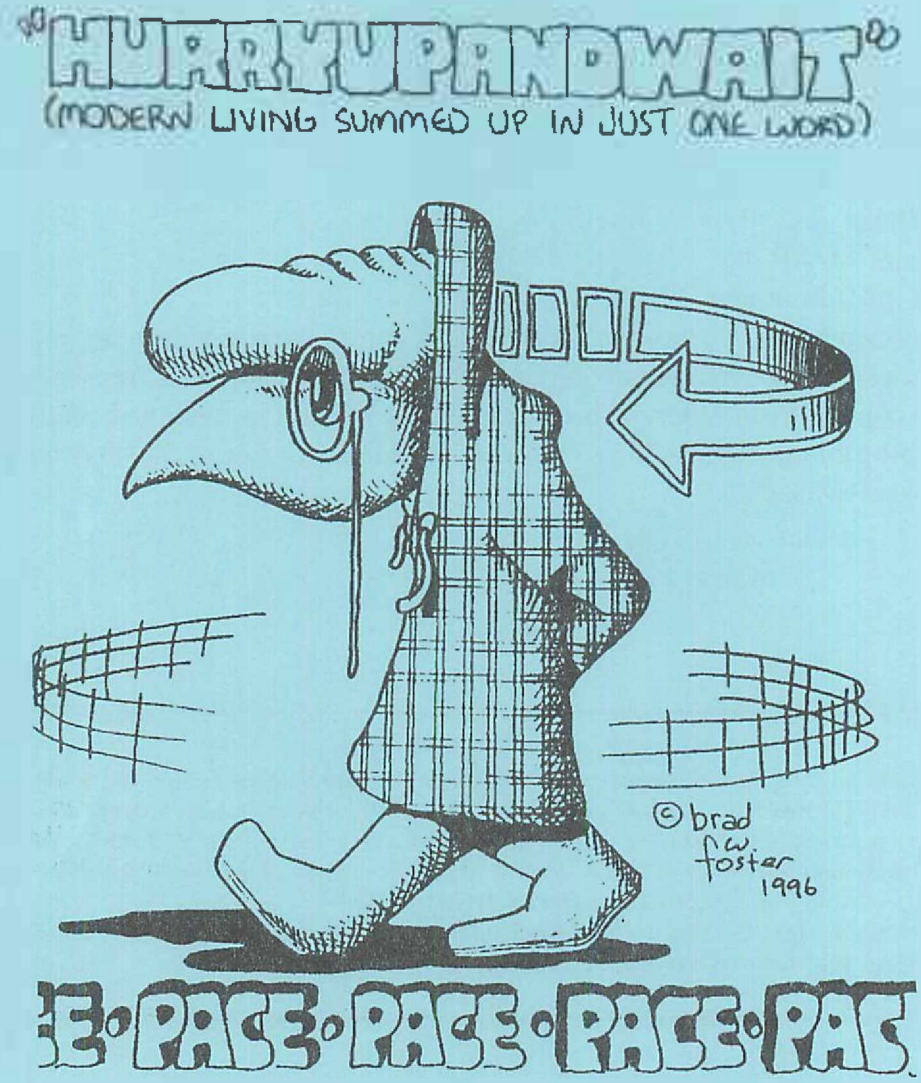
Bob Devney is replacing his usual fanzine review this month with movie reviews to help you with your Hugo decisions. Lloyd Penney has provided us with a few brief fanzine reviews instead.

This issue contains a rather lengthy and detailed report from Evelyn Leeper regarding her trip to Japan. While it has very little fannish content, I found it fascinating; I hope you do, too. In addition, there is yet another installment of Ian Gunn's cartoon, *Space*Time Buccaneers* (only 10 left). Finally, there was quite a back-log of letters as the last two issues were published very close together. If you think your letter should be here and isn't, it means I got it recently or it got lost in the stack, and it will appear in the next issue. I also plan to have two Boskone reports plus some fiction in it, and hope to mail it in June. The deadline for the next issue, should you want to submit something for it (we're always open to suggestions!), is mid-May. Until then, good reading!



Art by Brad Foster

Cineophile

Voting for the Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo
by Bob Devney

If you're thinking about the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation in the science fiction/fantasy field for 1996, it seems to me your choices break down into three groups. There are the obvious choices. The interesting choices. And the totally insane choices.

You have a few months to think about them all. Then (if you're a fully paid up member, supporting or attending, of this year's world science fiction convention, LoneStarCon 2) you can make your picks and send your final ballot off to San Antonio, enjoying the privilege of being among the small group of—what, several hundred people? ¾who decide this best-known of SF awards.

Normally, given my lazy, crazy, twisted character, I'd be drawn to the last category like vampires to a blood bank. But frankly I only have space and time here for about three full-fledged reviews. So for once I think I'll seek the sacred middle ground. Therefore, let's talk about your three most interesting potential choices this year. Afterwards we'll briefly consider the others.

When we're done, it should be pretty clear to you what my choice would be. And perhaps I'll have affected your own thoughts about which way to vote. I hope so. Since as someone who hasn't purchased a membership I'm not eligible to vote myself.

What, you thought I was kidding about the lazy, crazy, twisted part?

Low Spirits

The Frighteners takes its grim spirit from *Beetlejuice* and *Death Becomes Her*, its demons from *Ghost* and *Candyman*, its hero's winning trick from *Flatliners*, and its underlying air of desperation from *High Spirits*.

It's got a solid cast, first-rate directing (by Mick Jackson, who did the much more serious *Heavenly Creatures*), world-class special effects, and a script with a number of good ideas and lines studded throughout. Despite the laundry list above, some of the latter are even original. That it doesn't all add up to more may be the most frightening thing of all.

Michael J. Fox stars as Frank Bannister, who's not exactly on the stairway to heaven. He's a busted-out ghostbuster and medium in a small town who lives in a half-renovated dump and tries to slip bereaved family members his business card at funerals. Bannister once was a rising young architect, who one day had some sort of tragic accident. Ever since, he actually can see ghosts.

But he uses this gift only for a shabby con game. His usual ploy is to assign ghostly confederates to cause mischief. Then get himself hired to root them out. Despite his practiced patter and Fox's practiced ease with this kind of smoothie role, Bannister's heart doesn't really seem to be in it. As one of his ghostly gang comments, "Death ain't no way to make a living."

What brings Bannister back to life are a woman—Trini Alvarado as a young doctor who soon (conveniently) becomes a widow woman—and a worthy opponent. Unusually large numbers of townspeople are dying of freak heart attacks, and it soon seems to Bannister that an unusually evil ghost/demon named The Collector of Souls is behind it all. And a little *further* behind it all, events may connect with a mass murderer who went on a killing spree up at the old sanitarium and was executed years ago. Said sanitarium being unoccupied now—except by the haggy old widow (Julianna McCarthy) of the former director, plus her half-zombied grown-up daughter (Dee Wallace Stone), who as a teenager was somehow linked to the killer.

There's lots more plot to go around, and plenty of characters as well. To mention just two:

The local cemetery is run by a kind of ghostly drill instructor, embodied — well, maybe that's not the right word — by *Full Metal Jacket*'s R. Lee Ermey. My favorite of his lines: "There's a piece of dirt up here with your name on it, Bannister!"

Jeffrey Combs is the other standout in the supporting cast, as FBI guy Milton Dammers. He's the agent to whom the Bureau seemingly assigns all their deeply twisted paranoid occult serial killer cases. Presumably on the theory that it takes one to know one. When Combs shoves the heroine into his car, crabs around to the driver's door, and menaces her with a frightening crimson object he whirls from under his coat, it takes you a long terrified moment until you realize the object is merely the world's reddest, most evil-looking hemorrhoid ring seat cushion.

On the score of logic and internal consistency, while *The Frighteners* doesn't go as low as *Independence Day*, things are still disappointingly loose. The interaction between the spirit world and the physical one seems especially ill-defined. In fact, downright contradictory.

Ghosts can walk through doors and walls. Except when they get stuck. Or when they just bulge out the wallpaper like latex, in a marvelous-looking, much-used, but completely nonsensical effect. (Your wallpaper would just shred, wouldn't it? Kids, don't try this at home. My home, anyway.] And when you hit a ghost your blows pass harmlessly through. Except when Michael J. Fox gives one a sharp backward elbow-jab that sends it reeling.

I see that NESFAns Dave and Claire Anderson and George Flynn all were taken enough with the film to put it

forward for Hugo consideration. On the other hand, the public seemed to find little joy in it. The critics ditto. In fact, though Roger Ebert admired the special effects, the bottom line of his piece goes like this: "Last year, I reviewed a nine-hour documentary about the lives of Mongolian yak herdsmen, and I would rather see it again than sit through *The Frighteners*."

I liked it better than that. If nothing else, the end credits send you out with that great final song, "Don't Fear the Reaper," which I've now been humming for 3 days. Got to like a movie that keeps you thinking about it.

However: *The Frighteners* as a Hugo-caliber piece?

I've got grave reservations...

But then, don't we all?

Danson Fairly Swiftly

Watching the Ted Danson TV miniseries version of *Gulliver's Travels*, the word that comes to mind, unfortunately, is "worthy." When it might have been "wow!"

The film is fairly faithful to the 1726 satire by Jonathan Swift. Unlike the case in less ambitious media versions, Dr. Gulliver actually visits all four of his imaginary places: Lilliput, home of little people. Brobdingnag, home of big people. Laputa, home of people too smart for their own good. And Houyhnhnmland, home of smart, civilized horses (the Houyhnhnms) plus people who are real yahoos (the Yahoos). Also to its credit, this version retains Swift's satirical emphasis. Its bitter focus swiftly dances around, scorching all abusers of human reason. Including rulers, generals, doctors, academics, junkmen, farmers, dwarves, men, women, children, and so on.

You know, all us yahoos.

Plus you get well-done scenes of all the familiar wonders. Life looked at from both sizes now. A flying island. Talking horses. And most famous and disturbing of all, a giant tied down and held helpless by a hundred little men.

This fidelity was aided by the two-part TV miniseries format. That gives it 4 hours and 18 minutes of elbow room, more than many people will sit still for in a theater. (I saw it as a two-videotape set.) But unusually for TV, this *Gulliver's* got a $28 million budget. Which allows a first-quality cast plus boffo special effects and production values. It's perhaps the only *Gulliver's* I've seen where you can actually *believe* he's big, he's small, hey, that horse is talking pretty good sense...

Nevertheless, it's a good film, not a great one. The trouble may come from two causes. The script sets the entire story of his adventures as flashbacks within a frame tale that shows Gulliver returned from 9 years of exile. Like Odysseus or a Vietnam vet, finding his marriage shattered and his home at risk, he's overcome for a time by madness. Insisting on the reality of the fantastic worlds he's seen gets him shipped posthaste to perhaps the worst destination in all his travels: an English madhouse.

Star Ted Danson does a creditable job with these scenes, as with the entire movie. (I somehow didn't mind this 18th-century Englishman's mid-American accent. Although heavens knows wot our Brit and Aussie friends will say.) But the madness just goes on too long, scene after scene. You start wishing the Laputans would, like, discover lithium early and for god's sake *give* Gulliver some.

My second problem with this movie: it isn't *The Adventures of Baron Münchausen*. Terry Gilliam's underrated 1989 extravaganza covers similar material—18th-century man tests and unsettles the Age of Reason with stories of fantastic adventures. But *Münchausen* had a great director with a great visual imagination.

This *Gulliver's* has merely a good director, Charles Sturridge of *Brideshead Revisited* fame. He does have one inspired visual motif here, signaling a flashback by having it intrude into the frame story. So, for example, poor Gulliver is languishing in his madhouse cell — and suddenly a 3-foot-long hornet crawls up his back. (*There's* an image that'll stay with me for a while.) This transits us neatly into the middle of the battle against the giant insects on the dinner table back in Brobdingnag.

However, the imagination of Sturridge and the creative crew from Jim Henson Productions just isn't as wild, dark, and grand as it would take to make a movie masterpiece of this material.

No reflection on the stellar cast. The lovely Mary Steenburgen plays Gulliver's long-suffering but faithful wife; their convincing love story adds fresh warmth and humanity to somewhat soften Swift's colder vision as the film goes along. Supporting players include Peter O'Toole as king of Lilliput, whose first words on seeing Gulliver are "Well you weren't exaggerating. He's a whopper!" Plus James Fox, Alfre Woodard, Ned Beatty, Omar Sharif, Edward Woodward, Kristin Scott Thomas—and Sir John Geilgud as the scientist bent on extracting sunlight from cucumbers.

There's still plenty here to entertain a SF fan. And the film's ending manages some real grandeur, with a pure science fictional sensawunda feel. Let's conclude with its last lines, delivered by Gulliver in voice-over as the camera swirls back and up, showing he and his wife walking free over the hills in a magnificent English landscape:

"I have lost eight years of my life.

"And yet, and yet, the moments I have had. The marvels I have witnessed. The wonderful truths I have seen.

"You see, when night falls, and you close your eyes to sleep and dream—I have *seen* the things that you can only dream about.

"I have been there...I was lost at sea for a long time, but I have been there. Oh yes...all the way, and back."

Howard's End

Let's invent a new category to consider for awards, or just to help us think about certain films.

Call it, however absurdly, the nonfiction science fiction movie. It would be a film with SF elements or interest that is nevertheless factual in content. Last year's example: *Apollo 13*. This time, let's consider *The Whole Wide World*.

This independent film is based on a memoir by retired schoolteacher Novalyne Price Ellis. Published in 1988 when the author was 76 years old, it's the story of her romance in the mid-1930s with a young man in a small Texas town, Cross Plains. The title derives from that young man's self-description as "the greatest pulp writer in the whole wide world." He was Robert E. Howard, creator of *Conan the Barbarian, Red Sonja*, and other heroic fantasy icons. This movie about one episode in his life strikes me, on a small scale and wholly on its own terms, as a perfect little gem of film-making and an American original.

As brilliantly embodied by Vincent D'Onofrio, Bob Howard is big-boned, not unhandsome, soft-spoken, endearing in a bumbling kind of way. He's introduced to an attractive young schoolteacher (Renee Zellweger as Novalyne Price). Feisty, determined Price draws a bead on him under her flapper hat with a shrewd cowgirl squint, and keeps smiling at Howard with the prettiest mouth east of Abilene. Their first meeting goes well. But she finds it vexingly hard to arrange a second. Howard's mother is the smothering type, stonewalling all his phone calls. (Except one about some other writer named Lovecraft.)

Novalyne persists. Pretty soon Bob is back, swinging his big arms around, talking louder now. Taking her for long rides at night out into the country in his convertible. He quotes poetry. Tells her about writing. Gives her daring French novels. No less than he, she seems a little bigger than the small-town milieu in which we find her. They both keep doing the best thing a movie character can do: surprising you.

In one café tryst, he's scornful about the realism of a woman's-magazine story she's trying to write. Hurt, she lashes back. "Well, I haven't seen any barbarian swordsmen, or beautiful Amazon women, or giant snakes frolicking around the streets of Cross Plains lately!"

Howard gives us the key to his character with one reply in his soft Texas voice. "Well, I have...You better look a little closer next time."

They quarrel, make up, quarrel. Time passes. He's got his writing and his mother; both consume him. Things do not end well.

Perhaps I'm just starved for a film about a writer, and one in our genre at that. Or simply gaga over Zellweger, a really attractive, fresh, direct presence (this is her first film; she stole *Jerry Maguire* from Tom Cruise for her second). But this movie succeeds on all sorts of levels: as an unusual study of a real relationship...a tender love story...a fascinating character sketch...an authentic period piece...and a portrait of the artist(s).

For instance, it's famously difficult to show a writer writing and make it interesting. The filmmakers do so beautifully here. Howard sometimes composed his stories aloud. So we see him at twilight in his room, bellowing out lines of purple magnificence, hunched over the keyboard in a summoning trance. And they orchestrate these scenes with terrific Conan music. Deep, restless chords rise and fall ominously, fraught with dark power.

The moviemakers also take care to show Howard in his place. There's an unforgettable scene where we witness the lovers' most passionate kiss. It's set in a specifically Texan landscape of rugged bluffs and wild woods, rough ridges and shining river waters. From Howard's viewpoint as he gazes across the land, we see the pioneer promise of the frontier years in this country—overlain with his Hyborian Age of blood and magic.

With a look, we know that in Robert Howard's eyes these times are one.

I said "lovers" above; not strictly accurate, perhaps. Remember, these were nice young unmarried people in a more restrained age. But is there sexual tension or romantic tenderness here? Certainly. On the river bluff. In the look on Novalyne's face. At the typewriter keyboard. And in a mostly silent scene where Howard washes the body of his adored, dying mother.

I knew something about Howard's own end going in—one dimly remembered sentence of fact, perhaps. The movie puts a much different feeling behind that reality, without altering its dark essentials. That's one of its chief fascinations, of course. *The Whole Wide World* is a true story.

Again, you could also make the case that it's a science fiction movie, or at least a fantasy. Beyond just dealing with a writer from our crowd. There are genuinely a few moments when you are shown one thing — and you see something else. Shown a Texas river valley...and see Cimmeria. Shown an overgrown farmboy shouting at his typewriter...and see the soul of the artist, wrestling in joy and torment with his barbaric craft.

I may lose most of you with what I must say next. But as Howard proclaimed, "the road I walk, I walk alone." Grant that this IS a science fiction movie. Then if you're really trying to pick SF's best dramatic presentation of 1996, *Babylon 5* isn't even in the same solar system with the eccentric little planet that is *The Whole Wide World*.

By now, you may have guessed where my vote would go. Or haven't you a clue in the whole wide world?

Let's examine a few other possibilities below. After that, it's up to you, your conscience, and whether you have a shred of independent freethinking in your entire being. Or are you just going to sheepishly vote for something that isn't a great science fiction masterpiece but plays one on TV?

The Obvious

Independence Day

This straightforward invaders-from-space, special-effects-happy SF flick made more money than any other movie released in the United States in 1996. But feeling good about that would be like the American Society of Demolition Engineers voting Timothy McVeigh its Blockbuster Award for Special Achievement in Explosive Publicity.

Independence Day is very exciting. Almost everybody leaves the movie pumped up and happy. But if you're a science fiction fan, the bad feelings quickly come flooding in. You don't have to be some killjoy scientific accuracy anal case. The movie has a load of horrendous scientific, technical, even common-sense howlers that any bright 15-year-old fan could have caught in 15 minutes.

Obviously, the moviemakers just don't care. (For confirmation, see their previous work, *Stargate*. Same sloppy story.) Don't vote for a movie that just doesn't get it. Got that?

Star Trek: First Contact

Well, it was better than many other *Star Trek* movies. All of which should have been subtitled *The Search for Kirk's Talent*. Obviously, there's an installed base of Trek fanatics out there who will probably vote for this. But I guess I just haven't been quite assimilated yet by the Bore ... sorry, Borg.

Babylon 5

I have only seen a few episodes, and wasn't really all that impressed. So join the long list of people who want to disown me for this character flaw. Starting with my sister Liz. And my Hugo-nomination-veteran friend Michael Burstein, who a little birdie told me helped engineer a sinister fanworld conspiracy last year to sweep in some *Babylon 5* thing. Apparently had something to do with San Juan Capistrano—wasn't it "The Coming of Swallows"?

Listen, I know this whole article is a lost cause and what's going to win this year will probably be a *B5* episode entitled something like "Severed Creams" or "Za Dum Dum" or "Shadow Prancing" or "Wart without End" or "Innertubes and Expectorations." But I've got to make the attempt to get you to do the right thing. If it's the last thing I do in the whole wide world.

The Interesting

You've already heard about my top three picks in this category. A few others:

The Arrival

My comment when I saw this cinematic take on a theme of The Aliens Already Among Us: "Finally, Charlie Sheen in the role he was BORN to play: a brilliant radio astronomer..." Actually, it's a solid SF flick with a fairly intelligent script, good performances (including, fairly amazingly, Charlie's), a few laughs (mostly intentional), and fine direction and atmosphere. Excellent scorpions-in-the-bed scene especially. It doesn't quite make my cut for the Most Interesting top three. But you wouldn't be actually crazy to vote for it, if you didn't like my choices.

Mars Attacks

Memo to Tim Burton, creator of the sublime fantasy classic *Edward Scissorhands* and the also pretty damn wonderful *Batman*:

The trouble with making a loving tribute to bad 1950s SF flicks is that if you're not careful you might end up with something that feels a lot like a bad 1950s SF flick with superb production values.

Like this.

Sorry, Tim.

Sincerely, Bob.

Escape From L.A.

A vote for this would obviously be a thinly disguised Life Achievement Award for director John Carpenter to thank him for terrific films like *The Thing* and *Escape from New York*, not for this lightly warmed-over treatment of Snake Pliskin's midlife crisis. Let's leave that sort of thing to the Oscars.

***Third Rock From the Sun* (Episode Whatever)**

You don't know one person who's mentioned this show in terms of a Hugo?

I have two comments: 1) Why? Isn't comedy eligible? Then how come you voted for *Back to the Future*, *The Princess Bride*, and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, which won for 1986, 1988, and 1989 respectively? And 2) Now you do.

The Insane

Dragonheart

Didn't see it. Hear that Sean Connery has a great dragony delivery—think his voice coach had him doing scales? Wish Dennis Quaid would find a hit role that suits his considerable talents. Don't see how this has a prayer.

Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*

OK, so it's got a ghost.

By this inclusive logic, why not vote for *Trainspotting* because it's got a fantasy scene wherein a guy dives into a toilet and comes out underwater? Or *Mission: Impossible* because you don't think a helicopter could actually do that with a train? Or *Baywatch* because the actresses defy localized gravity?

Phenomenon

John Travolta plays an ordinary guy who may have had a UFO experience and suddenly turns smarter than Isaac Asimov. Not to give anything away, but the ending indicates that there isn't a science fiction explanation after all. Although the explanation they do give is so spacey that maybe this counts as at least a fantasy.

Still, to win, this movie would have to be touched by an angel.

Michael

John Travolta plays an angel. Say, you don't suppose...?

Nah. At best, the Vincent Barbarino/Vincent Vega fan clubs would just split the vote.

The Island of Dr. Moreau

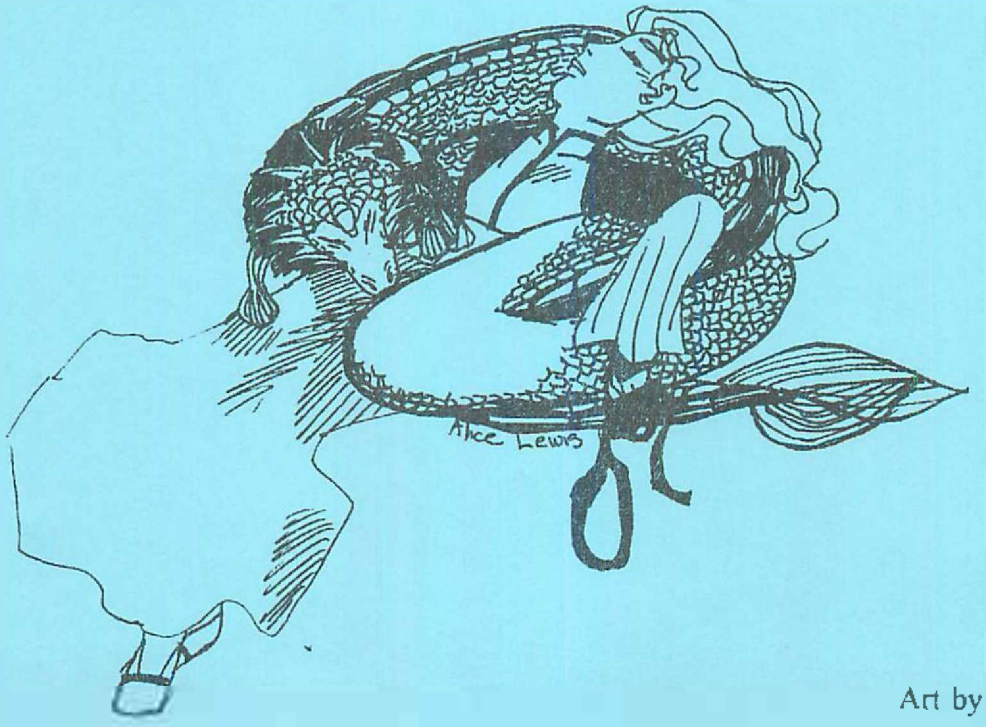
OK, this one was *so* bad that it must be you just love absolutely anything Marlon Brando or Val Kilmer are in. Or you're a direct descendent of H. G. Wells and want more income for the estate. Or you think David Thewlis has a face that just begs for somebody to smash it in, and you want the movie to win so when you go to the Hugo ceremonies in San Antonio and, by some bizarre chance he shows up, and you get the sick chance to wipe that incredibly annoying smirk off personally.

Hey, maybe you're onto something with that last one...

Breaking the Waves

This sensitive story of a touched young Scottish woman and the sexually self-sacrificing things she does out of love for her crippled, crazy Scandinavian husband off a North Sea oil rig would be a truly insane selection on my part. Since I didn't see it.

It's spoken of by many critics and discerning movie fans as one of the best movies of the year. Not obvious to me what its SF element is. But after my special pleading for *The Whole Wide World*, who am I to complain about a little weakness in that department?



Art by Alice Lewis

Art by Mercy Van Vlack

Japan

A travelogue by Evelyn C. Leeper

Art by Ian Gunn

"Four black dragons, spitting fire,
And the earth trembled, and the sky cracked,
And I thought it was the end of the world.
And it was."

—exchange from Stephen Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures*, describing the arrival in Japan of Commodore Perry's "Black Ships"

October 6/7, 1996: Flight and Arrival
October 8, 1996: Ueno Park (Tokyo)
October 9, 1996: Imperial Palace area & Ginza (Tokyo)
October 10, 1996: Kamakura
October 11, 1996: Ikebukuro and Shinjuku (Tokyo)
October 12, 1996: Tsukiji and Asakusa (Tokyo)
October 13, 1996: Shibuya and Harajuku (Tokyo)
October 14, 1996: Odawara and Nikko
October 15, 1996: Matsumoto
October 16, 1996: Travel to Kyoto
October 17, 1996: Hiroshima and Miyajima
October 18, 1996: Himeji
October 19, 1996: Nara
October 20, 1996: Hikone and Nagoya
October 21, 1996: Kinkakuji & Ryoanji Temple (Kyoto)
October 22, 1996: Imperial Palace & Festival of the Ages
October 23, 1996: Nijojo Castle and *The Ghost of April*
October 24, 1996: Higashiyama (Kyoto)
October 25, 1996: The Path of Philosophy (Kyoto)
October 26, 1996: Kyoto National Museum & Eel Festival
October 27, 1996: Osaka and Return

The answer is, "No, not really."

When people asked us if we had any big vacations planned and we said, "Yes, to Japan," the first thing everyone asked us was, "Isn't Japan very expensive?" Well, it's not the cheapest place in the world, but it isn't that expensive either, or at least doesn't have to be. In fact, the per-day cost for us was about the same as for our last trip to Britain.

We have a friend who said that we would find Japan the most different place we had been to. I think he meant it was the most different place *he* had been to, forgetting that we had been to places like Egypt, India, and China. Someone described Japan as being unique in that it is the only non-Western "First World" country. Certainly my expectations were different for this trip than for our others. Japan is also the First World country furthest from its nearest First World neighbor, for what that's worth. I expected a modern infrastructure, but I also expected a very different culture. Did I find it? Well, read on.

[Almost all prices are quoted in yen. When we went the exchange rate was US$1 to ¥110.62, or conversely, ¥100 to US$0.90. (For the mathematically challenged, just assume one yen is about one cent, so ¥680 would be US$6.80.) People using other currencies should make the appropriate conversions, because I don't have all the current exchange rates handy. The only prices quoted in dollars will be those we paid in dollars, such as US$950 each for airfare from Newark, and in the cost summary at the end, with an occasional one here and there for reference. Part of my assignment on this trip was to determine how much it might cost my brother, the baseball fan, to make a trip to Japan to see baseball. While I will not be pricing baseball tickets themselves, the rest should be helpful. The JNTO [Japan National Tourist Organization] or the JTB [Japan Travel Bureau], both with offices in New York, should be able to give more information on sports and sport tickets. I'm also using a 24-hour clock and metric measurements.]

This log is shorter than some of my previous ones. For one thing, I am finding it harder to keep going as constantly as before. After a long day of sightseeing, I don't have as much energy to write in this log as I used to. For another, Japan is in many ways a less exotic culture, or at least one that more people are familiar with than, say, Thai or Lithuanian. I suppose this is because it is a First-World economy, and has adopted much of the First World's patterns. (For example, buying something in a store in Japan does not involve bargaining, nor is there one counter for paying and another for pick-up. Come to think of it, Foyle's in Britain had the latter system when we were last there.) But also, most of the things to see in Japan don't have long historical notes behind them. In Finland, when we saw the harbor fortress, there was history that I could talk about which would be meaningful. In Japan, there is some historical association connected to a temple, but not much that is understandable without giving far more background than I could.

The Lonely Planet guide says, "As in India, rail is *the* way to travel in Japan, but there are few other similarities. Japanese rail travel is usually fast, frequent, clean, comfortable, and often very expensive." In India, on the other hand, it is usually slow, infrequent, dirty, uncomfortable, and often very cheap. Well, in most ways that a tourist interacts with Japan it is the opposite of India. That is, in India, the language is the same, but everything else is different. In Japan, the language is different, but everything else is the same. And this probably summarizes my reaction to Japan. Yes, there are some differences, and yes, the underlying philosophy is different, but in most of a tourist's dealings, everything is the same except the language. In India you haggle when you buy things, ride rickshaws, worry about the water, see everyone wearing Indian clothes, and chase away vendors. In Japan you pay fixed prices, ride the subway, drink the water with blithe abandon, see everyone wearing Western clothes, and no one pesters you.

I suppose I should mention what resources we used. We started by pretty much following the walking tours in Frommer's *Walking Tours: Tokyo*, though we became somewhat disillusioned with that and eventually used it merely as a framework for putting our own together (i.e., we dropped almost all the shopping stops, which seemed to be three-quarters of the stops). We also used information from

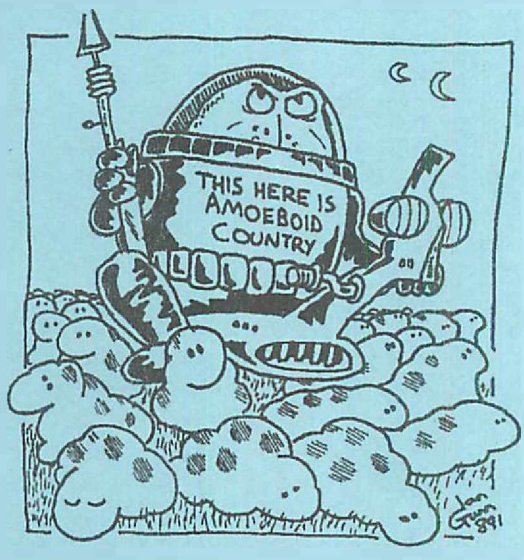
Fodor's *Tokyo*, the Lonely Planet guide to Japan, and the Internet. Special thanks go to Dave Griffiths (dgriff@infomatch.com) for his interesting log at http://www.infomatch.com/~dgriff/japan.htm, to Gerald Masan (masan@iipr00.ifw.uni-hannover.de) and Andre Schramm (schramm@vader.prec.kyoto-u.ac.jp) for recommending Himeji-jo Castle, and to Gerald Masan (masan@iipr00.ifw.uni-hannover.de) and Louise Hirasawa (hirasawa@u.washington.edu) for recommending Horyu-ji Temple. We have a couple of other books as well, and we read even more (mostly history and other background—I recommend Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*) before leaving.

October 6 - 7, 1996: Flight and Arrival

Well, we're not off to a good start. First Mark's watch casing broke where the band is attached, so it became a pocket watch by default. Then we were told there was some fluid seepage from the plane and there would be a slight delay. This "slight" delay turned out to be three hours while they replaced part of the braking system. Luckily our "connection" in San Francisco was actually the continuation of this flight, so they held it, though we practically had to run between gates to make it. (They also claimed to have had some mechanical problem on that plane, or so the passengers said.) All this got us into Narita about ninety minutes late, landing about 17:40.

Immigration and customs were pretty fast, and after getting some money from the ATM (one of the few I *knew* would have English prompts, and one of the few on Cirrus), and changing some travelers cheques (well, we needed more than our daily ATM limit to start out with), we proceeded downstairs to the train area. Everything was very well-marked in romanji as well as Japanese, so we had no difficulty finding the Keisei Line area (well, no more than we would have trying to find our way around, say, Penn Station in New York). (Romanji is the Roman alphabet. When I say things are labeled in romanji, this often means in English as well. "Maranouchi" would be romanji; "Transfer to Maranouchi Line" would be English.) Here we had two choices: a rather daunting ticket dispensing machine labeled entirely (as far as I could tell) in Japanese, or buying a ticket from the clerk. We opted for the latter, it being easier to say "Nippori Station tokkyu" (Nippori Station limited express) than try to match up the Japanese with the labels on our map. At some point we will try these machines, but right after twenty-four hours of travel did not seem like the best time to start.

The Keisei Limited Express (about ten stops) costs ¥980 per person from Narita to Nippori. I specifically mention this because every place I looked and everyone I talked to gave me different information, ranging from ¥480 to something like ¥3800! There is a Keisei Skyliner, which makes fewer stops and takes about sixty instead of seventy minutes, but costs twice as much. This ride gave us our first view of Japan, and my first impression is that it is a country in love with neon. (Mark notes that the word "neon" is pronounced very similarly to the Japanese word for Japan, "nihon." This must have some deep significance.)



We were just about the only Westerners on the train, and the only Westerners on the next leg on the JR Yamanote Line. Changing at Nippori Station was easy, with everything again labeled in English, and a clerk to buy tickets from. (Note: always hold on to your tickets, as you need them to exit at the other end.) On both trains, people asked us if we knew where to get off, and seemed to be very helpful in general.

At Ikebukuro, we had some difficulty finding the "West Exit" the ryokan had directed us to and eventually had to ask directions to the police box ("Koban doka?") which had a detailed map of how to get to the Kimi Ryokan. With the map we had no problem finding the Ryokan, and after checking in, collapsed onto our futons about 21:00 and slept until 6:00.

October 8, 1996: Ueno Park (Tokyo)

The Kimi Ryokan is not a true ryokan. For one thing, it's much cheaper (¥7500 for a "large" double) than a ryokan; for another, it doesn't include meals. But it's definitely more Japanese than Western. You leave your shoes at the front entrance. The room seems to be a six-tatami room (we haven't picked up the futons to check), making it about three meters by four meters. It has two futons and a small table, along with a closet for storing the futons during the day if you want, and a small alcove underneath it for suitcases. There are three clothes hooks, placed so high that I don't understand how most people can reach them, and one fluorescent light in the ceiling. There are two (Western-style) toilets on each floor (for about eight rooms), and two showers. There is also a Japanese-style bathtub on one floor. One other thing that distinguishes it from a traditional ryokan is that its bulletin board has grown into the Kimi Information Center, which even has a web site: http://www.ipc.ntt-it.co.jp/kimi.

We had originally planned on going to Tsukiji and Asakusa today, but had also decided that we would not set an alarm to wake up at 4:00 (Tsukiji is a fish market where the main action is from 5:00 to 8:00). Since we slept later than that, we rearranged our schedule, and since it was raining, this seemed like a good day to do Ueno Park, which has several museums that we planned on spending a lot of time in. We dropped into the lounge for green tea, and talked a while to a man from California on his fourth long trip to Japan. He was able to recommend a reasonably priced place to stay in Kyoto, so we'll probably call and make reservations soon.

At about 9:00 (to miss the rush hour) we went to Ikebukuro Station and took the Yamanote Line to Ueno. Even after the "official" rush hour, it was still very busy, with people rushing about blithely ignoring the arrows indicating directions for pedestrian traffic in passageways and on stairs. We had heard that the JR Lines (including the Yamanote) were more expensive than the subway lines, but this was only ¥160 each and the subway would have involved changing trains for not much of a savings. (The cheapest subway fare four years ago was ¥120, and this was probably further than that would cover.) Ueno Station was easy to recognize — even in Japanese, the train announcements here are clearer than back home. Ueno is one of the bigger stations (as is Ikebukuro) and is full of shops of all sorts. Outdoors are even more stores and restaurants with very reasonably priced food. One sushi place had bento boxes of assorted sushi at prices cheaper than in the United States, and if it hadn't been raining, we might have picked up something for a picnic in the park.

However, it was raining, which made Ueno Park somewhat less appealing than it would normally be. We passed a statue to Takamori Saigo, a samurai who first helped restore the emperor in 1868 and later fought against him when he curtailed the power and privileges of the samurai class. A bit further on are the tombs of the soldiers who fought against him defending the Tokugawa Shogunate. General MacArthur wanted the statue taken down as being too nationalistic, but there was so much public outcry that he changed his mind.

Shortly after this was the Kiyomizu-do Kannon Temple to the goddess of child-bearing and child-raising. It had been closed for renovation until a few months ago, during which time a temporary temple has been built to accommodate worshippers.

We then went looking for the Toshogu Shrine, but got sidetracked at first by a smaller shrine to the goddess of letters and medicine. Eventually we got where we were going, the shrine to Ieyasu Tokugawa (also known as Tokugawa Ieyasu, since true Japanese style places the family name first, but many Japanese names get "Westernized" in translation). He founded the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603 after Nobunaga deposed the emperor. This shogunate lasted until 1863, when it was overthrown by men such as Takamori Seigo, and the Edo Era ended and the Meiji Era began. This was followed in 1912 by the Taisho Era, in 1926 by the Showa, and in 1989 by the Heisei. In modern times the era changes with each emperor, though earlier this was not true. (The Fujiwara Era, for example, ran from 858 to 1160.)

The shrine itself is at the end of a long aisle flanked by stone lanterns used for religious purposes. There were many prayer plaques left on a rack near the shrine. These are pieces of wood, about the size of postcards, and also similar in that they seem to have pre-printed pictures or illustrations on one side. People write their prayers on the other, and leave them hanging by their cords on a rack. (One assumes that someone regularly removes the older ones, sort of like cleaning old notices off the community "for sale" boards back home.) There is also a memorial marked by a piece of a tree burnt in the bombing raids of 1945 and found nearby in 1991, dedicated as a memorial to peace.

We got to the Tokyo National Museum about 10:45, having decided to do this one before the other museums because it was said to be *the* museum to see. There was a major exhibit of works from the Horyu-ji Treasures as well as the usual exhibits of pottery, painting, swords, armor, and so on, as well as an entire gallery of non-Japanese Asian art. (This includes Egyptian art, which I suppose is connected stylistically to Asia but is not actually Asian.) The museum has 90,000 pieces but displays only a small number at any one time. This small number was enough to keep us occupied until almost 15:00, however, so we were glad we had come here first instead of having too little time.

There were some Westerners in the buildings (the museum occupies several buildings, including the three main display halls), but almost all the visitors were Japanese, including some small groups of school children, and also one large group of adults (maybe thirty or so) who were apparently getting a lecture about a particular Chinese painting in the non-Japanese gallery. There was one painting that looked very familiar to me: "Two Beauties" by Utagawa Toyokuni. Maybe it was used as the cover of a book or something, but I feel like I've seen it a lot.

We also dropped into the museum store, with typical museum store prices, and the restaurant for lunch, with atypical museum restaurant prices: I had curried rice for ¥530 and Mark had katsuiya (pork cutlet over rice) for ¥720. Since there is no tax and no tipping, this is actually less than this sort of meal would cost in a museum in the United States. (Beverages, however, *were* expensive: ¥300 for coffee or tea, and ¥220 for a small cola.) This restaurant, like so many other restaurants, had a display of the menu as plastic food in a case by the door. Also supposedly common (though this was the only place we saw it) was the purchase method: you go to the cashier, tell her what you want (based on the labels), and pay her. She gives you a ticket for each item, and when you sit down, the waiter comes by, takes your ticket, and brings back your food. (Beverages seemed uniformly high-priced in restaurants, no matter how cheap the food. That must be why there are so many beverage vending machines around, at about a third what the cost would be in a restaurant.) Random note: While the ryokan toilet is Western style, many toilets in museums and other public buildings are Japanese style.

By the time we finished here, it was clear we would not have time for the National Museum of Western Art, the National Science Museum, and the Shitamachi Museum. Since the latter was a sort of "Museum of Everyday Life" of Tokyo over the last century or so, that seemed like the best choice (being something unlike what we have at home). This was outside Ueno Park but very nearby, and although small, had interesting displays of magazines, children's games (including sumo wrestler trading cards), and other memorabilia. Unfortunately there were very few labels in English, but we could tell what most of the items were in general: an exhibit of ways to combat insects, a collection of movie magazines, even a hula hoop. There were also re-creations of shops and tenement homes as they would have been before the 1923 earthquake. Well, not entirely as they would have been, since each re-creation had modern items in it as well: a calendar, very recent children's toys, and so on. Maybe that's a way of saying that this way of life still continues in some sense, even though the buildings were destroyed, if not by the earthquake then by the war and its aftermath of reconstruction. (Oh, by the way, the costs for these were ¥200 for the shrine, ¥790 for the Tokyo National Museum, and ¥200 for the Shitamachi Museum.)

We then walked along one of the main shopping streets in Ueno, Chuo-Dori, and then along Ameyo Yokocho, a pedestrian shopping street that used to be a wholesale candy district, but now is full of stalls selling everything from fish to jewelry at a discount. They had cheap watches, but we couldn't find a cheap watch strap for my watch (from which I had removed the strap so I could carry it as a pocket watch). Maybe it doesn't pay to replace a strap these days on an electronic watch.

By now it was almost 17:00, and I was exhausted. (Carrying around three different guidebooks in my shoulder bag didn't help.) Rather than stand around and then end up in rush hour, we went directly back, planning to go out again in a couple of hours. However, we both fell asleep and when we woke up decided it was too late.

October 9, 1996: Imperial Palace Area and Ginza (Tokyo)

Since we woke up (relatively) early (a little after 5:00), we decided to do Tsukiji today rather than try to wake up even earlier another day. Getting tickets from the subway ticket machine is not all that difficult, even when there is no English. The lines are all color-coded, so if you know you're going nine stops on the red line and then two stops on the gray, it's easy to find the stop and read the price underneath (which is in Arabic numerals). Tickets from Ikebukuro to Tsukiji are ¥180, which means that the subway prices and JR prices are pretty comparable. The JR trains have maps with all the stops labeled, but some of the subway lines have electronic maps, where the current station lights up, making it even easier to find the right stop.

The subway cars themselves are very clean, with no litter, and no graffiti. As an example of how well passengers take care of the subways, the seats are a plush cloth, and it has no tears or stains. (The old New York subways, or maybe it was the LIRR, used to have this sort of seat covering before the war, and when it was phased out, a friend of my father's who worked for them got some of the discarded material to use as a backing for a handmade chessboard for my father.) The word is that 7:30 to 9:00 is rush hour. I can at least assure you that 6:00 to 6:30 is not.

Well, we got to Tsukiji and glanced in the Temple. However, since a service seemed to be in progress, we decided not to go up to the front to peer at the statue of the Buddha, but instead went off to the fish market itself. We got to what appeared to be the right area, and it had a wholesale fish market look to it. Only two things were missing: people and fish. We wandered around the deserted area for a while and finally came upon the police box, where Mark determined that the market was closed for Health and Sports Day, a national holiday. Strange, our book claimed that was tomorrow, as did a couple of other tourists we met (and as did the Tourist Information Center when we went there later). Maybe the wholesalers close the day before the retailers do, or some such.

Given that this pretty much messed up the whole day's plans (we had been planning on taking a ferry to Asakusa after seeing Tsukiji, but it wasn't running this early), we decided to do the Imperial Palace Walking Tour. The weather wasn't ideal (sun would have been nice), but at least it wasn't raining. The first thing of interest we saw on this tour wasn't even mentioned in the book: a statue of Godzilla. Not life-size, alas, but about three feet high on a pedestal across from the Toho Twin Towers building.

We were so early here that pretty much everything was closed. You can't go into the Imperial Palace anyway, but we did take the obligatory picture from the Nujibashi Bridge. We got to the East Garden about twenty minutes before its 9:30 opening, and had to hang around waiting. We walked through, stopping briefly at the small museum of pieces from the previous Emperor's collection. (It was only a brief stop because only about a dozen pieces are exhibited at any one time.) At the top of the hill are the remains of Tokugawa's castle.

We decided to skip the Museum of Modern Art and the Science Museum (not the same museum as yesterday's skipped National Museum of Science) because we felt museumed-out already—or at least for the time being. We started toward the Shrine to the War Dead, but decided we needed to eat first, since we hadn't eaten in almost twenty-four hours. We wandered down the street a few blocks and found several choices in this business area. I had said what I really wanted was a bowl of noodles, and sure enough, one of the places was a noodle shop. There were the plastic models of food outside, but at first there appeared to be no prices on them. Then I noticed the Japanese symbol for yen (not a "Y" with an "=" through it, but a kanji character), and realized that the prices were in Japanese kanji numerals rather than Arabic. Using our phrase book, we were able to determine that they were cheap, and so went in, pointed through the door to what we wanted and got two large bowls of soba noodles, broth, and tempura vegetables, for a total of ¥800. It's true that the restaurant lacked some of what most people might consider necessary, such as tables and chairs (you stand at a waist-high counter to eat) and spoons (you pick up the bowl and drink from it), but it was good and it was cheap. Standing there, slurping my soup (slurping one's noodles is considered good manners in Japan), I felt that I was getting at least a glimpse of Japanese life.

But it was a very small glimpse, I realize, and though it's still early in the trip, I have to say I'm having a hard time getting a handle on Japan. Though this is a less formally regimented country than Singapore, it is nonetheless a very regimented country by consensus. Everyone dresses the same (the men all wear dark blue suits, with the very occasional gray one), and the women wear a lot of black. It reminds me a bit of what China was like when we were there, although that has changed a lot in the last fifteen years and Japan is still very "cookie-cutter." I had expected some culture shock, and people had said it was the most different culture they had seen, but I'm just not feeling it. Maybe reading so much about it ahead of time made some difference, and also the fact that we're not interacting with the people here except on a very superficial level. Doing business here would be a shock, I imagine. I do notice that while people try not to be rude, they are a bit stand-offish. For example, if I sit down on a subway next to someone, they won't get up and move away, but if the seat next to me frees up, a person standing right there might not take it.

Anyway, after lunch we went back to the Shrine to the War Dead. This is officially named the Yusukuni-jinja Shrine, which means "Peaceful Country Shrine." In *Star Of The Unborn*, Franz Werfel postulates a future in which, after trying to be the "world's darling" by two wars of conquest, Germany became a very pacifistic country. To some extent he seems to have had the right idea, but the wrong country. (Yes, I know the shrine was named over a century ago. Bear with me.) After World War II, Japan (with a lot of "encouragement" from the United States) renounced war as part of their new constitution. (One wonders why, if we thought it such a great idea, we didn't change our own constitution to match.) As far as I can tell, they seem to have adopted this belief rather than just mouthing the words. But on the other hand, if they could name a shrine to the war dead the "Peaceful Country Shrine" even back then, it implies that this peaceful stance may not be as meaningful as we might think. The fact that hundreds of war criminals were enshrined here also indicates that what the Japanese mean when they renounce war is not what we are hearing.

Of course, for a while it seemed as though the Japanese had renounced war as a method of conquest and switched to economics and capitalism instead. However, recent setbacks in the Japanese economy and their overseas holdings make that less likely as a long-term future either.

There is also a military museum on the grounds, the Yushukan Museum (¥200). This was closed for a long time after World War II, and now seems to concentrate on everyday objects and diaries of soldiers rather than the more militaristic displays of armaments and glorifications of victories that one sees elsewhere. The fact that the Japanese still refer to their long and brutal invasion of China as the "Chinese Incident," and don't seem to include it as part of World War II (which they call the "East Asian War") again seems to indicate an unwillingness to face historical fact completely.

Finishing up here, we took the subway to the Ginza. I expected a lot of tall buildings, and there were a few, but tall here seems to mean about ten stories. This is no doubt due to earthquake restrictions, but it makes the Ginza look small by comparison to the downtown shopping areas of New York, Chicago, or even San Francisco. We followed the Frommer's tour here, but it seemed to consist in large part of shops and galleries (well, it is what the area is known for), and other than the display areas in the Sony building, there was little of interest. Sony displays some of its newest products in its building, as do many other companies (mostly in Shinjuku these days, I think). We also stopped in a bookstore, and discovered that English-language books cost two or three times their marked United States price (just in case you're interested).

We stopped in the Tourist Information Center for a couple of brochures, then walked over to the Yamanote Line, where we got on the train and rode it a full circuit around the city before finally getting off at Ikebukuro. This is supposed to be a good way to see the city, and it probably is if you are on a train that is not absolutely packed with people. We could see out the window behind us somewhat by twisting around, but it was not ideal. (I wonder if anyone has a book pointing out sights one can see from this train at various places along the route.) It wasn't rush hour that made the train so full, because the second time we rode from Yurukucho to Ikebukuro the car was emptier, not fuller as it would have been if it were rush hour traffic building up.

This at least let us sit down for about an hour, and gave us enough energy to walk back to the Kimi, stopping for a Coke on the way. There are vending machines everywhere selling Coke, other sodas, and about a dozen variations of tea and coffee in cans. Some even give you a choice of hot or cold tea or coffee (in cans, so I hope they don't heat it too much!). These are fairly consistently ¥110, which is certainly cheaper than in a restaurant, but I suspect canned coffee is not as good as fresh brewed.

We also stopped at the local mini-market and picked up some sushi-to-go for dinner. One of the assortments was vegetarian: four oshinko-maki, three giant maki, and three rice balls wrapped in fried tofu wrappers. The other was mostly shellfish sushi: shrimp, giant clam, two pieces of squid, two kappa maki, tamago, salmon roe, and something close to eel. The former was ¥380; the latter was ¥580. They come complete with chopsticks, ginger, and soy sauce (no wasabi, though), so we ate them in the Kimi lounge/dining area with the green tea provided there. This is certainly cheaper sushi than we can find at home, and is even cheaper than something like McDonald's at home. I had conservatively (I thought) budgeted US$80 per day for food for us; I suspect we will not even come close to that.

We had heard about someone's problems finding a place to stay in Kyoto, so we decided to call one place we had a recommendation for. We managed to get our first five nights in Kyoto there, but still had to find someplace for the other six. However, this at least got us started (and through the period of our JapanRail Pass, when we wanted to be doing day trips, not changing hotels), so we decided to wait until we had collected more change for the phone before trying some other places.

I looked at the JNTO brochure "Walking Tour Courses in Tokyo" that we got at the TIC, and decided it was better than the Frommer's book. The book, while it has some good sights, concentrates too much for my taste on shops, hotels, and restaurants. (I can think of several people who would love it, though.) The brochure has six walks on eight pages (four sheets) which seem more the temple/shrine/museum/interesting store type. It doesn't have much background on each, but then, the Frommer's didn't have enough to eliminate the need for a good guidebook. The ones in Fodor's aren't bad, and do have some background information, but for a quick overview, the free brochure gets my vote.

October 10, 1996: Kamakura

Well, I fell asleep at 21:00 and woke at 2:00, so I got five hours of sleep—at the wrong time.

We left the Kimi at 7:00 (no point in getting to Kamakura before anything opens). At Ikebukuro Station we got tickets to Kamakura (¥880 each one-way). We rode to Shinagawa and then changed there with no real problem. The train that arrived on the Kamakura track didn't actually say "Kamakura," but the station attendant said it was the train for Kamakura. When we got off at Kita-Kamakura (the stop at the near edge of Kamakura), our tickets were taken not by a machine, but by a ticket collector. This is one of the few places where this was true; I guess it's not a very busy station.

Kamakura is known for its temples and shrines, mostly originating from the time when Kamakura was the capital in the 13th century. Our first stop was the Engaku-ji Temple (¥200), right by the train station. (Actually, I think that is redundant, since "ji" means temple. It's sort of like saying "Rio Grande River." We found this redundancy everywhere, with "Something-jinja Shrine," "Something-koen Park," and "Something-jo Castle" as well.) Engaku-ji is one of the five main Rinzai Zen Buddhist temples in Kamakura. (Rinzai relies more on riddles, stories, and question-and-answer drills than on the meditation of Soto Buddhism.) Founded in 1282 in memory of those who had died resisting Kublai Khan's second invasion attempt. As with many temples and shrines, the buildings themselves are not that old, having been rebuilt and reconstructed many times. Even the main gate here dates back to only 1780. There is a bell from 1301, the largest in Kamakura and a Japanese National Treasure.

Another Japanese National Treasure here is the Shrine of the Buddha Tooth, which we spent far too long looking for. Though we were given an English-language pamphlet describing the buildings, there was no map of which was which. There was a picture of this building, but its distinctive upswept roof was blocked in real life by tree branches, and when we first looked at it we didn't realize what it was. There was also a Zen garden (like a rock garden, but consisting mostly of a few dark rocks on a ground of small white pebbles). The pebbles are swept into lines and circles around the rocks, giving the whole the appearance of islands in a sea. Around the garden were a hundred small statues and carvings of Buddhas. In front of the temple was some sort of children's festival, probably in honor of Health and Sports Day, in which teams of young children competed in games. These were accompanied by music, usually from Walt Disney films.

Because there are so many temples in Kamakura, we decided to skip all but the main ones, and so did not go to Tokei-ji, a temple known for its history as a women's refuge. Women who lived as nuns for three years here could be recognized as officially divorced, which it why this is sometimes referred to as the "Battered Wives Temple." However, there are no nuns living there today, less complicated methods for divorce now being available.

We did stop at Jochi-ji Temple (founded in 1283) (¥100), listed as one of Kamakura's five great Zen temples. What are the other four? And what makes a Zen temple great? Are they talking about the architecture, or the quality of the teachers? Certainly architecturally

this did not appear (to me, anyway) as that noteworthy. And if it were the architecture, then when they reconstruct the buildings, do the rankings change? And why five? I had read that the Japanese like to list the *three* best of everything.

We were going to stop at Kencho-ji Temple next, but the admission fee there was ¥1500 per person (at the other temples it is about ¥200). While Kencho-ji did look very large and imposing from outside, we suspected we did not understand Buddhist architecture or symbolism well enough to appreciate it that much, so decided to skip it. (Kencho-ji is Kamakura's most important Zen temple, and I'm sure someone will say that this is like going to Rome and not seeing Saint Peter's. But Saint Peter's I understand.) This, by the way, seemed to be one of the few times the Lonely Planet guide was out of date. Most of the other admissions and fares were what they had been when the guide was printed in October 1994. For some places, a guide book even a year old would be out-of-date, but Japan isn't one of them.

Along the way we stopped and had a beverage from a vending machine: iced tea flavored with hibiscus, acerola, rosehips, and lemon. There is certainly a bigger variety in the vending machines in Japan than back home. Next we arrived at Hachiman-gu Shrine. As the books say, this is quite a contrast to the Zen temples. While those are for the most part quiet and contemplative (with the exception of the children's games, of course), the shrine is a bustle of activity and noise.

Japan has two major religions, Buddhism and Shinto, and most Japanese apparently follow both. In particular, birth rituals and marriages are usually Shinto ceremonies, while funerals are usually Buddhist. But in other aspects as well, they co-exist in the same individual. Shinto shrines are built on sacred sites, while temples (I believe) can be built anywhere. But what confuses everything, at least for the outsider, is that there are things referred to as shrines that are Buddhist. (One sees these in little corners in the city, for example.) Shinto shrines have a giant torii gate of circular uprights supporting one or two curved circular cross-pieces at the entrance (and it is often orange or red), while Buddhist temples have a more traditional carved wooden gate.

Shrines also have zigzag pieces of paper strung on cords hanging from trees, and votive plaques (of the sort I described at the shrine in Ueno Park). People coming up to the shrine clap their hands to attract the attention of the deity, and also throw coins as offerings into a large coin box and may ring a gong. This takes to make shrines a bit noisier, and when they are particularly busy (as this one was), the constant clatter of the coins flung into the box begins to make you understand why the Japanese are not troubled by the noise in a pachinko parlor.

By this point we were pretty hungry, and luckily the shrine was right at the end of one of the main streets of Kamakura. Walking down the street we passed several "plastic food" restaurants, and eventually settled on a noodle shop, where Mark wrote down the Japanese for the dishes in the window that we wanted. (This does somewhat limit you from ordering dishes with complicated kanji, but it works pretty well otherwise.) Since this was a tourist area, the prices were higher than yesterday—¥650 each for the soup, and ¥400 for six gyoza (dumplings). (I think the bowls may have been slightly bigger as well, though.) If you eat at places like this, food is not expensive in Japan. In fact, you can eat better and cheaper in Japan than in Britain.

We also saw a couple of wedding processions. There was a Shinto one at the shrine, with everyone in traditional black and white Shinto garb. There was also one on the street where people were wearing more Western clothing; that one ended up at a Roman Catholic church. After lunch we had hoped to take a bus to the Daibutsu, or the Giant Buddha. However, I took a look at the buses in front of the railway station and realized that I couldn't even figure out which bus stopped where there (they didn't seem to have numbers on the stops), and it looked like only about a kilometer or two, so I suggested walking. Mark agreed, or at least I thought he did, so we set off.

Following the maps we had was not all that easy, though, because there were no street names on them (or for that matter, any street signs on the streets either). Going by the shape of the streets, we asked in sign language a Japanese couple carrying a Japanese tourist map if the Daibutsu was ahead of us. They indicated yes, but a minute or so later I felt a tap on my shoulder. They had realized that we needed to make a right turn at the light and had run back to tell us!

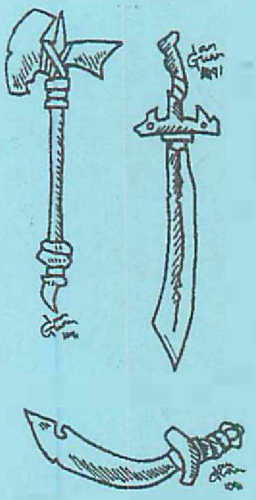
The walk seemed longer in reality than on paper, but it did at least give us a chance to see a Japanese town out of the center of the tourist section. We passed several shoe stores, leading Mark to comment that we must be in the ghetto. (The burakumin, the "untouchables" of Japan, often deal in leather goods. This is one of the major remnants of the earlier class system— I don't think the Japanese today care about whether you are descended from a samurai or a peasant, but descent from a burakumin does still matter. To most Westerners it appears strange because the burakumin are identical genetically to the other Japanese. They are merely the descendants of people who were in professions such as tanning that were considered as "dirty.")

We finally got to the Daibutsu. The last couple of blocks was easy to follow because there was such a crowd going towards it. It is within the grounds of Kotokuin-ji Temple (¥150), but sits outside. This is because the building in which it was originally placed was washed away in a tidal wave in 1495 (it was built in 1252), leaving it untouched. It has been repaired and reinforced over the centuries, and you can see evidence of this if you go inside. Yes, the Buddha is hollow, and for an extra ¥20 you can go inside. You used to be able to climb a small staircase to a platform at a window in back, but that is closed now. There seems to be some disagreement about how tall this Buddha is. One book says over thirty-two feet (ten meters), another says thirty-six feet (eleven meters), and a sign there said forty-four feet (thirteen meters). Well, anyway, it was big.

Our last sight in Kamakura was the Hase Kannon Temple (¥200), also known as the Hase Dera Temple. It is known for its carved wooden statue of the eleven-faced Kannon, or juichimen, but I think may be better known, at least among tourists, as the temple where there are offerings for miscarried and aborted fetuses and stillborn children. Thousands of little statues are erected by their parents, and it's made more poignant by the way some have been dressed by them, with bibs, or pacifiers, or little toys beside them. Some are statues of Jizo, the patron saint of travelers and departed children, while others seem to be little stone statues of children, done in a style reminiscent of South Pacific cultures. In addition to the prayer plaques, there were also small stones with one of two characters written on them left at the feet of various statues of Kannon, and sometimes there were several flattish ones stacked up. I have no idea what significance this has.

We walked back to the train station. This turned out to be a misunderstanding. I suggested waiting for a bus, and Mark said something which I interpreted to mean it probably wouldn't work, but apparently wasn't that at all. Anyway, we got on the train and dozed a bit from exhaustion on the way back. We still had one more stop, since we had to change trains at Shengakuji Station. Shengakuji Station is named for Shengakuji Temple, which is dedicated to the Forty-Seven Ronin. Who are the Forty-Seven Ronin? Well, let me give a brief explanation here.

A lord was provoked by an enemy to draw his sword in his enemy's house. This was such a stain on his honor that he was forced to



commit ritual suicide. His samurai were now masterless (ronin), but swore to avenge his death. For a long time they planned, many taking on false characters and appearing to become drunkards or other low types. Eventually they all rejoined and killed their lord's enemy, then committed suicide together at the site of this temple. Though this is a major temple to the Japanese (there were even souvenir-type shops around it), it appears to be unlisted in most Western guide books, maybe because it is somewhat remote from the tourist track. We had some difficulty finding it because the one map it was marked on had no street names or much else to help, and indeed we would have missed it altogether, except after we had given up and were walking towards the station, we came upon a sign pointing us to it. Unfortunately, we got there after it was closed, but we could still see it clearly from the gate. In the twilight it had a very calm, yet sad, look that is perhaps appropriate to the place.

We returned to the Kimi, picking up sushi boxes at the local convenience store (a different assortment this time, and a larger bottle of soda). It's pretty easy to dehydrate here without realizing it. People are saying it's very humid, but it's only about 70% humidity and in New Jersey that would be low. After dinner we called a few more places in Kyoto recommended by both the Lonely Planet and Internet people, and found a place for the last six nights at ¥8000 a night. So we were all set for rooms.

October 11, 1996: Ikebukuro and Shinjuku (Tokyo)

Even though we woke up at 5:30, we decided not to jump right out of bed and rush off to Tsukiji. Instead we lay around the room until about 10:30, which was good timing since they were just coming around to change the linens then. Our first stop was at the JR Travel Service Office in Ikebukuro Station to change our vouchers for JapanRail Passes good starting Monday, at which point we will be spending a lot of time on trains for the next seven days. You can do this changing only at certain offices, but there are several in Tokyo. There is also one at Narita, and you can change them before they start (in other words, when you convert the vouchers, you tell them what the starting date should be), but it's just as well we didn't do it when we arrived because we changed our minds on when we wanted them to run. We were going to start them later, but if we have to change hotels in Kyoto one day, we shouldn't plan on any major travel that day.

We went into the local department store (Tobu) to see what their food floors were like. They were not giving out all the free samples that the guidebooks claim, but they did have pre-made sushi by the piece that you could buy. We thought the sushi in the convenience store was cheap, but we were wrong—compared to this it was overpriced. We got an assortment for lunch consisting of two pieces each of flying fish roe, herring, iki (squid), maguro (tuna), tako (octopus), unagi (eel), uni (sea urchin), and something pink that was some sort of fish paste (we think); and one each of clam, something tentacled, herring with scallion, and a long tekka maki (tuna) roll. And what did all this come to? A grand total of ¥1288! That's right, this deluxe assortment cost about US$12. (It's also true that we saw apples priced at three for ¥1000 and other fruit similarly high-priced. But not everything was like this.)

So we went back to the Kimi and ate our feast, then walked around Ikebukuro. The pedestrian shopping street had posters for all sorts of movies, including such American films as *The Rock* and *Tin Cup* (they seem to love golf here, so this should do well), some Hong Kong films, and some Japanese films, including a poster for *Mosura* (otherwise known as *Mothra*). Toho is remaking all their old monster movies, but this poster seemed to be announcing that it was coming rather than here, and movies are very expensive anyway (about ¥1500). This street had more flashy signs than the Ginza area and even though obviously only a small area, seemed more like what we were expecting of Tokyo shopping areas than the Ginza.

We looked in the poster section of Tokyu Hands, hoping to find a *Mosura* poster, but all their movie posters were of classic non-Japanese films. The toy section had a lot of Disney stuff, which is enormously popular here. We then went into the Toyota Amlux Salon. Now we are not normally car people (though we like our Toyota), but this was billed as being very interesting, and indeed it was something like going to a World's Fair pavilion.

The Toyota Amlux Salon is six floors (everything in Tokyo is vertical). One floor is devoted to urban cars, another to all-terrain vehicles, and so on. There was also a special exhibit (at least I think it was special) of handicapped accessible vehicles (elevator seats, room in back to store a wheelchair, hand-operated, and so on). There were some computerized displays (design your own car, etc.), but you really needed to know Japanese to use them. However, a couple of presentations were in English. One, the Dome Theater, was a series of short films showing how a Toyota is assembled. One of the films used holograms, another had a robot in front going through motions similar to that in the film, and a third was in 3-D (polarized, not red/green, but not the new fancy 3-D stuff Sony has). There was also the Amlux Theater, with a regular-size movie screen in a small room that made it seem larger, very comfortable seats (which will never show up at our local multiplex), and some special effects like vibration or aroma-wafting at appropriate times during the movies. (The aroma stuff wasn't all that noticeable, at least to me.)

In addition to all this, there was a "Patio di Frutta," a coffee shop, and a "player piano" (which was actually a Yamaha baby grand, not the old clunky upright you're probably envisioning). And what Japanese tune was it playing? Debussy's "Clair de Lune."

Having finished with all the excitement that Ikebukuro has to offer (except for the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space escalator, which we were planning to get to later), we took the subway to Shinjuku. Shinjuku Station is supposed to be the busiest in the world, with two million passengers going through it twice a day, but we got lucky (or unlucky) and took a line that terminated practically at the station exit, so we didn't have to wend our way through it.

People say there aren't many homeless in Japan, and this may be true, but there are some, and many of them live around Shinjuku Station. In New York, the homeless sometimes live in a makeshift cardboard box shelter, but here these are more elaborately constructed, with several boxes tied together to form a larger, more permanent home. What is also true is that passersby in Tokyo are not constantly approached by people begging for money.

We started with Western Shinjuku, not very "user-friendly," but having some of the tallest buildings in Tokyo, and some of the most architecturally interesting. One guide book describes the Tokyo Metropolitan Office Buildings as looking like something from a high-budget

production of George Orwell's *1984*. This is somewhat true, but they at least lack the heavy squared-off look of real Stalinist architecture.

All the guide books (and our friend Dale who had been to Tokyo several times) agreed that there was something called the O. A. Center in the Shinjuku NS Building that displayed the latest products from a bunch of computer companies. Well, the Shinjuku NS Building did have the 30-story atrium, and the giant Seiko escarpment lobby clock, but did not seem to have anything called the O. A. Center. The information clerk did not speak much English, but did understand "O. A. Center" and looked it up, then showed us on a map that it had moved to the Shinjuku Sumitomo Building a couple of blocks away. This also had an even higher atrium (52 stories), and an observation room on the 51st floor, but also failed to have the O. A. Center. Their information clerk wanted to send us back to the Shinjuku NS Building. We decided to give up instead.

The view from the 51st floor was impressive, and even more so when you realize that you are looking *west*, away from the center of Tokyo. (The observation deck in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Offices may face east, but we didn't get to it.) It's a pity it was cloudy and smoggy, but the latter is a semi-permanent condition, and the former seems to be so as well, at least so far on this trip.

Having seen Western Shinjuku, we now wanted to go to Eastern Shinjuku. It was about 16:30, the start of rush hour, and the most obvious route was through Shinjuku Station. Luckily, perhaps, we couldn't find this route: the entrance we came to had JR entrance gates the whole way across, and there didn't seem to be a way around them to get to the station itself. Mark suggested walking *around* the station, which took a couple of extra blocks because of tracks, but did work.

Eastern Shinjuku is probably what people picture when they picture modern Tokyo. Stretching before us was a long wide street of stores, restaurants, and so on, all with flashing, pulsating neon signs. Neon, neon, and more neon. If there's a neon shortage somewhere, here's why. (Well, here and Las Vegas.)

The area east of the station and north of this main street is called Kabuki-cho, and it is a combination red light district and general entertainment area. There are various hostess bars, massage parlors, and so on, with varying levels of discreteness (some of the pictures displayed are pretty surprising, considering that this is such a general area). Japan is not a country with non-discrimination laws, and at least one club we saw said on the door, "Japanese only." One suspects many have this policy but don't announce it so openly, which is interesting since many (including this one) have American names or motifs. Oh, in Japan "pink" has the same lascivious connotation that "blue" has in the United States (as in "blue movies"), so a lot of pink was in evidence. Well, as Mark pointed out, we do have the Pink Pussycat in New York.

We wandered around for a while, just taking it all in. We stopped in a CD store on the main street and got two CDs of Toho Films monster and science fiction movie themes. CDs are expensive here (about ¥2400 each), but we can't get these back home and they do make a nice souvenir. Now all we have to do is figure out which movies they are from the Japanese titles!

We decided to eat dinner and looked around for a while before deciding where. We ate at a Mister Donut American Carousel. It's not what you think. It may be that there were donuts upstairs, but the basement of this restaurant was decorated in sort of 1950s American style. Elvis Presley songs were playing. Forks were used instead of chopsticks. The only thing not 1950s American was the food: Chinese dumplings and ramen soup. (At least what I remember of the 1950s in America did not include Chinese dumplings and ramen soup.) We got combination plates that each had a ground pork steamed bun, a shui mai dumpling, and a shrimp dumpling. Mine had ramen soup; Mark's had noodles with a sort of vegetable topping. This came to ¥1030 total. (Things are reversed here from home. Food bought in a supermarket or department store is taxed; restaurant meals are not.) After this we returned "home" and collapsed.

October 12, 1996: Tsukiji and Asakusa (Tokyo)

This being our last chance to get to the Tsukiji Fish Market, we set our alarms for 5:30, but didn't need them. We left the Kimi at 6:00 and got to Tsukiji. This time there were a lot more people on the streets, many wearing rubber boots, and stores were open. And when we got to the fish market itself, there were fish. Boy, were there fish!

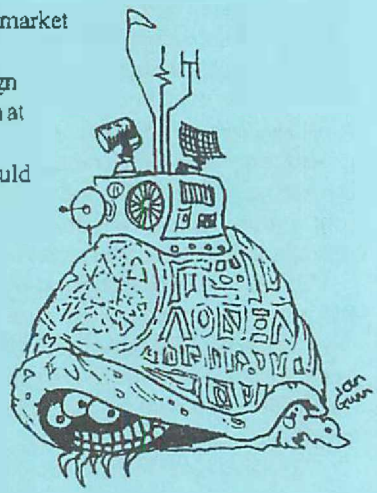
Tsukiji Market is 225,000 square meters (56 acres) and handles about 2500 tons of fish a day valued at about US$4,000,000. We didn't get there early enough for the auction, which starts about 3:00 I think, but there was still plenty going on, as wholesalers, retailers, restaurant owners, and others bustled about buying and selling fish. Huge frozen tuna were being cut up with electric saws, or hacked at with axes. Fresh fish was being sliced with knives as long as samurai swords. Who knows, they may have *been* samurai swords. Live fish flopped around. Eels swam in tanks. Crabs waved their claws. There were fish bigger than a man, and fish the size of a pin. Dr. Seuss's *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* wouldn't even begin to scratch the surface.

There were also motorized carts whizzing around in the main aisles, making the side aisles, while crowded, much safer. The floor was wet, but the recommendation of one book to wear old shoes may have been a bit of overkill. Don't wear good shoes, but general walking shoes would be fine. Don't wear long floppy jackets, though—there are a lot of tanks of water and who knows what else. We spend about an hour and a half wandering around taking pictures. Photographers would love this place, though it's difficult to stand somewhere very long to compose a picture without being in someone's way or having people constantly walk between you and your subject. (I also read that flash photography is not allowed during the auction.) *National Geographic* did a photographic spread on this in their November 1995 issue, if you want to see what it's like.

After all this walking around looking at fish, we stopped at a stall for breakfast and had ... fish. Maguro donburi, to be exact, or raw tuna on rice with a bit of nori (seaweed), ginger, and wasabi, served with green tea. At ¥700 each this was more than we had been paying for meals, but still incredibly cheap by American standards for such a dish, and how could one not have paper-thin slices of very fresh maguro at a fish market? Around the wholesale market was another market of restaurants and general stalls, although there did seem to be

an unusually high number of stalls selling rubber boots. There is also supposedly a wholesale produce market here and, while we didn't see the market, we did see lots of produce trucks.

From here we walked to the Hama Rikyu Garden to catch the river bus to Asakusa. There was a sign outside the garden which said "Closed for Today," but someone waiting there indicated that it would open at 9:00. I guess the sign was what they put up at the end of the day, but it's confusing early in the morning.



Since we had to pay admission (¥300) to the garden to get to the boat dock, we decided we would walk around and see it (not to mention that the first boat was not for another hour). In one of those strange "gotchas," if you take the river bus from Asakusa to Tsukiji, it's the same boat fare but gives you free admission to the garden. Of course, if you go in that direction, you arrive too late for the Fish Market, since the first boat is after 10:00. Normally we are not garden people (which I realize makes a fair amount of Kyoto wasted on us), but we do occasionally wander through one.

The park has a lot of ducks, cranes, and other birds. In fact, there is what used to be a duck hunting pond there, though I doubt it is used for that purpose any more. Above this pond we finally got a view of Tokyo Tower, known to us from many Godzilla films. It's sort of a mini-Eiffel Tower, painted red, white, and blue for some reason. Like the Eiffel Tower, it has a viewing platform, but is really more interesting to look at than from.

At 10:15 we caught the water bus, which had a pre-recorded description in Japanese and English of what we were passing. It took forty minutes to get to Asakusa and cost ¥620 each, pretty cheap for a sightseeing-type boat. The same man who told us when the park would open was at the water bus dock and told us when the water bus would leave and how much it was (even though both were clearly posted). People say that the Japanese are very helpful to foreigners, and they are, with people often asking if they can help us find someplace or other. But people also say that the Japanese also feel superior to everyone else, and I wonder if these aren't related, and what we see as helpfulness isn't in a sense paternalism. (Of course, Americans often have the feeling of superiority without the helpfulness, so even if what I suggest is true, the Japanese are ahead of us.)

The Japanese also love things Western. The traffic lights play tunes when it is safe to cross, and one near the Kimi plays "Coming Through the Rye." As we walked through one of the shopping areas in Asakusa, we heard them announcing some sort of street festival and playing Elvis Presley songs, "In the Mood" and "By the Bayou."

The main sight in Asakusa is the Senso-ji Temple, also known as the Asakusa Kannon Temple. This is approached down a long covered alley of shops selling everything from crackers to Godzilla toys to clothing. It reminded me of the entrance to the Red Fort in Delhi, though of course here the vendors don't chase after you out of their shops. Even with this admirable restraint, the carnival atmosphere seemed out of keeping with Western notions of dignity around religious sites. (I think I've heard that St. Peter's in Rome may be as surrounded by vendors as this.)

The temple itself was fairly impressive architecturally, but not notable in any obvious aspect. My knowledge of temples (and shrines) is very limited, so I can't comment on them very much. I suppose one might ask why I'm going to them. Some have historic interest (though many, especially in Tokyo, seem to be recent reconstructions, the originals having been destroyed either by the 1923 earthquake or the World War II bombing), but I guess it's more to see what Japanese tourists go to see. And there's also the feeling that there are some sights you have to see. We would be surprised if someone went to New York and didn't see the Statue of Liberty, or to Beijing and didn't see the Great Wall. And I claimed that when tourists left India, their film was checked and if they didn't have a picture of the Taj Mahal, they were told they couldn't leave until they had one. Well, here there seem to be some things one must see: Mt. Fuji, for example. While the temples and shrines are not quite on that level, I am still enough of a checklist sort of person to feel I should see them. (Mt. Fuji may be a "must-see" but it also turns out to be a "hard-to-see," as we discovered.)

After the temple, we walked over to Kappabashi, the wholesale restaurant supply district. The books implied that there were a lot of stores selling plastic food here, but it was almost entirely dishes, cutlery, signs, and other non-plastic-food items. The few plastic food places we saw were fairly expensive, which was a pity—they would have been good souvenirs.

It was only mid-afternoon, but we had started early and were tired, so we picked up some stamps at a post office and returned to the room, where we did *not* write our post cards. Getting back to Ikebukuro is not usually difficult (it's on two subway lines and the JR Yamanote Line), but once in a while we end up somewhere where we need to ride a long way to change to the right line, or to change twice, or to switch from the subway to the JR Yamanote Line, effectively having to pay twice, and this was one of those times.

Instead of writing post cards, we did laundry. There was a coin laundry a few blocks from the Kimi, so I took the week's accumulated laundry over and washed and dried it in under an hour. While I was there, someone (local, I assume) came in, put his laundry in the machine, took his shirt off, put this in the machine, put his yakuta (cotton bathrobe) on, took his pants off under it, and put them in the machine as well. From what I've heard, this is fairly common.

For dinner we went to a Chinese restaurant nearby. We had clams in a vinegar/soy sauce (cold), squid in spicy sauce (hot), clams in black bean sauce (hot), and soup with a thousand-year-old egg. This was our most expensive meal so far—¥2626—but certainly reasonable compared to prices back home. After dinner we went over to Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space, a concert hall nearby which was supposed to have a very exciting escalator. Well, it did go up the four stories of the atrium, but it was no more exciting than many in various subway systems. One book had claimed, "It doesn't get much more exciting than this in Ikebukuro." What a depressing thought! On the way back to the Kimi it started to rain, so we cut through the subway station to get out of the drizzle for at least a couple of blocks. Rain, or at least overcast, has been our constant companion so far.

October 13, 1996: Shibuya and Harajuku (Tokyo)

We've been skipping breakfast because we weren't sure where to find it, but today we picked up steamed pork buns at the convenience store for ¥88 each, and those made a reasonable breakfast. One reason Tokyo is so clean is that people don't eat (or drink) as they walk. If you

buy something in a store or from a machine, you consume it there, and there are always trash bins and recycling bins at these places.

We took the train to Shibuya Station and went out onto Hachiko Square. Hachiko is Tokyo's "Greyfriars Bobby" (a comparison that occurred independently to both Mark and me). Hachiko was a dog who used to wait at the station for his master, and kept doing so even after his master died. Both were honored by their cities, but Greyfriars Bobby was buried in a nice grave, while Hachiko was stuffed and put on display in Tokyo's Science Museum.

Because Japan's major religions don't have the tradition of a special day for rest and/or church attendance, Sunday mornings are just like other mornings. Stores are open and people are busy doing whatever they would do other days. Office workers do have a five-day week, as do schools (or possibly a five-and-a-half-day week), but stores are open as early on Sunday as on other days. (On the other hand, the major department stores do close one day a week, but it's a different day for each chain.)

We went into a couple of music stores hoping to find some cassettes to supplement the ones we had brought. Because of all the power lines in Tokyo, particularly those near the Kimi, we are unable to pick up more than a couple of radio stations and they are more talk than music. So we've been listening to the cassettes a lot and need to get some different ones. But neither the Wave nor HMV had any cassettes. I guess Japan is advanced enough that cassettes are considered old technology not worth bothering with. Everything is now CDs and mini-discs, with expensive vinyl for the real audiophile. We did not bring a CD player and did not want to buy one, so we'll have to make do and hope Kyoto has better radio.)

We walked over to NHK (the Japanese broadcasting company), but the tours there seemed to be in Japanese only and designed for tour groups, even to the extent of having a special spot for taking group pictures. (This spot didn't have an interesting background, just a sign with NHK's logo, the date, and the tour number.) Many things in Japan are designed more for the tour group than the individual tourist. The same was true in countries such as China and the former Soviet Union, but there it was more a political thing about limiting individual freedom, while here it's more on doing things with your group. Some might claim the two are the same, but I don't think they are. (Dave Griffiths claimed that the NHK tour was not all that interesting anyway, since what you see are actors pretending to do television broadcasting things, rather than an actual behind-the-scenes look. This sounds a bit like Universal Studios in Florida, but without the rides.)

The TEPCO Electric Energy Museum, on the other hand, was designed for individuals or families, and had some English, though not enough to use many of the interactive displays or understand the full explanations. (On the other hand, it was free, so we couldn't complain.) This was again World's Fair material, complete with a carousel theater like the one General Electric pioneered, which was narrated by a character who looked like a friendly version of the Wicked Witch of the West.

From here we walked to Harajuku, which is the area next to this part of Shibuya, though for some reason none of the maps for these two areas that we had seemed to fit together properly. It must have been a difference in scale or orientation. The day had turned sunny and hot, which was a nice change from a week of overcast and rain. The main street of Harajuku was closed off as a pedestrian shopping mall, and it was full of pedestrians shopping. We saw more Westerners here than we had the rest of our trip. But they (we) were still a very small percentage of the people.

We had lunch at Quintet, a noodle shop described in the Lonely Planet guide, though under a different name. The easiest way to order seems to be to copy down the names of what you want from the display outside and then show it to the waitress. This does limit you to items with not very complicated names, and to places with good penmanship.

We dropped in at Kiddyland, which, as predicted, was packed with teenagers. I bought some Japanese baseball cards for my brother, and Mark commented on how the Japanese have failed to realize the marketing potential of Godzilla. They did have one or two Godzilla toys, but Ultraman seems far more popular here, and Disney characters outstrip them all. One of the shops along this street was Condomania, which is part (I believe) of a chain dealing in condoms. (No big surprise, right?) In addition to condoms, they have other items such as oils, and also condom joke gifts and art (like a flowerpot with a little flower made of a rolled-up condom).

We stopped to find out how much the Ota Museum was, in case we had time to come back to it. Our guide books are all a few years old and all disagreed anyway, but even the latest JNTO pamphlet was off. The admission is currently ¥900, steep by United States standards even if this is one of the best ukiyo-e (woodblock print) collections (outside of the one in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which is supposed to be the best in the world). (Interestingly, ¥900 is the same price as the condom flower in Condomania. I wonder if this means something.)

The main "official" attraction in Harajuku is the Meiji Jingu Shrine, the major Shinto shrine in Tokyo. It was originally built in 1920, destroyed during World War II, and reconstructed by 1958, but as with most shrines, the reconstruction was faithful to the original, even in the materials used. This shrine was also busy, though not as busy as the shrine in Kamakura. We did see two wedding parties, but one seemed to be there more to pose for photographs in fancy wedding dress against the backdrop of the shrine (the woman was wearing a colorful kimono rather than the traditional white Shinto robe and headdress).

There was also a "display" of dolls of all sorts with a sign above them saying good-bye to them. I'm not sure if this was some special thing, or a standard ritual of girls getting rid of their dolls at some point. One of the problems of traveling on one's own is that there is no one to ask about these things, particularly when you don't speak the language at all.

And I am having definite problems remembering any Japanese that I learn. The phrase book is handy if I want to say exactly what it says, but I hardly ever do. For example, it will say, "Is this the last train?" when I want to say, "When is the last train?" and Japanese is complex enough that it's not obvious what changes to make. But I find that individual words are sometimes enough, and context is usually helpful. If we walk up to a train station ticket window and say "Kamakura," the clerk will probably understand that we want two tickets to Kamakura on the next train. There is a newer Lonely Planet phrase book, more than twice as thick (but costing less than twice as much). The problem with it is that it is too big to carry around in a shirt pocket any more; I'm glad we have the old one, which is convenient for reading some of the basic signs.

After the shrine we went to Harajuku's main "unofficial" attraction: the performers in Yoyogi Park. Actually they are on the bridge from the main street to the park and at the entrance of the park, rather than in it. This is sort of like Speaker's Corner in London in that the same people are back week after week (this happens only on Sunday, another similarity). According to the books, this is supposed to be rebellious youth, but the books go on to say that these young people don't drink alcohol or do drugs, usually perform as groups, and don't even wear their costumes to the park, but change in the public restrooms there. So I'm not sure why the books think this is rebellion—it

sounds more like amateur performers to me. (One difference between these performers and those in, say, New York City is that these aren't asking for money.)

The stars of all this are what someone called the "Dancing Elvises." These are members of several rock and roll clubs who dress up in old jeans or leather pants, long pointed shoes, leather jackets (which they took off because of the heat), and pompadour hairdos. They play old Fifties rock and roll on their cassette player and dance to it in classic overdone Fifties style. There are also a few young women in flared skirts and petticoats who dance rather more sedately (they don't fling themselves on the ground) and more in unison to such tunes as "Let's Go to the Hop."

We met another American couple here: he is stationed on the U.S. military base nearby and she is visiting him. She was saying she lives in a town in Nebraska with a population of about three hundred, and has never seen anything like this. (Doesn't she have television? Even so, I suppose you pretty much get only broadcast television in really small towns, and I don't think PBS has done a special on the performers of Harajuku yet. But it's a great idea.)

The other performers (there seemed to be far fewer than the books indicated) were some pretty bad singers, a reasonable punk mime, and a group of Hare Krishnas (well, they *were* performing). We returned to the Kimi, stopping in Tobu about 17:30 to pick up sushi. It was really crowded at that hour, but there was still plenty of sushi. We got another huge amount of sushi for ¥1050, and picked up a liter of Coke to go with it. (I know, real gourmet.)

After dinner, I went down and soaked in the tub. First you wash yourself thoroughly, either under the shower (which didn't seem to work) or using the faucets outside the tub and rinsing off with a basin provided. Then when you're clean you take the cover off the tub and climb in. This tub was not very traditional-looking: it was basically a shorter, deeper bathtub. When you sit in it the water comes up to your neck. This had the temperature set at 42 degrees Centigrade (about 108 degrees Fahrenheit), which is actually pretty cool for a Japanese tub. After soaking in this for a while, my feet felt a lot better, and the rest of me felt a lot sleepier. In fact, when I got back to the room, I fell asleep for an hour or so, then wrote for a while, then went to sleep about 22:30, missing the group of rowdy Americans who came in about 23:30.

October 14, 1996: Odawara and Nikko

Some days the best you can say is that no one threw cow dung on your shoes. But let me begin at the beginning.

Breakfast was again steamed buns. We had two day trips planned from Tokyo, one to Hakone and one to Nikko. The Hakone one was primarily to see Mt. Fuji, and involved taking trains, cable cars, and various other forms of transportation through a scenic area. In other words, we would be outside a lot and weather was critical. Since the morning looked relatively clear, and hardly anyone was carrying an umbrella, we figured this would be a good day for Hakone.

We tried to get tickets to Hakone (actually the town is Odawara; it's the gateway to Hakone National Park) at the window at Ikebukuro, but were unable to. Apparently you get tickets either at the Travel Service Bureau offices in the major stations (these are open mostly from 10:00 to 18:00) or at the station from which the train is leaving. In our case this was Tokyo Station. So we took the Yamanote Line to Tokyo Station. Even though it was not rush hour yet, it was really packed, at least for the first few stops. However, it was not so packed that there were conductors pushing the people in. (By the way, to use the JapanRail Pass on the local trains, go through the gate for handicapped and special pass access. Even if these aren't marked, they're obvious: there's a man in a booth at one end of the row of automatic gates. Just show your pass, open so they can check the dates, though in Tokyo they didn't seem to care.)

In Tokyo Station we ended up getting on a local train rather than the Shinkansen (bullet train), because I didn't realize there were separate tracks for the Shinkansen. Make sure you look for those tracks if that's what you want. At any rate, we got on the train and started out. The trip took about ninety minutes and was basically through city the entire way. There may have been brief stretches of countryside, but nothing like one sees in most countries. Japan is a very urban country.

The cities we were traveling through were not all gleaming buildings and neon, either. The buildings outside the city centers were mostly older and somewhat run-down. The vision many people have of the shining 21st-century Japan may be true of parts of Tokyo, but it certainly is not the case everywhere. We see spotless factory interiors with robots assembling cars, but most of the factories look pretty much like factories everywhere, at least from the outside. By now you've probably guessed that by the time we got to Odawara, it was raining. We debated what to do—was it worth doing the Hakone route in the rain? Given that it would be about US$40 each for all the transportation to do it, it didn't seem worthwhile if the main attraction, Mt. Fuji, was not even visible.

So what could we do? Well, we had covered most of what was in Tokyo itself, so we decided on what will undoubtedly seem to some like a bizarre course of action—we went to Nikko. This is bizarre because Odawara is southwest of Tokyo, and Nikko is northeast. So our plan involved returning to Tokyo Station (this time on the Shinkansen), taking the Yamanote Line to Ueno Station, having a quick lunch in a noodle shop and a quick look in a bookstore (where they had various American science fiction books in Japanese for about ¥410 each), taking the Shinkansen to Utsunomiya, and then taking a local train to Nikko. What with changing, etc., this took us from about 10:30 to 15:00. (That did include an hour in Ueno when we made seat reservations and had lunch.)

A few more notes about JR trains. The unreserved seats are in cars that are usually at the front but sometimes at the back. Look for the signs that have the characters for unreserved on them (three characters, the first a vertical rectangle divided into three horizontal slices with a little vertical line coming out of the center of the top, the second a similar rectangle divided into four parts with one vertical and one horizontal line, also with the little vertical line, and a third kanji character too complicated to describe). Alternatively, ask "Juyiseki ka?" ("Is this unreserved?"). You can, of course, get reserved tickets ("shiteiseki"), but often these are sold out. With unreserved you may have to stand, but this didn't seem that common, particularly if you are getting on at the beginning of the route.

In Nikko we had the choice of walking uphill a half hour in the rain or taking a bus. We took the bus. We were worried that we would miss the stop (Shin-kyo Bridge), but it is 1) pretty obvious, and 2) announced in English. (The other stop announced in English is the train

station on the return route.) The bus is fairly straightforward; the fare is displayed electronically at the front by zone, and if you get on after the first zone you get a ticket at boarding that says where you got on. They require exact change, but they seem to be willing to make change from the next passenger's money if possible.

There is a legend connected with this spot, and so there was a famous bridge built here. But the old-looking bridge is actually a reconstruction of the original bridge (for which they still want ¥300 just to walk across it, and it's only about thirty meters). There is also a new bridge on which all the traffic goes and this you can walk over for free. Across the bridge is Nikko National Park, containing two major shrines and a temple. Most people who come to Nikko go to all three, and they in fact sell a "two-shrine-one-temple" ticket which saves you on admissions. The only catch is that this does not include Ieyasu's Tomb, though even if you pay the extra for that the combination ticket is a good deal—if you are going to all three sights. However, it was now 15:30 and last admissions were at 16:30, so the multiple ticket wouldn't have done us much good. This way we also had an excuse to skip a couple of places we probably had less interest in anyway. (The admission to Tosho-gu Shrine, including Ieyasu's Tomb, is ¥1250. The combination ticket, not including the tomb, is ¥950, and the tomb is ¥500. I am not sure what the other shrine and the temple are now, but it's obviously worth the combination ticket.)

We climbed the path up to Toshu-gu Shrine. The rain had, surprisingly, stopped, but it was still very dim among the trees and the mist was rising off the mountains in a very atmospheric setting. The shrine and tomb are quite elaborate, with more ornamentation than most of the ones we have visited so far. Mark said there was a gate somewhere nicknamed the "Looks All Day Gate" because you could spend all day looking at the carvings on it, and the main gate here may have been it. This shrine is also known for its carving of the three monkeys ("hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil"), though I doubt that they originated here.

Ieyasu Tokugawa united Japan in 1603, and so Mark describes him as the "Arthur of Japan." There is a long climb up stairs to Ieyasu's Tomb high among the cedars. This part of the shrine is referred to as the "Sleeping Cat," because there is a carving of a sleeping cat on the gate at the beginning of the stairs. There is, however, apparently no legend about this sleeping cat, not even for tourists, so you know it's a different culture. (I mean, most places would have some story about how when the cat wakes, Ieyasu will return to lead Japan again or some such.) We finished here just about the time the shrine was closing (17:00), and naturally it started raining. Well, it had at least held off while we were at the shrine.

Because it was raining we decided to take the bus back to the station rather than walking. When we got to the station, it took us a few minutes to realize that it was not the JR station, but another station. By the time we got to the JR station (about a block away), we had just missed one train and had to wait almost an hour an a half for the next one. (This was, of course, the longest gap between trains of the day.) By the time we got back we were definitely tired.

Oh, and the cow dung? Well, in India boys run by you and throw cow dung on your shoes so an accomplice can come up and say, "I saw that. There's a shop around the corner where you can get your shoes cleaned." Okay, so this day wasn't that bad, and we did finally see something worth seeing. But we spent an extraordinary amount of time on the train and waiting around train stations to do it.

October 15, 1996: Matsumoto

The weather this morning was clearer but still somewhat overcast in the direction of Mt. Fuji, so rather than try Hakone again, we decided to try to see some of the mountain area around Matsumoto. (We were glad we hadn't planned on climbing Mt. Fuji.) We got to the departure station (Ueno) only to discover that there were no reserved seats left, so we queued up for the unreserved car and did get seats there, though not window seats (at least until well into the trip as people got off). The trip was almost three hours (on a limited express, not a Shinkansen), and went through a lot of tunnels as we climbed into the mountains. The scenery was beautiful, and we discovered that there are countryside and rural areas in Japan, something not at all obvious if one stays around Tokyo.

Arriving in Matsumoto about 12:00, we made return reservations so there would be no risk of having to stand for the three-hour trip back. We then looked for lunch. The Lonely Planet guide talked about the Matsumoto specialty, soba noodles with wasabi and soy, and recommended a restaurant, but the restaurant seemed to have changed owners (or at least names), and was now somewhat more upscale than we were hoping for (a small serving of plain noodles was ¥1000). So we walked around and found another noodle shop, where Mark had ramen and I had something like chop suey over rice (vegetables and meat in a somewhat gelatinous sauce). I wanted a change, but I think I'll stick to noodles in the future. These came with a little dish of Japanese pickles and a little bottle of something mango-flavored that seemed to be like a yogurt drink. Because it was a whole meal, this was a little more expensive than other noodle lunches—¥1600 for the two of us.

After lunch, we walked toward the castle, about a kilometer away and well-signposted. We passed a department store with a glass elevator painted to look like the space shuttle, and a lot of less flashy stores as well. One department store had a display of their best-sellers (I think), and it appeared that several were science fiction, at least from the cover illustrations, but we didn't stop to check. (Later I discovered that these were Sidney Sheldon novels with no science fiction content.) We were stopped by two young women taking a survey who asked us where we were from, how long we had been in Matsumoto, when we were leaving, etc. We think they were probably from a tourism board, though I suppose it could have been a school exercise.

The castle in Matsumoto is known variously as Matsumoto-jo Castle, Fukashi-jo Castle, and Black Crow Castle. It was built in 1595, but never involved in any fighting. At the entrance (¥500, which includes the Folklore Museum) the woman held up a piece of paper for us to read that said a free English guide was available at the information desk. The only thing that made it difficult to read was that she held it upside down. There was no one at the desk when we got there, but within fifteen minutes an old man came back to it from the castle. Mark asked if we could have an English tour, and off we went.

The previous day I wore a thin T-shirt and a denim shirt, expecting it to be warm, so I had been cold most of the day. Today I wore a long-sleeved knit shirt, a cotton shirt, and brought the denim shirt. So it got really warm (well, only about 20 degrees Centigrade, or 68 degrees Fahrenheit, but it felt hotter), and I ended up carrying two of the layers. (Just as well, because by the end of the day when we were sitting on the train platform I had all three layers on and was still cold.)

During the course of the tour we found out that the guide was seventy-two years old and had served in China during the war. Mark commented that he must have some interesting stories to tell, but he didn't seem to want to volunteer any. The Japanese Army's reputation in the war in China is very bad, but of course we have no way of knowing what this particular person did then. Still, it was a strange feeling. He was also learning Hebrew (Mark saw he had a Hebrew book) so that he could read the Old Testament. He said this wasn't for religious reasons, but just to study it.

We went through the six floors of the castle, including the "hidden floor" (from the outside there appear to be only five floors), climbing several flights of very steep stairs to get to the top. This was made more difficult by the fact we were carrying our shoes in a bag with us. For the older tourists it was even more of a problem, and the steepness reminded me of a scene in a Pearl Buck novel (*Peony*, perhaps) in which the heroine goes up stairs for the first time and when she has to come back down is terrified and has to do it sitting down and going step by step.

The castle was used only for defense, not for living, and so has no furniture or decorations. (Although it does have a "Moon-Viewing Pavilion," which seems ill-suited to a castle built entirely for defense.) It does, however, have a display of guns and related materials such as bullet molds, powder horns, and so on. There was even a powder horn in the shape of a penis, which the guide pointed out to Mark.

This was the first castle we had seen unless one counts the distant view of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, so it's difficult to judge how good it is. We found it quite interesting and impressive, and having an English guide was a real plus and gives us a clue as to what to look for and recognize in other castles. The exterior is quite beautiful against the mountains, though unfortunately it is impossible to look at without also seeing the modern buildings and wires which surround it on all sides. (It is in a park, so the city isn't right up against it.) According to what I had read, this is a common problem in Japan.

After we finished the tour, Mark went back through the castle again to take some pictures of things he had missed, while I sat on a bench enjoying the view. There were some other Westerners there, Australians (I guess they count as Westerners in this context). It's about as far from Japan to Australia as from New York to Buenos Aires, which is still pretty far, but as I noted earlier, closer than to just about anywhere else outside of Asia.

We went over to the Folklore Museum, which took less time than expected because there was a special exhibition of modern Western art taking up a fair part of it. It had some prehistoric items, some natural history exhibits, and a large collection of clocks. Why clocks? Well, a rich industrialist collected them and then donated his collection to the museum. There wasn't anything particularly folkloric, or even Japanese, about them, though there were more Japanese-made clocks than one would see in, say, Boston. (Although given the ukiyo-e collection in Boston I mentioned earlier, this may not be true.) There was also a display of folk items, labeled entirely in Japanese, so we were unable to determine the exact significance of the carved wooden penises (in varying sizes, but all considerably larger than life-size) displayed there.

Walking around the outside of the castle grounds, we were stopped by an older man from Kobe who apparently just wanted a chance to speak English to someone. He said that he had had an exchange student from Washington State living with him for a while, which is probably where he learned his English.

We stopped at a used bookstore on the way back to the station and bought a couple of postcards of the castle. Postcards are not very common here. The various sights may have one or two packs of postcards, but the only place they seemed to have individual ones was at the Daibutsu in Kamakura. Well, some do have individual ones, but they are larger, and run about ¥150 or more each. We bought some at the Daibutsu to send to people, but had hoped to find a couple more "exciting" ones (of Tokyo or something less serious than the Daibutsu) for our godchildren. Well, maybe in Kyoto.

We had made reservations for the 18:49 train, figuring we would finish sightseeing about 17:00 and eat dinner, but we finished earlier and weren't really hungry yet. We probably could have changed our reservations to the 18:31 but it hardly seemed worthwhile, and the one before that was a bit too early. We bought some snacks at a convenience store and ate them on the train platform while waiting. (Mark felt somewhat embarrassed that what I bought was Calbee, which are sugar-frosted corn flakes. It didn't stop him from eating some, though.)

As I said earlier, the platform was cold now that the sun was down. (Actually, it had clouded up toward the end of the day anyway.) It was good to get on a warm train, and we both napped part of the way back, there not being much to see in the dark. Strangely, the train was twenty minutes late to Shinjuku, unusual in such a precise country. (For example, in the stations there are lines drawn as to where to queue for specific train cars, and the car doors line up with them when the trains stop.)

(At least, I thought the train was late. The tickets had what appears to be an arrival time printed on it, but we often didn't arrive at that time. Perhaps it is the time of the last stop *before* the destination?) We finally got back to the Kimi about 22:30 and got to sleep about 23:30, leaving our packing for tomorrow.

October 16, 1996: Travel to Kyoto

Today we were basically just traveling without really sightseeing. So naturally, the weather was beautiful. We packed—pretty easy to do in a traditional Japanese room, since there are no drawers to check and no chance of forgetting something under the bed. We went out, picked up our steamed bun breakfast, and returned to the Kimi, where we ate it with green tea in the lounge. We needed to kill time until 9:00, as we had to change more money and the banks don't open until then.

We checked out and wtalked towards Ikebukuro Station. The first bank we passed, Gunma, was an "authorized foreign exchange agent" (not all banks are). We went in, where we were directed upstairs to someone who didn't seem familiar with the procedure for traveler's cheques. He looked it up and finally concluded that I needed to sign the cheques and fill in the form, and he needed to photocopy my passport. (One wonders why.) This done, he gave us a number and we waited downstairs for about fifteen minutes while they ... did what? This seemed to be one area in which the Japanese are less efficient than elsewhere. In fact, it may have been faster to change money in India! (I think the Tanzanians hold the record, though, since they record by hand the serial number of each bill involved.)

We got to Ikebukuro Station and took the Yamanote Line to Tokyo Station, from which the Kyoto Shinkansens leave. (Actually, Kyoto is just a stop on the Shinkansens that go to Osaka and Hiroshima.) We made reservations, but couldn't get seats on the next train. That's okay —we could get seats on the train after that, and they leave about twenty minutes apart, so it was no big deal.

That, by the way, is what is probably most amazing about the Shinkansens. Yes, they go really fast (and no, I don't know off-hand how fast), but there are other fast trains. It's more that these trains go roaring past the stations between Tokyo and Hakata (south of Hiroshima)

every seven minutes or so. I mean, we might have four super-expresses a day between New York and Washington, but not one every seven minutes, all day.

We got up to the platform and found the queuing point for our car. The previous train was still in the station and hadn't boarded yet, and everyone waiting for that car was an American. At first we thought they had a separate gaijin car, but it turned out to be a tour group who naturally had seats together. On our train we were, as usual, the only Westerners in the car.

While we waited we browsed the kiosks on the platform. There are several different "chains," but the most common seems to be one called "Let's Kiosk." This sounds like something our friend who likes to shop might say ("Hey, if there's nothing else to do now, let's kiosk!") and is somewhat typical of the fractured English one sees in Japan. My Japanese is even worse, I know, but I'm talking about the sorts of things one assumes would be professionally translated. One wonders how business is accomplished at all, given the difficulties in cross-cultural communication.

When we got the tickets for the Shinkansen we had seats 2A and 2B in car 13. Unfortunately, these are on the left side of the car and Mt. Fuji (which we would pass) is on the right. However, my Japanese wasn't up to asking for seats on the Mt. Fuji side. (If yours is, you want seats D and E.) We figured we could take our pictures from the train doors anyway. So we asked the conductor when Fuji viewing time was (as a woman in the ryokan had suggested) and he pulled out a card from his pocket and said, "11:53." (This means, I guess, that it's fifty minutes after you leave Tokyo if you're on the Shinkansen that stops first at Nagoya.)

Well, ten minutes before the appointed time we were positioned at the car doors with our cameras, and right on schedule we passed through the Shin-Fuji Station, and probably right behind that cloud and smog bank was Mt. Fuji, but all we could see was a bit of the lower left slope. This is apparently not uncommon, and it's harder and harder to see Mt. Fuji these days. (Perhaps it's better earlier in the day.)

The Shinkansen seems the train most designed for tourists, with announcements in English as well as Japanese. Well, for some announcements anyway, like stops. There were other announcements only in Japanese. Hostesses come through selling beverages, snacks and ice cream, and they bow when they enter and leave each car, as do the conductors. The Shinkansen is fast and comfortable, but it is not cheap. (This is an example of "Good, fast, cheap—choose two.") With the JapanRail Pass we don't feel it, but a reserved seat ticket from Tokyo to Kyoto would cost ¥13,920 one way. Our trip to Matsumoto would have been ¥7020 round-trip for each of us. (Reserved seats cost only ¥500 extra, which must be why they sell out.) This, of course, is why we will be doing all our long trips during the week the pass is good.

We arrived on time to Kyoto (13:39) and promptly got lost around the station. We somehow went out the south side and couldn't figure how to get to the north side. Even attempting to walk around the station (as we did with Shinjuku earlier) didn't seem to work. Finally we went to an information desk, where they directed us to an underground promenade which went to the other side of the station.

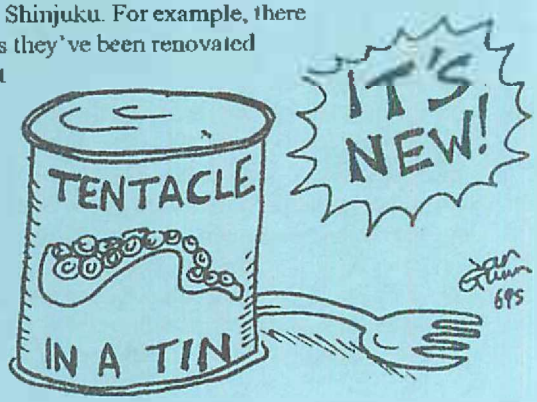
We first went to the Travel Information Center, which is pretty much right across the street from the station. This is supposed to be better organized than the Tokyo one (according to the Net), but was out of most of the pertinent pamphlets. We did get one for Matsumoto (for background information), for example, but they were out of the Nara and Kyoto Walks ones, which we luckily picked up in Tokyo. I guess that makes sense in a way—they would go faster here than further away. So pick up your Kyoto pamphlets in Tokyo and vice versa.

By now the backpacks were feeling pretty heavy, so we went back to the station and took the No. 205 bus three stops to the Riverside Takase. We had a bit of difficulty finding the Takase, because while we had a map with it indicated, there were no street names on the map and no street signs on the street. Luckily a young woman riding by on a bicycle stopped to ask (gesture) if she could help. We showed her where on the map we were trying to go (and the name in Japanese) and she pointed down the side street and then to the left. And sure enough, there it was.

The rooms in the Riverside Takase are larger than those in the Kimi (maybe twice as large), and have closets with hangers, more storage space, and a larger table with a thermos of hot water, green tea bags, and cups. The window is larger, and we even figured out how to close the glass after a very cold first night with it open. There is a coin washer and dryer right in the Takase. (It turned out the dryer was broken, making the washer not very useful unless you wanted to hang all your laundry outside and hope it dried in time.) However, there are a few drawbacks. The bathtub is not left filled or continually heated, so it's more like taking a bath back home, and it takes a long time to fill. The toilet is a bit more claustrophobic. And there's no lounge for sitting and meeting people (well, there are only five rooms). Mark thinks it's not as clean, but I think it's just older and more used-looking. There's also the question of why there were two policemen in riot gear guarding the small bridge over the tiny canal that runs in front of the hotel. There are several other bridges along the canal; this was the only one so guarded.

By now it was after 15:00 and we hadn't eaten since our pork bun breakfast. We set out looking for food. There didn't seem to be anything near the Takase, but another group of tourists said that there were places to eat in the Gion and it wasn't far. Well, they actually meant Kawaramachi, Kyoto's "downtown" in the sense of a shopping area. There were lots of stores, but no really cheap restaurants that we could find. We finally found a reasonably priced restaurant in one of the shopping arcades, where we had eel; I had eel udon and Mark had a ramen dish and something like an eel custard (though with tofu rather than egg custard). (This came to ¥1950.)

After dinner (for by this time it was dinner) we walked over to the Gion, which is across the river from Kawaramachi. This is the entertainment district, but not flashy and somewhat tacky like Kabuki-cho in Shinjuku. For example, there is Hanami-koji, a street with 17th-century teahouses on either side. One suspects they've been renovated since then, but they still retain their original appearance. Part of the entertainment here consists of geisha houses, and we even saw some geishas on their way to work. Somehow I would have thought that they would put on their make-up and get dressed at their place of work, but apparently they dress at home—or somewhere else—and arrive at work "in character."



We walked back to the hotel, not quite getting lost in the dark. Looking at the map, I realized that our other hotel is apparently only a few blocks away, even though it is listed as being in a different area because it is across the river. This would be convenient except that check-out time at the Takase is 10:00 and check-in at the Ryokan Seiki is 15:00. Well, we'll sort it out somehow.

October 17, 1996: Hiroshima and Miyajima

More traveling on the train, but at least today we had sightseeing as well. The weather was clear and cool. I hope it lasts.

We left the Takase about 7:15 and walked to the station, it actually being closer than the Kawaramachi area to which we walked yesterday was. On the way we passed various vending machines. One near us is called "Time Trip," and sells phone cards. We also saw a machine like one Dave Griffiths mentioned, selling porno magazines. He said he saw this outside a bookstore, and suspected it was there to allow anonymity (though you're right there on the street buying them). I thought it might also prevent people from reading them in the stores without paying. These magazines run about ¥2000 to ¥3000 and a lot seem to feature nurses on the cover (well, women in nurse uniforms, or partial uniforms, anyway). For a long time the big taboo in Japanese magazines and movies was pubic hair. This taboo seems to have been broken. (Later we rode by here on the bus when the magazine store it was in front of was open, and the machine had a curtain over it, so I guess it's just an after-hours vending machine.)

At the station we made the depressing discovery that there were no reserved seats to Hiroshima until the 10:42 train, which was far too late for us. So we took the 7:42 in unreserved seats. We were able to sit down even from the beginning, though in the smoking car (hack! gasp!)—we still don't have the hang of guessing which unreserved cars will be non-smoking. At the next stop fifteen minutes down the line, Osaka, lots of people got off and we were able to sit together. It is less important to have reservations at the start of the line, or right before a major stop, than if you're getting on somewhere in the middle, or even worse, right *after* a major stop. Let's Kiosk must be a Tokyo chain; I haven't seen any around here.

We arrived in Hiroshima about 10:00 and, in keeping with the grand Leeper tradition, got completely lost around the station. Even after we got across the street from the station (a major accomplishment involving several false starts and underground passages), we had difficulty figuring out how to cross the river. But finally we got into the main section of Hiroshima. Not surprisingly, Hiroshima is a modern town. In the center at least, all the buildings are less than fifty years old. The reason for this, of course, is the reason why we, and millions of other tourists, come to Hiroshima.

Much as been written about the atomic bomb and the Atomic War (well, it was). The Lonely Planet guide (Tony Wheeler in specific) does some editorializing on this, saying that 75,000 died in the initial blast, and the death toll eventually reached 200,000. Wheeler compares this to the 30,000 who died in the Blitz, but doesn't mention any other statistics, such as the 10,000,000 who died in the concentration camps, or the 750,000 who died in the Siege of Leningrad, or the 300,000 who died in the Rape of Nanjing, or the 135,000 who died in the Dresden fire-bombing. When one looks at the deaths in World War II (which are estimated to total 54,000,000 from all causes), the number of deaths at Hiroshima is large but not a major percentage.

Wheeler also describes the A-Bomb Dome as "the spot where the world ended for the people of Hiroshima." Perhaps in some sense this is true, but if one looks around Hiroshima today, it seems as though it is doing quite well. Except for the A-Bomb Dome, it has been completely rebuilt and looks pretty much like any other Japanese city.

This may sound like I'm a defender, or even a supporter, of nuclear weapons and their use. So let me clarify my position. The bombs used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were (relatively) small. The invasion of Okinawa certainly led the Allied military to believe an invasion of the Japanese mainland would cost millions of lives, on both sides. Earlier, the Japanese government, expecting such an invasion, had called for "ten million deaths with honor," and it's estimated that at least a quarter of a million Japanese died during the invasion of Okinawa. (Contrast this figure, just to take one small island, with the 350,000 Japanese deaths from the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to take the entire mainland.) The Japanese were also working on an atomic bomb, and on biological weapons as well (which they had used in Manchuria). And many of the people who made the decision to drop the bombs did not understand them and thought them just quantitatively different from existing bombs rather than qualitatively different. Given all this, I have to say that I cannot disagree with the decision.

And as Mark points out, this concentration on nuclear weapons has meant that countries have not been spending as much effort developing biological or chemical weapons. Now that we know about nuclear winter, what we have are a whole bunch of very expensive weapons that we are afraid to use. Yes, it's possible for a suicidal individual or country to set off an atomic bomb. It's still safer than having a lot of biological weapons floating around waiting for an accident to happen. With nuclear accidents, the danger is more contained (even given air currents) than unleashing some new germ warfare would be.

The one building in Hiroshima that was not torn down after the war was the remains of the Prefectural Industrial Development Hall. The ruins of it with its domed roof are what is referred to as the A-Bomb Dome. (I had envisioned a glass dome covering some blast area, but that's not what is meant.) This building was less than a kilometer from the "hypocenter" of the blast, and is proof that the bomb used was relatively small, in that a large part of it *is* still standing. Around it are memorials to various groups who died. (A couple of blocks away there is a memorial to the Koreans who died in the blast. More than ten percent of the deaths were Korean slave laborers brought to Hiroshima.)

Across the river from the dome is the Peace Park with the Hiroshima Peace Museum. This was the most crowded sight we had seen, with hordes of schoolchildren brought here. One presumes the purpose is to teach them peace, though they seemed totally unaffected by what they were seeing. (One book said that back in the militaristic period of the 1930s, schoolchildren were all taught how to perform seppuku in case it became necessary. This is an improvement.) The museum constantly asks for the elimination of nuclear weapons, but fails to take into account the fact that destroying the weapons will not destroy the knowledge of how to make them.

After hearing so much about how the Japanese only selectively remember World War II, I was curious to see what the museum said. Of course, I could read only the English translations (and this was the one place where everything was translated into English), but there were several quotes of interest. On the one hand, it says, "In 1941, a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor hurtled Japan into the Pacific War (World War II)." This somewhat glosses over the fact that it was Japan who launched this attack, not some third party hurtling Japan into the war. And it claims there were three reasons that the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: to avoid even heavier casualties from an invasion; to win the war before the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and hence would have some political power in the Pacific settlement (the Soviet Union had agreed to declare war on Japan within four months of Germany's surrender, and did in fact do so before the atomic bombs were dropped); and to test the effects of the atomic bomb as a weapon. (It also claims that the decision had been made very early to use the atomic bomb on Japan. Perhaps, but the developers believed it would be used against Germany, and it might have been, had the European war not ended when it did.)

On the other hand, it does mention that Japan imported Korean and Chinese slave labor, does talk about the Rape of Nanjing (though it says estimates vary on the number of deaths), and says, "But we must never forget that nuclear weapons are the fruits of war. Japan, too, with colonization policies and wars of aggression, inflicted incalculable and irreversible harm on the peoples of many countries. We must reflect on war and the causes of war, not just nuclear weapons." But naturally much of the museum is about the horrors of atomic war, with photographs of radiation and blast victims (hibakusha), charred and twisted everyday objects found after the blast, and poems such as this one by Tamiki Hara:

"This is a human being?
Look how the atom bomb changed it.
Flesh swells fearfully.
All men and women take one shape.
The voice that trickles from swollen lips
On the festering, charred-black face
Whispers the thin words,
This, this is a human being.
This is the face of a human being."

There was also a museum shop, but not full of junky tourist souvenirs: the books were all about the blast, atomic weapons, or radiation, and the T-shirts all had peace or disarmament messages. Strangely, they did not have a copy of the best-known (at least in the West) manga about Hiroshima, Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* (and its sequels *Barefoot Gen: The Day After* and *Barefoot Gen: Life After the Bomb*). (We saw these later in the English-language section of the Maruzen Bookstore in Kyoto.)

In the Peace Park there is also a statue to Sadako, a girl who was two years old in 1945, survived the blast, but developed leukemia ten years later. She attempted to fold a thousand origami cranes, since the legend is that if you fold a thousand cranes you will get your wish. Almost every book says she folded only 665 before she died, and that her classmates folded the other 335 afterwards, but the museum claims she folded 1440. In any case, her classmates had a statue erected to her of a girl holding a representation of a folded crane, and all the school groups bring cranes (a thousand, perhaps?) to lay at the foot of the statue. They also all sing what seems to be the same song as part of the presentation, though I have no idea what it was saying. There are piles of cranes strung on string at the statue, and the groups have to stand in line to do their presentations.

In the park, we met a young man from near Hiroshima who wanted to talk to us. But he didn't ask about the bomb (which I had heard is what people in Hiroshima ask Americans about). He wanted to know if America was really as dangerous as it seemed on television and in the movies. We tried to explain that some parts are but most are not, and that they have to make the shows exciting somehow. (I will note in passing that Japan seems to have an almost crime-free society with an emphasis on family values, without having a need for school prayer or a call for a "Christian nation." It's not completely crime-free, though; people still lock their bicycles when they leave them on the street.) He also asked about whether everyone in America had to have insurance against lawyers. Well, maybe not against lawyers, but it is true that we seem to have a lot of insurance *because of* lawyers.

We walked toward Hiroshima-jo Castle. On the way we stopped in a computer store and looked at the books on the first (ground) floor. There were Japanese translations of all the O'Reilly Associates UNIX books; the one I looked at (on TCP/IP) was ¥4700, not that much more than in the United States. (This will be meaningless to the non-computer people who read this.) Hiroshima-jo Castle is, naturally, a reconstruction, the original having been destroyed August 6, 1945. It is nice enough, I suppose, but does not have the multiple floors and hence graceful and beautiful look of a castle such as Matsumoto-jo Castle. The Lonely Planet guide said that there was an admission of ¥300, and inside a display about the construction of the castle using laser effects. Well, there was no admission but no display either; maybe it was moved to a museum. The inside was empty and afforded little of interest other than noticing that the cross-beams were already cracking.

By now it was about 15:30 and we decided to go to Miyajima, west of Hiroshima. There is supposedly a tram from the center of town, but it would take fifty minutes and we had no idea where to catch it. So we took a tram back to the train station (saving ourselves the problem of negotiating our way back there), and took the local JR train instead, which took twenty-five minutes. This actually stops at Miyajima-guchi, which is the departure point for ferries to Miyajima, an island just off the coast. Leaving the train station, we immediately saw the JR ferry terminal two blocks in front of us. We walked down and used our JapanRail Passes for the ten-minute ferry ride to the island. (There were no actual rails that I could see.)

The Lonely Planet guide describes Miyajima as a tourist trap, and there were a lot of shops selling souvenirs and some special star-shaped cookies. You could watch the cookie assembly lines running, with a mechanical brush oiling the molds, then another machine pouring the batter in, then the molds being run through a heating area, and finally the cookies being mechanically removed. For the more nature-inclined, there were deer wandering around the town and the path to the shrine.

Oh, yes, the shrine. You've seen pictures of it; Itsukushima-jinja Shrine is one of Japan's most photographed attractions. Its most notable characteristic is that the giant orange torii gate sits in the middle of the water. Well, in the pictures it does. This is really true only at high tide, and at low tide the gate sits in the mud. (If you walk to the gate at low tide and throw a pebble up onto the top and it stays there, your prayer will be answered.) We arrived somewhere in between, so there was water around the gate, if not all the way to the shrine.

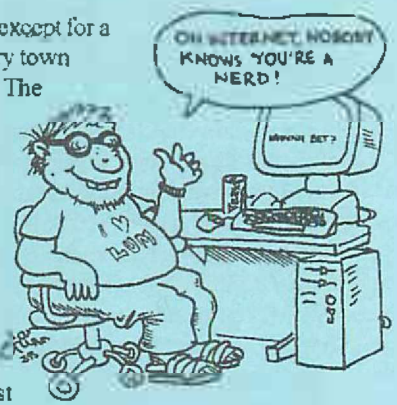
Even with all the souvenir shops, Miyajima was very peaceful. Of course, the fact that we arrived at the end of the day may have had something to do with this—the shrine closes at sunset and most people do not stay on the island. In fact, when we walked back to the pier from the island, most of the shops were already closed. But sunset may be the best time to see the "floating torii" (at sunrise, the mountains on the island would put it in shadow). It's true we didn't have time to go into the shrine, but the scenic beauty of the area with the temple horns blowing in the background was worth the trip.

We took the ferry back to the mainland (which as Mark points out is just another island) and had a quick dinner of squid and yakitori. There were not a lot of places to choose from, and the place we picked had a ¥200 cover charge per person, which with the tax brought dinner to ¥1771 (meals over a certain price are taxed). This is the only place we found with a cover charge.

On the Shinkansen back from Hiroshima there were some loud Louisianans who were obviously here on business and trying to figure out if they could open their sake without a corkscrew. I offered them mine if they needed one, but sake comes in screw-top bottles. After a while they mellowed out and settled down; their Japanese host seemed to take it all in stride. Random note: one really useful item to have on a trip is a compass. Even in the city it's invaluable for orienting yourself with the maps, especially on cloudy days (of which we have many).

October 18, 1996: Himeji

Thanks to the Internet, we had a great day today. We decided not to rush out first thing, so we didn't catch the train until 9:21. (Well, if the Japanese railways are that precise, I suppose I should be.) We stopped for pork buns on the way (to eat on the train) and this meant we had to rush to catch this train. Luckily we didn't get lost on the way to tracks, which is easy to do in Kyoto Station. They're remodeling it "to serve you better," though I doubt we'll ever see the benefit of it. (The airport in Guayaquil, Ecuador, had a similar sign in 1986, and they haven't served us any better since either.) We talked to a couple of other tourists. Most people seem to spend more time in Kyoto, with only a day or two in Tokyo, but so far I have to say that Tokyo seems far more interesting than Kyoto. Admittedly, we haven't had much time here, so my opinion could change.



It clouded up as we rode and was cloudy when we arrived in Himeji, but luckily it didn't rain (except for a couple of drops). We walked along the main street, observing the statues erected there. It's not every town that has a statue of a nude saxophone player on its main street. In fact, I suspect this is the only one. The main attraction in Himeji is Himeji-jo Castle (¥500). This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I am reminded of Mark's article about the (supposed) "Seven Wonders of the World Committee" that determines what the current Seven Wonders are. Well, UNESCO seems to be something very like that, except they have no numerical limit. I had a list of UNESCO sites and checked it before we left, but nothing in Japan was on it. This is because the list was a couple of years old. Japan did not sign the Agreement of World Heritage until 1992, and it was after that that Himeji-jo Castle and Horyu-ji Temple were listed as World Heritage sites. (And the ancient sites of Kyoto as well, it turns out.)

Again, an English tour was available. An old man gave the tour, but there was also a young woman trainee who gave a couple of sections. I don't know if they are employed by the castle or just volunteers. I would have thought volunteers, but it seems strange to have a trainee volunteer. On the other hand, maybe this is how people practice their English. Although students spend many years learning English in school here, I understand there is more concentration on reading it, and the result is that most can't speak it even after all that. (I know, Americans are terrible at other languages. But they don't spend years learning them in school, nor do they have much contact with them outside of school. The exception would be Spanish, since at least in some areas one can get Spanish-language television and radio.)

Himeji-jo Castle was built at the beginning of the 17th century by Terumasa Ikeda, son-in-law to Ieyasu Tokugawa. (I will leave the historical details to Mark, since I'm sure he's covered them completely.) We first saw the Long Corridor, which was a long defensive building along the western edge of the castle grounds, but also contained a "Cosmetic Tower" for Princess Sen, whose dowry helped build it. On one of the buildings after this, the guide pointed out a cross on the end of one of the roof tiles, the only evidence that one of the earlier daimyos (lords) here had been a Christian. (Though the main castle was built in the early 17th century, other buildings were constructed earlier, and even though they may have been demolished, parts of them were re-used.)

We also saw the "Oil Wall," made of clay mixed with rice water. All the other walls are of white plaster and have been restored many times; this wall is over four hundred years old. The stone wall around the base of the main keep (donjon) incorporates all sorts of stones including old tombstones, stone coffins, millstones, and stone lanterns. Apparently getting all the stone necessary was a problem. There is a legend that the millstone was donated by an old woman when she heard that the castle was being built, but this is not true, because that part of the wall is much newer. But it's a nice patriotic legend to get people to sacrifice for their country.

The donjon itself appears to have five stories from the outside but really has six and a basement (much like Matsumoto-jo Castle). One of the main pillars is original; another was replaced only during the restoration work done from 1956 to 1964. The stairs are very steep (originally there were no stairs, only ladders). The guide implied that some of the castles had elevators installed during restoration/renovation work, but this wasn't one of them. (Needless to say, this means that this castle is *not* handicapped accessible. Most everything else is. Although temples and shrines usually have a few steps, they often have a ramp as well. Not only do all the main sidewalks in major cities have curb cuts, they also have a strip of raised "stripes" down the center for guiding blind people using canes, and at the corners the stripes become dots as a warning. The same is true in the Tokyo subway, which also has Braille at the ends of the handrails on the steps to and from the platforms.) This donjon had a display of materials relating to the people who lived in the castle (this one was used for living). Its atmosphere was somewhat hampered by the loudspeaker constantly reminding people in both Japanese and English not to smoke. (Fire is obviously a real danger.)

The Lonely Planet guide book says the "tour" takes about an hour and a half. By this it probably means the "route," since it doesn't really talk about having an English-language tour. (There is an English-language brochure with map and explanation if you don't want the tour.) Not only castles here have specific paths to follow, but museums do as well. (I suppose it's possible that this is true only of history museums, though the Asian art building of the Tokyo National Museum had a specific route.) I'm sure one can interpret this in terms of the Japanese emphasis on conformity and the group, where in the West we are more geared toward letting people wander about on their own as their individual wishes dictate, but I'll leave that to others.

At any rate, the book said an hour and a half, the guide said at the beginning it would take two hours, and what with all Mark's questions and subsequent discussion, it actually took three. I think the guide was not used to Americans who already knew who all the main historical figures were, even after seeing *Shogun*. (Of course, *Shogun* changed all the names for some reason.) Speaking of which, parts of this castle have been used for filming historical films and television shows, including *Shogun*.

After the castle, we went to the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of History, which had a special exhibit of archaeological finds from the area. It was a nice exhibit, but it overlapped a lot of what we had seen in the Tokyo National Museum, and for us served mostly to raise the

usual admission fee of ¥200 to ¥800. This museum has a nice section on Japanese castles, with cutaway scale models and descriptive illustrations (not a lot of English, but not a lot was necessary).

By the time we finished with this museum, it was after 15:00 and we hadn't eaten lunch. We walked back to the train station, and on the way found a place to have lunch (dinner, really, by the time we ate). This made stopping in Kobe on the way back not worth it; our main interest was the synagogue, but we wouldn't get there until after sundown on a Friday night, and we weren't planning on attending services. So we didn't rush, but stopped at a Baskin-Robbins for ice cream. Mark had "odura cream," which turned out to be red bean swirl, and I had chopped chocolate. They also had green tea ice cream, and pumpkin pudding ice cream. I'm sure the latter (the October Flavor of the Month) was invented for the United States, but in Japan they celebrate Halloween (we saw displays of Halloween costumes) and Christmas, even though the vast majority are not Christian. This is yet another example of how things are the same as back home.

We came thinking we would at least get to miss all the campaigning for the presidential election back home, but we merely swapped it for the campaigning for the elections in Japan. The whole time, there were trucks with loudspeakers cruising the streets pushing various candidates. Of course, we had no idea what was said.

We returned via Shinkansen and stopped in a manga store on the way back to the Takase. Manga are often described as Japanese comic books, but there's more to it than that. There seem to be two kinds. One is the large (really large—eight and a half by eleven inches, or slightly smaller than A4, and up to two inches or five centimeters thick) monthly magazines, which have five or six stories printed on cheap newsprint. The other is published in a book format, and is usually devoted to more serious works. In the United States we are starting to see more manga-influenced works, where they are often called "graphic novels." I mentioned earlier *Barefoot Gen*, which was just a translation of a Japanese manga. But a work such as *Maus* by Art Spiegelmann seems to have been at least somewhat inspired by manga, in that it tries to use the combination of text and illustrations usually referred to as "comic books" to tell a serious story. (For more information on comic books and manga, see Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*.)

Most of the manga were incomprehensible to us, even with the illustrations, but there were three of interest: *Les Miserables*, *Heidi*, and *Jane Eyre*. *Les Miserables* (listed on the cover as *Les Miserable*—the French here is as fractured as the English) is a little over two hundred pages, so obviously somewhat abridged, but makes an interesting souvenir. I wondered if they have Sherlock Holmes manga. (I never did find any Holmes manga. And anywhere I saw this series of Western-inspired manga, they were the same three.) Random note: Western actors appear in advertisements here, particularly the actor from *The Professional* and Quentin Tarantino. You also see URLs in advertisements here; they are frequently the only Romanji in the ad.

October 19, 1996: Nara

Today was our day trip to Nara. Several people suggested spending more time in Nara than just a day, but I think we have decided we are city people rather than temple and shrine people, and so we found a day in Nara to be just about right.

Breakfast was something different this morning: a green tea and red bean muffin, a bran muffin, and a piece of "custard bread" (what appeared to be a thick slice of bread with a custard filling). We took the JR Line to Nara. There are private lines that are a bit faster, but with the JapanRail Passes this was free. (I suppose that's a bit of a drawback to the pass; you find getting places sometimes takes longer. Luckily, it's not usually a very big difference.) This was a local train complete with children in uniform going to school (I guess they have a six-day schedule). While there are school uniforms, this doesn't seem to include shoes, for which anything goes (conservative uniform with bright pink running shoes, and so on), and the rest of the dress code must be equally loose: I saw one student in uniform with a lip ring.

We arrived in Nara and walked down the main street to Nara-koen Park. All of Nara is dotted with temples and shrines, but the major ones are mostly concentrated in Nara-koen Park. Our first stop was Kofuku-ji Temple, which includes a five-storied pagoda dating from 1426. (There is also a three-storied one dating from 1123.) One can't go in, however, so the main attraction seems to be the "tame" deer that wander around. There are vendors who sell a package of "deer cookys" for ¥150 so you can feed the deer. But it's a funny thing: though the deer will wander by the vendor without trying to eat the biscuits from the table, as soon as a tourist buys some, whammo! The deer swarm the poor soul, butting against him (luckily their horns are trimmed), drooling on him, and trying to eat not only the biscuits but often his clothing as well. The best approach seems to be to throw down the biscuits and run!

By the way, this is another example of a price change from when the Lonely Planet guide was printed: they quoted ¥100 as the price of the biscuits. I think the English label "deer cookys" was added to some of the stands because gaijin tourists were buying the biscuits and eating them themselves! As for the antlers, every Sunday in October they have a sort of deer rodeo when the deer are herded into enclosures and have their antlers sawn off. There were signs all over the place advertising this, for only ¥500 admission.

We next walked to the Nara National Museum, not really excited about seeing another museum, and so we were not entirely displeased to discover that the museum was closed while they were setting up a special exhibition to start in a few days. (This actually worked out well, as we were able to get to Horyu-ji Temple, which we would not have had time for otherwise.)

Our next stop—and apparently everybody's stop—was the Todai-ji Temple. While this has several buildings, it is really popular only for its Daibutsu-den (¥400), which is the building housing the Great Buddha. This building is the largest wooden building in the world, and the Buddha inside is the largest bronze statue in the world. Although it is larger than the one at Kamakura, it is not as impressive, probably because it is enclosed in a dark hall which makes it seem smaller. The vital statistics about this Buddha statue are printed on the ticket in case anyone wants them. (Most tickets here are informational. For example, castle tickets will have little maps of the castle on the back, labeled in Japanese.)

The one piece of entertainment that the Daibutsu-den has that Kamakura lacks is the "Tunnel of Enlightenment." At the base of one of the pillars towards the back of the hall is a tunnel through it, about a third of a meter square and two-thirds of a meter long. The legend is that if you can squeeze through the tunnel, you will attain enlightenment. I tried, but couldn't quite fit. (I had problems with my shoulders, but afterwards noticed that some people tried it with one arm pointed above their head and one by their side, thereby tilting their shoulders to minimize the width.) There was one woman who did squeeze through, and the book says children do it all the time. I suspect in a couple of

hundred years it will be a lot easier to get through; it's wood, so all these people squeezing through are wearing down the wood and widening the hole. Of course, before then they may close it, because as the hole widens, the pillar becomes weaker.

The books warned of hordes of schoolchildren with guides with megaphones, and there were some, but it wasn't as crowded as, say, Hiroshima. Maybe there were fewer because it was Saturday. There were souvenir shops lining the path to the Todai-ji Temple, selling the sort of junky souvenirs that we usually assume only Americans buy. There were stuffed deer toys, deer hand puppets, toy samurai swords, key chains with pictures of the temple, and so on. Two of the odder items were little Buddha hand puppets (I doubt they sell little hand puppets of Jesus at St. Peter's in Rome), and a James Dean noren. (A noren is the small divided curtain that hangs outside a shop when it is open.)

Nara-koen Park itself was reasonably busy but quiet. The only real crowds were at Todai-ji Temple, and there were no boom boxes or noisy groups. (The subways and trains are also very quiet. They invented the Walkman here, and people use it.) We got a few sprinkles, but no real rain. Our last stop in the park was Kashuga Taisha Shrine, notable more for the thousands of stone lanterns lining the paths to it than for anything I could notice about the shrine itself.

On the way back to the train station we had lunch: curry udon, zaru-soba, and another soba dish. We had thought we were ordering squid ramen, but what looked like squid in the plastic food turned out to be scallions sliced diagonally. Oh, well, it was good anyway. If you're a picky eater, this is not the place for you unless you either read or speak Japanese, or are on an unlimited expense account and can eat in restaurants catering to foreign tourists. (They do have McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and other Western chains. I don't consider that eating.)

We took the train a few stops farther down to Horyuji. Having the kanji for the various towns and sights in the Lonely Planet guide is helpful, because you can always show it to someone if your Japanese pronunciation is bad. But even more, you can use it to read the signs in train stations and at bus stops when they aren't in Romanji. Using this we found the train to Horyuji and the bus to the temple there without too much difficulty. The temple is about a two-kilometer walk from the bus stop, but the route is not clear, and the roads are narrow and have heavy traffic—the bus is definitely safer. Although the bus announcement at the beginning said in English that this was the bus (number 72) to Horyu-ji Temple, the stop itself was announced only in Japanese.

Remember what I said about Himeji-jo being a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site? Well, apparently the Horyu-ji Temple area is another one in Japan; I simply must get a more up-to-date list. Horyu-ji Temple was founded in 607 by Prince Shotoku. The special exhibit in the Tokyo National Museum was of the treasures of Horyu-ji and featured a lot about Prince Shotoku, but of course we didn't appreciate it then, or even know we were coming here. There were signs all over saying there was no photography allowed. There were also tourists all over photographing away, including folks with tripods taking group photos of schoolchildren. I guess the no-photography rule applied mostly to inside the buildings.

The site is divided into three sections (all covered by one ¥1000 admission). The Western precinct contains the main buildings, the main hall, a lecture hall, and a five-storied pagoda that one brochure says is the oldest wooden building in the world (though from the other books, I get the impression it may be just the oldest pagoda in the world). The buildings house various statues and images but, except for the lecture hall, cannot be entered and are not lit, so seeing what is inside them through the doors shaded by eaves is very difficult. (I suspect shining a flashlight in would be frowned upon.)

The Treasure House contains more statues and other objects, these in a museum setting that makes them much easier to see and appreciate. Some of what we saw here were pictorial biographies of Prince Shotoku painted on screens. I suppose one could think of this sort of thing as the predecessor of manga. They also had something which was labeled a "National Treasure": "Tamamushi Ornamented Beetles' Feathers." I didn't think beetles had feathers. The eastern area is mostly notable for the Yumedono, or eight-sided building where Prince Shotoku is believed to have meditated.

Getting back should have been straightforward. There was a big sign outside the temple that said to go back to the station, and catch the number 71 bus at stop 2 (there were three different stops near the temple). We went to stop 2, but when the stationmaster asked where we were going and we told him, he indicated we should wait at stop 3, across the street and a block down. This didn't sound right, but we went there anyway. Sure enough, fifteen minutes later I saw a bus pull up to stop 2, and was trying to see the number on it when I saw the stationmaster running down the street toward us gesturing for us to take this bus (which was actually number 71). It did take us to the station, but we just missed the train. Had we stayed at stop 2, we probably would have made it, but the trains run every ten or fifteen minutes here anyway. We changed at Nara for the train back to Kyoto.

It was too late to stop in Uji to see the Byodo-in Temple, being about 18:00, so we looked at its image on the ten-yen coin instead. We then got into a discussion of whether we should just hop off the train at some stop and see what was there. I was for the cautious approach, not knowing how late the trains ran and also not very impressed with the opportunities afforded by the towns we were seeing. But I suppose we should have, just to see what one was like. We ended up riding back to Kyoto and eating at Osho, a Chinese restaurant that appeared to have a dining room upstairs and seats at a counter in the kitchen. We ate at the latter and had gyoza (two orders), mar po dofu (a spicy tofu dish), and something else (I can't remember what Mark ordered). This came to ¥1550, not a bad price considering the quantity.

Back in the room we tried again for the supposed English-language movie, but the closest was Jackie Chan's *Rumble in the Bronx*, dubbed in Japanese and retitled *Red Bronx*. My feet hurt every evening and that's wearing my walking shoes. (I think the problem is that the heel padding in them has no "give" any more. I brought old ones, and will abandon them here.) The slip-on shoes I brought, because they would be easy to take off and put on, are not getting much use. One reason is that in addition to all the walking, we are climbing a lot of stairs, either at temples or in train stations.

October 20, 1996: Hikone and Nagoya

Today was our last day on our JapanRail Pass, so we traveled again. I started with a breakfast of a green tea muffin; Mark had a pork bun and a vegetable cutlet bun. The bakery where I got the muffin has a bag that says "thank you" in dozens of different languages but it is somewhat out of date, listing Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as being part of the Soviet Union and Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia.

We rode the Shinkansen to Maibara. As I said before, although they give announcements in both Japanese and English, they give more in Japanese, such as all the "change here for such-and-such lines" announcements—and I'm starting to recognize some of the Japanese (at least the names of the other lines). The station at Maibara was the most poorly labeled station of the ones we've been at, with very little

Romanji. And the Lonely Planet guide misled us as well, claiming that the Tokaido Line went to Hikone from Maibara when actually it's the Biwako Line. (Lake Biwa-ko is the main attraction in the area.) By asking around in broken Japanese, I was eventually able to find the right track and train and we got to Hikone. True to our luck, there was a big bicycle race going on (which made getting to the castle a bit more difficult), and renovation of the donjon occurring, which made seeing the main keep impossible. But having come this far, we did want to see the rest of the castle (¥500, with no reduction because of the renovation work).

A sign at the entrance indicated that the castle's five towers were named as "Important Cultural Assets" in 1951, the main tower as a "National Treasure" in 1952, the complete castle area as a "Special Place of Historical Interest" in 1956, and the stable as an "Important Cultural Asset" in 1963. The castle is also on the list of "Hundred Best Sightseeing Places" ("Meigetsu Hikone no Kojo," "The beauty of Hikone Castle in the Moonlight." is one of Lake Biwa's "Eight Famous Scenes"), and on June 5, 1996, the Environment Agency selected "A Hundred Soundscapes in Japan" to preserve, including the time-keeping bell (Jihogane) and chirping of insects in Hikone Castle. Who decides all these? And is there some rank-ordering? Is an "Important Cultural Asset" more important than a "Special Place of Historical Interest"? Or is it like National Parks and National Monuments at home, which are created by different groups of people? (National Parks are created by the President; National Monuments by Congress.)

As I said, the main tower was closed, and surrounded by scaffolding. It seems now that at least one sight per trip for us is surrounding by scaffolding. Mark claims it is a major infestation of scaffolding moths. The last renovation of the tower was in 1957, which seems fairly recent for it to require another one now, but I guess not. We did not get to see the view of Lake Biwa from the top floor, but there was a spot on the grounds that had a nice view. It was very windy, and the water was quite choppy.

We walked over to the garden, passing a monument to Seiichi Funabashi's *Life of a Cherry Blossom*, a novel about Tairo Naosuke Ii, who signed the Japanese-US Trade and Amity Treaty in 1858 and was later assassinated by isolationist elements. The garden itself was okay, but nothing special. Lunch on the way back to the station was ramen for Mark, and soba with green beans for me.

It was easier finding our way out of Hikone than to it. Not only was the station smaller, but it was also better-labeled. When we originally posted our itinerary to the Net, we had listed a day in Nagoya. A couple of people said not to waste time there, so we had added Himeji and Hikone and dropped Nagoya, but some things took less time and we ended up with time on our JapanRail Pass that we hated to waste, so since it was only about 13:00, we decided to go to Nagoya for the afternoon. Nagoya is a big city, and both the station and its well-labeled subway system are reminiscent of Tokyo's. It has a castle, which we had been warned was a reconstruction, but since many of the castles have been renovated and were still interesting, we decided to see it anyway.

Nagoya-jo Castle (¥500) is very impressive-looking on the outside, but inside it looks just like an office building with green marble or modern wood-paneled walls, marble floors, fluorescent lighting, and an elevator. It is basically a museum with a fancy exterior. But in addition, two floors were closed for remodeling and another floor and a half were devoted to a special exhibition with separate admission. This left the sixth floor (an observation deck with a souvenir stand and much bigger windows than the original castle had), the fifth floor, half the second floor, and the ground floor for us to see, with some exhibits and models of the original castle and other buildings. And this is Nagoya's main attraction. I have to agree with the Net—skip Nagoya.

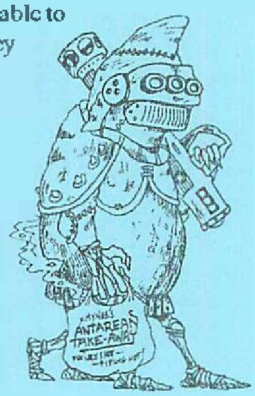
There was also a statue to Kito Kiyomasa, and what is referred to as "Kiyomasa's Stone Drawing." He was a lord who wanted to show his enthusiasm for the building of the castle, so when his peasants were pulling the big stone he was contributing for the foundation, he stood on the stone and waved his fan in encouragement, while personally leading the work chant. I've seen managers like this, and Scott Adams would have a field day with this in his "Dilbert" comic strip.

We walked part way back to the station, but nothing much was open and it was cold and windy, so we took the subway back, then walked around the station area looking for dinner. We found a place near the station for dinner (Meshiya) where the proprietor had a curled ponytail, a long graying beard, and a skullcap, and the menu was entirely in Japanese. We ordered two dishes at random, and got stir-fried beef and fried whole fish (not really big, but not the breaded stuff most people think of as fried fish either).

After dinner we took the train back—our last train on the JapanRail Pass. The JapanRail Pass cost us US$273 each, and I calculated we made US$659 worth of travel each on it. Of course, a lot of that was because we had the JapanRail Pass. Without it, we probably would have done day trips to Nikko, Hiroshima, and Nara (and *maybe* Himeji) and left it at that. Still, the trip from Tokyo to Kyoto, and a round-trip from Kyoto to Hiroshima, covers the cost of a one-week JapanRail Pass, so if you can do those within a seven-day period, it's worth getting. (I should note that there are also cheaper ways to get between some places. For long distances, time becomes a factor, and to some extent on a vacation, time is money.) We were tired and it was cold, so we were going to take the bus back to the Takase, but we would have had to stand at the stop for fifteen minutes, in which time we could be most of the way back, so we walked.

October 21, 1996: Kinkakuji Temple and Ryoanji Temple (Kyoto)

Today we had to change hotels. Luckily, the logistics were not as bad as they might have been. We had been able to get only five nights in the Riverside Takase, so had booked the remaining six nights in the Ryokan Seiki. Though they are listed as being in two different areas of Kyoto, the areas border each other, and it was only about a twenty-minute walk from the Takase to the Seiki. Even with our luggage this wasn't bad, but it was morning and we were fresh. We thought we might have to leave our luggage at the front desk at the Seiki, or worse yet, have to take it to the station and check it, but there was a room free even though check-in wasn't officially until 15:00. So we dropped our bags off and immediately headed out to see Kyoto.



Our first stop was the Tourist Information Center (again). Now that we knew there were two big festivals on Tuesday, we wanted more information on when and where they were. We also got a slightly better map of the northern area of Kyoto, and not much help on whether Toei "Movieland" was worthwhile if we didn't understand Japanese. We then took the 206 bus to Kinkakuji Temple. This took about forty-five minutes, because we were in the southeastern area and it was in the northwest, but at least we got to see a lot of Kyoto on the way. The buses display the next stop on an electronic display at the front, as well as announcing it, and some of them include Romanji on the display and/or announcements in English of what sights are at or near this stop.

Kinkakuji Temple (¥400) is more accurately called Rokuon-ji Temple, and is also known as the Golden Pavilion. It is apparently also a World Cultural Heritage Site, or rather part of one: the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto. Maybe these were named after the Horyu-ji pamphlet was printed, because that said there were only two such sites in Japan. It has also been named a "Special Beauty Site" (whatever that means). The Golden Pavilion is a reconstruction, since a monk obsessed with it burned the original down in 1950. Well, actually, that one was also a reconstruction of one that had previously burnt down (at least according to one person). Yukio Mishima wrote about this in his novel *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*. There is a fine reflection in the mirror pond (though not as good as the reflections in some of the Norwegian lakes we've seen). The Lonely Planet guide claims the gold-covering had been extended to the first floor during the reconstruction, but if so, the renovation in 1987 reversed that and only the second and third floors are covered in gold. Perhaps to prevent further fires, visitors are not allowed in the pavilion.

On leaving Kinkakuji Temple, we walked towards Ryoan-ji Temple, stopping for a Chinese lunch along the way. Gerald Masan says, "A visit to one of the lesser known, remote temples will give a deeper impression of the temples. A visit to Ryoan-ji at 11:00 AM will give you a deeper impression of Japanese package tour buses." While an impression of the temples is a good thing to get, part of getting a feel for modern Japanese culture would include getting an impression of Japanese package tour buses. In fact, one of my favorite books on tourism is Maxine Feifer's *Tourism in History*, which discusses (among other things) the birth and rise of the package tour. In any case, Ryoan-ji (¥400) was not nearly as crowded as either of the Daibutsus, or as the Hiroshima Peace Museum. And the loudspeaker announcement explaining the garden was fairly easy to tune out, being entirely in Japanese.

The garden in Ryoan-ji Temple is the most famous Zen garden in Japan (or in the world, for that matter). It is not what Westerners think of as a garden at all, consisting of a raked gravel bed with fifteen rocks placed in it, surrounded by a wall. The rocks may represent islands in a sea, though some see them as tiger cubs crossing a stream or other less likely interpretations. One thing making it complicated is that the rocks now have moss growing on them, but when the garden was created in 1450, they probably did not have moss. And moss makes the rocks appear more like islands (and less like tigers) than bare rocks would. Looking at the garden, I knew I was supposed to get some sort of Zen feeling. But instead I found myself thinking, "Is the raking of the pebbles fixed? How?" and "What does a Zen garden mean, especially to someone typing on a palmtop in it?"

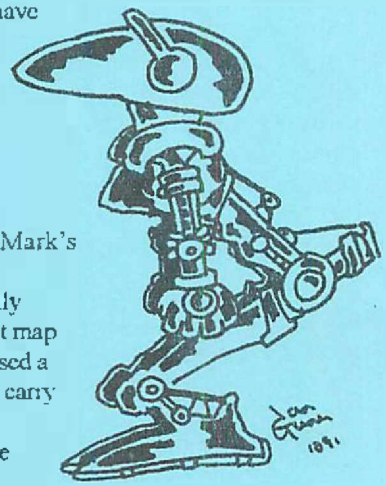
On leaving, I got confused as to which direction we wanted to take the bus in, and so we managed to be on the wrong side of the street just as our bus came by. Another one, which we did catch, came by fifteen minutes later, but it's things like this that make everything take longer. We took that bus to a stop north of Gion, and walked a long way—a very long way—to Sanjusangendo Temple. Distances that don't look so far on the map are, and the streets are not very interesting. Maybe we're just missing the fascinating byways of Kyoto, but I found walking in Tokyo much more interesting. The streets have more vitality to them, and there seems to be more of interest, where here the streets seem mostly residential or small businesses.

As with all temples, there were "No Smoking" signs all over. If nothing else, the temples give you a chance to get away from tobacco smoke. The Japanese love to smoke (a fact I find somewhat ironic given how they talk about all the cancers caused by the atomic bomb), and smoke everywhere. The restaurants here do not have non-smoking areas, at least not the restaurants we've been going to.

Sanjusangendo Temple (¥500) is known for its 1001 statues of the Thousand-Armed Kannon (Goddess of Mercy), arranged in ten rows of fifty each on either side of the central worship area, with the last one behind the main altar. These statues were all individually carved and are replacements for the originals, which were destroyed in a fire in 1249; it is estimated that it may have taken a hundred years to create them all. They all seem pretty dusty now, probably because they are so close together and have protruding rays from the heads that they are difficult to get to in order to dust.

They are called "Thousand-Armed," but each has only forty arms. Apparently each arm saves twenty-five worlds, making a thousand. (Jews will recognize the logic; it is almost precisely the same as one reads in the Passover Seder discussing the number of plagues visited on the Egyptians at the Red Sea.) Along with the 1001 Kannons are twenty-eight Nijuhachibushu (spirits subordinated to Kannon): Varuna, Narayana, Sri-devi, Kimnara, Mahamayuri, Maha-brahman, Gandhrva, Purna-bhadra, Sagara-naga-raja, Mani-bhadra, Kumbhira, Gobujo, Hariti Dhrtarastra, Virudhaka, Virupaksa, Vaisuravana Garuda, Maha-bala, Nanga-naja-raga, Vasu, Mahesvara, Vikarala, Asura, Sakra-devendra, Sanjaya, Purna-bhadra, Mahoraga, Vajra-pani, Vayu. It's probably just as well we don't read Japanese and that there was no English here—this would have taken us forever, since each Nijuhachibushu had a descriptive plaque. Again, this temple is misnamed. Rengeoin is the whole complex, while Sanjusangendo is just the main hall.

We picked up some food at Lawson's, and returned to the Seiki. The room is our smallest yet: a six-tatami room. When the futons are unrolled there isn't much room left at all. There is hot water and tea bags, and a free television (the Takase had a coin-operated one). There are also a half dozen hangers. I did the accumulated laundry, happy to have a working dryer. Except it wasn't. Apparently it had no heat, so running it did very little in terms of drying clothes. We hoped that the laundry dried by the morning, since I had foolishly washed *all* our socks (and all my shirts but one). It's hard to hang up this much laundry with only six hangers and very little furniture.



October 22, 1996: Imperial Palace and Festival of the Ages (Kyoto)

Disaster strikes! Lawson's was out of pork buns! Well, okay, not disaster, but a crimp in Mark's breakfast plans. (I had a raisin bun in the room.)

We took the 202 bus from Gojozaka near the Seiki, but managed to overshoot the stop we really wanted by one. (The problem is that the bus map doesn't indicate the streets very well, and the street map doesn't label the bus stops. This worked out for the best, though, because on the walk back we passed a 7-11 and got buns there. (I realize that 7-11 and Lawson's don't seem very Japanese, but what they carry is. Circle-K also has stores here.)

As we proceeded toward the Imperial Household Agency Office we saw them preparing for the Jidai Matsuri (Festival of the Ages) with traffic barriers and such. This is one of the major festivals in

Kyoto, held every October 22 to commemorate the founding of the city, and we just happened to be here for it. To tour the Imperial Palace, you don't just go and get a ticket, you have to apply for permission at the Imperial Household Agency Office at the Palace. You do this by filling out a form which asks for your name, age, and passport number. Then they stamp it "permitted" and that's that. I'm not sure the purpose of this, or if they ever refuse anyone (though supposedly these tours are granted for foreigners only, but I saw Japanese entering as we were leaving, so maybe it's just specific tours that are for non-Japanese).

Unlike many palace tours, this covers only the outside of the buildings. The buildings date from various eras, but are all quite old and rarely used except for ceremonial occasions. As the tour guide noted, the current Emperor would rather live in the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, which has electricity. One suspects it has been more modernized than just that. The guide told us something about the Palace, but as she was not speaking very loudly, it was hard to hear a lot of it. (Because these tours are only for foreigners, they are in English. If you understand a different language, you need to bring an interpreter.) She did explain a little of the symbolism of a Japanese garden, particularly of the tsukiyama ("hill garden") or chaniwa ("tea garden") types. There are three basic elements: stone, water, and trees. These represent respectively bone, blood, and flesh. In addition to these, there is the kare-sansui ("waterless stream") type of Ryoan-ji Temple. It is not clear how or if this symbolism translates to the kare-sansui; it would seem that would be a garden attacked by a vampire. In any case, flowers are not part of a traditional Japanese garden. Flowers do, however, play an important role in the art of ikebana, or flower-arranging, so they are not completely ignored.

One of the things about Japanese culture is that the traditional arts were so unlike those of other countries, even China and Korea, which influenced Japan heavily. These arts included ikebana, calligraphy (here there is a tie to China), chanoyu (the tea ceremony), origami, kabuki, Noh, haiku, and bonsai. Add to this the completely different clothing styles and domestic architecture, and you can see how the arrival of Perry's "Black Ships" was real culture shock on both sides. In contrast to this, we say now that the Japanese are busy inventing things and exporting them. But this is not new, what I've said notwithstanding. For example, people often cite Cervantes' *Don Quixote* as the first novel. Wrong—Lady Murasaki's *Tale of Genji* predates it by about six hundred years, or put another way, is almost twice as old.

After the tour (which took about forty minutes and was a bit of a let-down), we walked to the southern end of the Palace, where they were getting dressed in costume for the festival. We were at the southwest corner and saw quite a few costumes, but it appears that the area where most of the really elaborate costumes were being prepared was to the southeast. However, we were able to position ourselves at the very start of the parade route, right next to the reserved seats. It happened that Mark went over to the other side of the route just before the parade started and got stuck there, so he got a lot of pictures of the groups as they came across his field of view, while I got many head-on as they turned the corner—we couldn't have planned it better.

I was lucky, in that standing next to me was a woman from Boston who was a graduate student of Japanese history, and she was explaining the costumes and periods to someone else there. So not only did I have a front-row seat (albeit on gravel, not the most comfortable of seats), I also had a running commentary by a knowledgeable guide. I got to talking to the woman. Her name was Abby, and she was spending a year in Japan studying Japanese history before moving to Australia (she was originally from Boston). We talked a little about books about Japan, and she recommended a few: *Re-Creating: Japanese Women* (an anthology of articles; its sequel, *Re-Imaging: Japanese Women*, she said wasn't as good), *Musui's Story*, and Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto's *Daughter of a Samurai*. (I said I had already read *Tale of Genji*, and she also recommended Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book*.) I'm adding quite a lot to my reading list; whether I'll still be as interested in a year when I get to them is another story.

We then stopped for a quick (and somewhat late) lunch, and then took a bus back to Kyoto Station, from which we walked to Higashi Hongan-ji Temple. Higashi Hongan-ji Temple was built by Ieyasu Tokugawa. Well, he ordered it built. Other people did the actual work. Its main claim to fame seems to be a rope made of human hair, woven from hair donated by women when it was discovered that ordinary ropes were not strong enough to raise the beams to build it. Around the outside were several meditative poems, such as:

> "As long as the tomato aspires to be a tomato
> Surely something will come of it.
> It's when the tomato aspires to be a melon
> That it calls down grief upon itself."
> —Aida Mituwo

This poem can be interpreted two ways. It could mean either than a person must be true to their inner nature, or that a person should be satisfied with their position in life and not try to change it.

There was also a Fire Festival (Kurama-No-Hi-Matsuri) at the Yuki Shrine this evening, but we decided to skip it. First of all, we were tired. And secondly, it would take two hours to get out there (it's up in the mountains north of Kyoto) and longer to get back, and the Seiki locks its door at 23:00. (The festival is far enough out that it would be a little like being in New York City and going to a festival in Red Bank one evening.)

The shoe thing: I understand the idea of taking off your shoes when you come into a house. But putting on slippers seems like an unnecessary step, particularly since you have to take them off when you go into a tatami room, and change them for special bathroom (toilet) slippers when you go to the toilet. If you come back to your ryokan, drop off your coat, and go to the bathroom, you change your shoes six times by the time you're back in your room. On the other hand, this is one country where I can manage to get a really hot shower.

October 23, 1996: Nijojo Castle and The Ghost of April *(Kyoto)*

No buns again today, and they seem to be dismantling the bun case. This was a very low-key day, of the sort we could have used about halfway through the trip, but having it at all was good. We started by taking a bus to Nijo-jo Castle (another one of the "Historic Monuments of Old Kyoto" named as a "World Cultural Heritage Site") (¥500). The usual Japanese tour buses and hordes of schoolchildren were all over. (All the uniforms for the younger boys include short pants, by the way. I suspect they start wearing long pants after their coming-of-age ceremony, but I'm not sure.) At the ornate Kara-mon Gate, everyone was posing for pictures, and one schoolmaster with five boys in his group posed them in front of the gate and then proceeded to take pictures of them with each of six cameras!

We took advantage of the popularity of the castle by staying close to an English-language tour group (whether a standing tour group, or just people on a city tour wasn't clear), and listening to what the guide was saying through her megaphone. A lot of it was in the

handout (a fairly complete one in English), but not all. This castle, like some other buildings of the period, has "nightingale floors." These are specially designed floors which squeak (sounding like nightingales) when anyone walks on them. This means that enemies (including stealthy ones like ninja) can't sneak in quietly. This is accomplished by having clamps on the floorboards and nails holding the clamps in place. When someone walks on the boards, friction between the clamp and the nail causes the squeaking.

The wall (screen) paintings are also particularly notable, being 17th-century paintings of the Kano School (many done by the Kano brothers themselves). What the guide said that the handout didn't, is that some of the paintings are modern copies and that the originals are in museums. This is to protect them from fire and general environmental damage, and the plan is to move all the originals to museums eventually and replace them with copies. (I don't know if this includes the ceiling paintings, but I doubt it.) This is expected to take twenty-five years. Presumably the copies will be faithful to the originals, but that still seems like cheating. (One reason the originals have lasted as long as they did is that the castle wasn't used regularly, so there was much less smoke from candles and so on. And now the outer doors remain closed all the time to protect the paintings from light, dust, etc.)

While the paintings are excellent, the ones of tigers and leopards are amusing. Because there were no tigers or leopards in Japan in the 17th century, the painters had to imagine what the animals looked like from the trophy skins brought back from China and Korea. As with many such extrapolations, they guessed wrong. There was also damascene work around the walls featuring the three (heart-shaped) hollyhock leaves that are the Tokugawas' emblem, and panels between rooms consisting of cypress wood thirty centimeters thick with different views carved on the two sides.

Some of the rooms had mannequins set up in court dress, including lords in formal dress which included pants with legs over a meter and a half long—awkward, but according to the guide, if one of the lords tried to attack the shogun, others could trip him by stepping on his pants legs. This seems like an unlikely reason for this style. There were also gardens surrounding the castle. Actually, there had been a donjon (castle tower) at one point, but it burned down, so now this is really more just a palace than a castle (sort of the reverse of Matsumoto-jo Castle, where the palace part burned down, leaving only the donjon). The problem with the Seiki is that it's noisy. It has nightingale floors—and elephant occupants.

This all took about an hour and a half. We then started walking toward the Japan Foundation of Kyoto and looking for lunch. The best places to look for cheap restaurants seemed to be the covered shopping arcades. They are, I suppose the equivalent of malls, achieved by covering one of the narrower side streets for its entire length between main streets. The main difference between these and shopping malls is that cars and small trucks drive through these. The main problem is that it's not clear how to find them; they are scattered around, and none of the maps I have indicated them.

We walked by the Kongo Noh Stage to see if it would make sense to try to see a Noh play, but since everything there was posted in Japanese, we suspected that we wouldn't get very much from it. My understanding is that many modern Western dramatists have been influenced by Noh (alternatively spelled "No," sometimes with a bar over the "o"), especially Yeats and Beckett, and it would have been nice to see the original, but not if we didn't understand it at all.

One sees a lot of strange English around here. One phrase that shows up on a lot of children's clothes (it may be a brand-name for all I know) is "Hello Kitty." Another popular product is "Coffee Boss," which is a brand of canned coffee. We saw parodies of "Coffee Boss" noren and T-shirts for sale at some of the souvenir stands—they seem very fond of parody T-shirts here. So I tried some Coffee Boss. It's not the best of the canned coffee I've had here by any means; it's a bit watery. But we had some time to kill before the film at the Japan Foundation, so went into the Rokkaku-ji Temple, bought drinks, and sat on the benches there drinking and writing. Rokkaku-ji Temple isn't even listed in our books—Kyoto has far more temples than a guide book could cover, unless it was specifically focused on the temples of Kyoto. I don't know the story of this temple, but its current notable aspect seems to be its pigeons, which will swarm anyone who feeds them. (They were landing all over one woman who had some crumbs for them!) We also watched the calligraphers at the temple use an electric hair-dryer to dry the ink on the calligraphy that was being done there.

After this we walked over to the Japan Foundation of Kyoto. This seems to be set up to cater to foreigners, with English-language newspapers available for reading (our first chance to check up on news, and to see that Lucent's stock price had gone up). And they also have a film series Wednesday afternoons. October was devoted to "Fantastic World" (science fiction, fantasy, etc.); November would be "Crime Month." Today's film was *Shi-Gatsu Kaidan* (*The Ghost of April*). Other films this month were *Ginga Tetsudo 999* (*Galaxy Express 999*), *Gondola*, and *1999 Nen No Natsu-Yasumi* (*Summer Vacation: 1999*). All are shown with English subtitles and are free, but limited to non-Japanese nationals.

The Ghost of April was a 1988 film about a girl who appears to die but is really stuck between life and death. Another ghost tries to convince her to return to life, but when she sees that the boy she has had a crush on is more interested in another girl, she decides to stay dead. However, there is another boy in love with her, and the ending is somewhat predictable. It was nothing special, but it's always interesting to see films made in other countries, not as prestige art exports, but ordinary films for domestic consumption. This reminded me of the sort of thing Walt Disney would have made in the 1970s or so—aimed at a teenage audience with a somewhat comic haunting (though with less comedy than Disney would have put in).

Afterwards we stopped at a couple of department stores (Daimaru and Hankyu) to pick up take-out sushi for dinner. We had been spoiled by Tobu—neither of these had as varied, or as fresh-looking, a selection. Back home, we would have thought these great, of course, but here they suffer by comparison. We also picked up some pastries for dessert or breakfast, and some soda. One problem with the food departments in department stores is that they are in the basement. Finding the exit after wandering around to find the sushi can be difficult; I find a compass is really useful (though admittedly strange). I have also used the compass to orient myself in the maze of shopping arcades in Kawaramachi.

By the way, it is not necessary to bring tissues to Japan. You know how in the United States they hand out flyers on street corners to advertise things? Here they hand out little packs of tissues with an advertisement on the wrapper. These are handy because the public restrooms have no paper towels, and restaurants frequently have no napkins. So far we've collected about twenty packs with various ads on them. We figure they'll make interesting hand-out souvenirs for people at work—the most technical folks will get the ones with URLs

on them. (By the end of the day, the people handing them out—mostly students, I suspect—are so eager to get rid of their supply that they stuff ten or twenty packs in some people's shopping bags!)

On the way back we priced tickets for kabuki at the Minamiza Theater. They seemed to be between ¥4,000 and ¥10,000, with no indication that a single-act ticket was available, so we will skip this as well. Walking back from the theater we saw a poster for either the film *Anne Frank Remembered* or a production of the play. The poster was entirely in Japanese, but the picture of Anne Frank is instantly recognizable in any language (at least to us).

October 24, 1996: Higashiyama (Kyoto)

After yesterday's "day off" (well, by comparison), it's back to the sightseeing whirlwind. Four more days to go. Today's plan was basically walk number two from the Tourist Information Center's pamphlet on Kyoto walks, covering the southeastern part of the city. We started by walking east through one of the quietest parts of Kyoto we've been in—a cemetery. It was very big and the gravestones were very close together—is it just ashes buried here, or are people buried standing up, or what? There is hardly any representational art—the tombstones are pillars with an inscription, and there is an incense burner and a flower holder for each.

After about fifteen minutes of uphill climb, we arrived at Kiyomizu-dera Temple (¥300), in a beautiful setting among the trees of the eastern hills. It is known for its view of Kyoto (though Kyoto is not a very pretty city from a distance), and the temple recently purchased some adjoining land to avoid having a high-rise building erected that would have blocked the view. The main hall of the temple has a wide verandah which overhangs the hill it is on, supported by massive columns and cross supports. This is good, because the verandah is constantly full of people—the usual hordes of schoolchildren on a field trip. (Do Japanese students ever spend any time in school? It seems like in October the answer is "No.")

During World War II, one of the caricatures of the Japanese was that they had big buck teeth. Well, there is some truth to that. In actuality, it may be because the Japanese are less into orthodontia than Americans (I don't think I've seen anyone wearing braces on their teeth, and I've seen a lot of schoolchildren), but I don't think the Italians (for example) have as much orthodontia done either, and they are not known for prominent teeth. I suspect it really is a racial characteristic.

I mentioned earlier than you can't buy individual postcards most places. What people apparently buy instead are phonecards. For example, at the Kiyomizu-dera Temple, you can buy a phonecard with a picture of the temple on it. After you've used up the amount on the card, you have the card as a souvenir. Of course, the cards come in fairly large denominations; I think the smallest is ¥1000 and we would not have used that up, or even come close.

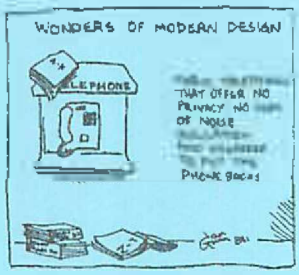
The Kiyomizu-dera Temple has extensive grounds, including a waterfall with supposed therapeutic properties. There was a long line waiting to drink from it, but it's not even really a waterfall any more; it's channeled into bamboo pipes at some point high up the hill. There is also the Jishu Shrine, with its "love stones." These are two stones about a half meter square and three-quarters of a meter high which are about eighteen meters apart. They say if you can walk from one to another with your eyes closed and not miss it, you will find your true love soon. Apparently coaching by friends is allowed, because the sign talks about how goals cannot be achieved without the help of friends. They also had a statue called "Nade-Daikoku-san," which they said meant "Daikoku to be patted." I think I'll nickname Mark "Nade-Mark."

We left the temple and walked downhill for about two hundred meters through the usual string of tourist shops that one finds leading up to (and conversely, away from) every major tourist attraction here. What is amazing after a while is the realization that they are all selling exactly the same things for the same prices. (Is this the Japanese "group mind" in action?) For example, every souvenir store we went into—here, the Kyoto Handicraft Center later, and the souvenir shops in the shopping arcades—had the same five sets of five different sake cups in ukiyo-e style: geishas, kabuki actors, sumo wrestlers, scenery, and semi-pornographic ("Kama Sutra"-type illustrations, but of a very mild sort). The only difference seemed to be that a few things were slightly cheaper in the shopping arcades.

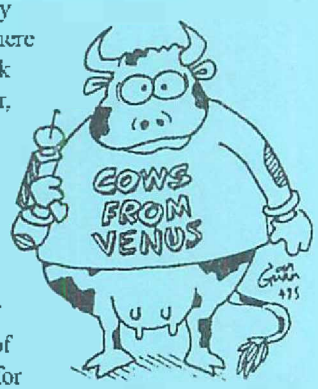
After this street we went down two other streets (still going downhill), Sannenzaka and Ninenzaka. These are lined with pottery shops (of the more expensive sort) and tea shops. Some people like this sort of thing, but I can't say it does much for me. We stopped for beverages. I was so confused trying to decide among the many varieties of canned coffee in the machines that I ended up with hot coffee instead of the cold I wanted, and also managed to spill a bit on my shirt opening it. Oh, well, it was getting hot and I had a T-shirt on under the shirt, so I took the shirt off. The weather had turned rather warm (later we saw a thermometer that said 23 degrees Centigrade). The hot coffee made the can hot enough that I needed to use my bandana to hold it. (Bandanas are also useful—mine has been a towel, a ground cloth, a cushion, and a pot holder so far this trip.)

We passed a pay phone that didn't have traffic roaring by it, so I called United Airlines in Osaka and reconfirmed our flights. I started with a whole handful of ¥10 coins and it took eleven of them to complete the call (it probably would have been cheaper at night). Our flight is scheduled to leave ten minutes later than the previous scheduled time.

Our next stop was Todai-ji Temple (¥500), built by Hideyoshi Toyotomi's widow in his memory. I haven't mentioned Hideyoshi before, but he was one of the three major shoguns at the start of the Shogunate (a.k.a. the Edo Period) around 1600. The other two were Odo Nobunaga and Ieyasu Tokugawa. This temple was just recently opened to the public, and the main hall is still not open. It has many art treasures, most of which are not on display. Even the statues of Hideyoshi and his widow, normally on display, seemed to have been removed for some reason. (There was an English pamphlet, but it didn't go into such details as why the statues weren't there.) Considering how Japan makes the best-known cameras in the world, I find it interesting that such a huge percentage of the Japanese tourists are using disposable cameras. They are everywhere!



We walked through Maruyama-koen Park and stopped for a snack. We had ... something. Mark thinks they may have been balls of pounded rice mixed with what we think was seafood, fried, and covered with a sauce. Maruyama-koen Park is known for having beautiful foliage in the fall when the maple leaves turn. This is supposedly mid-October, but this year it must be late, since almost all the leaves were still green.



We continued north, past a couple more temples that we didn't stop in (you can't visit every temple in Kyoto, certainly not in the short time we had), and ended up at the Heian-jinja Shrine. This is where the Jidai Matsuri Festival ended its parade a couple of days ago, and we were able to buy a program book (with English) and a set of postcards of the festival. Since the same costumes and order are used each year, these are accurate to what we saw except perhaps for some of the faces.

The shrine itself is nothing special, being a two-thirds scale reconstruction of the Heian Imperial Palace from the beginning of Kyoto's history (1100 years ago). It is painted white and what they call vermilion but I would call orange. Its most impressive feature is its torii gate, which is very large (though apparently not as large as the one at Yusukuni-jinja in Tokyo, which was listed in one of the books as having the largest torii gate in Japan, or anywhere else, one assumes).

That concluding the sightseeing plan for the day (we decided to skip the Kyoto Museum of Modern Art), we walked a couple of blocks north to the Kyoto Handicraft Center. This is a cooperative of several companies, and is *clearly* designed for tourists. There are a few people demonstrating techniques for making woodblock prints and such, though at least they are not trying to claim that everything there was made by these people. (This was the case in the "factory" in Toledo, Spain, we went to.) Every few minutes the loudspeaker would announce things like, "Sunrise Tours Number 27, please return to your bus; it is about to leave."

We looked around for souvenirs and gifts, and came to several realizations. One, almost everything we liked was expensive. Two, almost all the people we were looking for gifts for had been to Japan already and probably had what they wanted. (We're not exactly the last people we know to visit Japan, but we are pretty much the last of our gift-giving circle.) And three, woodblock prints like the ones we got from my parents, who got them from a friend who had been to Japan in the Fifties, are probably worth something.

We decided to walk over to the shopping arcades in Kawaramachi, where we picked up this and that as souvenirs. I'm not a shopping person (except maybe for books, which are way too expensive here when they're in English), and this tired me out as much—or more than—the sightseeing. We ended up by buying take-out sushi in Takashimaya, which has a better sushi selection than other stores, but is still not up to Tobu's, and then taking the bus back to the Seiki.

October 25, 1996: The Path of Philosophy (Kyoto)

Today we finished the eastern area and the "Path of Philosophy." We started by taking the bus to the northwest corner of Kyoto University. The area seemed much more conservative than around universities in the United States, but my universities for comparison are the University of Massachusetts (and the other four colleges in the area) and Stanford, which are not among the more conservative back home. There were big hand-painted signs advertising various events, but of course I have no idea what they were for. Mark got steamed buns at the Lawson's at the bus stop, and some squid jerky for later. (I had some chocolate bread earlier in the room.)

We walked east a fair distance, but we could see we were headed in the right direction by the hordes of schoolchildren, and the string of souvenir shops, where Mark found an inexpensive demon mask (from Noh theater design) as a souvenir for us. All the stores seem to have children's items that say "Shinsengumi" and have a cartoon of a little kid with a samurai sword; I have no idea what this means.

At the end of this string of shops was Ginkaku-ji Temple (or more accurately, Jisho-ji Temple (¥500)). Ginkaku-ji is also known as the Silver Pavilion, but was never covered in silver—that was the original plan, but it never happened. The name seems to have stuck, though. This was built in 1482, about a hundred years after the Golden Pavilion, and the idea probably came from that. Even now, there seem to be parallels. For example, both have calligraphic tickets of a sort that we've gotten nowhere else. Here, as at Kiyomizu-dera, you climb up the mountain for a view of Kyoto. This is not like Tokyo, which goes on forever; Kyoto has definite edges on either side, being bounded by mountains. The "Silver Pavilion" itself is not very impressive, being just an old building. It's the setting and the grounds that make this temple appealing.

Leaving the temple, we attempted to find the "Path of Philosophy," a tree-lined street that goes along a canal and which everyone recommends for a nice stroll. Again, our maps were not entirely useful, one showing it on the west side of a canal, another on the east, and none too clear on how far it was from the temple. After wandering around a while, we saw a map board by the side of the road, and it was very clear about where the street was. The Path of Philosophy is called that, not because any famous philosophers lived or walked here, but because someone decided that would be a good name for a peaceful tree-lined street that people might want to walk along, and possibly contemplate philosophy at the same time. I tried asking Mark his opinion of the Aristotelian notion of substance, but we didn't get very far. We did meet two old women who stopped us, gestured for us to close our eyes, and proceeded to bless us (or pray over us) for about a minute and a half. At least we think that's what they were doing.

At the southern end of the Path of Philosophy is the Eikan-do Temple. Like every other temple in Kyoto, it seems to be called by something other than its real name, which is Shoju-raigo-san Zenrin-ji Temple. This was the only time I felt that we had been misled by one of the sights. The admission was ¥300 each, but after you pay that and go in, you discover that to see the buildings and statuary (which are what the informational sign at the gate talks about), it is another ¥500. While it is possible that there was some small sign up at the gate saying this in Japanese, I don't think so, because I looked for it on the way out.

By now we were pretty much "templed-out" anyway, so we contented ourselves with seeing the gardens and then decided to go back to the Kawaramachi area and wander around. On the way we stopped for lunch. There wasn't much in the way of restaurants (of any sort) between where we were and the river which forms the eastern boundary of Kawaramachi, so when we passed a noodle shop we decided to go in, even though there was no plastic food or menu. It was clear that it wasn't an expensive place, and we figured we could just order at random. Well, it turned out they had an English menu anyway, as well as a Japanese one. Mark had soba in broth with a herring on top; I had cold soba noodles. (It was very hot outside—I would guess close to 30 degrees Centigrade.) This totaled ¥1400—quite reasonable.

After this we walked to Kawaramachi, and went into a few stores. We dropped into Virgin Music, where we looked at their selection of soundtrack CDs. They were all Western movies (American and European, not cowboys and gunslingers), and ran about ¥2250 each. We had hoped to find more Japanese film music, but I guess Virgin is not the place to look. Then we stopped at Maruzen Books.

First, we went through all the movie lobby cards they had out for their sidewalk sale, picking up lobby cards in Japanese for films such as *Star Trek 2* and *Gone With the Wind*. Then we went up to their eighth floor, where they had even more, and found a *Godzilla 1983* (known in the United States as *Godzilla 1985* when it was released there two years later) and a *Zatoichi*, as well as a few more science fiction ones. Their seventh floor seems to be fashion (Burberry's, etc.)—a strange department to find in a bookstore.

The sixth floor is foreign-language books (primarily), and this is also where they were having their "*Star Trek* Fair," which consisted of an enormous selection of *Star Trek* books: large-format photo books, books about science in *Star Trek*, and of course lots of *Star Trek* novels. Given that these are all books imported from the United States, and the prices here are about twice what they are at home, we didn't really browse through these. They also had an "SF Fair," which was a display of Tor science fiction books. I don't know if Tor helped sponsor this, or if it was Maruzen's idea. We did look at the books about Japan, Japanese culture, and so on. There were quite a few I was interested in, but they were almost all published by Charles Tuttle, based in Rutland, Vermont, so I figured I could get them cheaper back home.

We were in a good area for dinner, but weren't hungry yet. We looked for a place to sit and write in our logs, but this seems to be something Kyoto (and probably most Japanese cities) doesn't have in abundance. We eventually found a few benches in an open area where several shopping arcades met, and sat for about an hour writing. (It occurred to me later that another possibility would have been the Japan Foundation.) For dinner, we decided to try okonomiyaki, a Kyoto specialty which someone described as a vegetable pancake, with various ingredients such as seafood or egg, grilled and served with a sauce. One of the places recommended for this by the Tourist Information Center was "Mister Young Men." The menu was entirely in Japanese, but did have some pictures. I got what appeared to be "French-style Okonomiyaki" (well, it came with a little paper French flag in it, and had asparagus on top), and Mark got something else, which did not have a flag in it, but did come with a small salad and a small Coke. Mine had tuna and octopus in it and corn kernels and a pink sauce that tasted like a sweet Thousand-Island dressing on top. I don't think the French would think it very French. Dinner came to ¥1680.

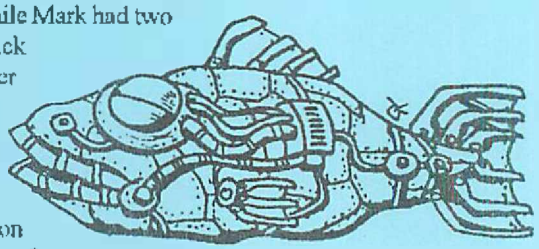
When we first got to Kyoto I said that my impression was that I preferred Tokyo. This hasn't changed. I must just be a big-city person, and while Kyoto is not exactly rural (it has a population of about 1,400,000), it's not as lively as Tokyo. Many people said we were focused too much on big cities and should try to see more of the rural Japan, implying that was more like the "real" Japan. But of Japan's 123,000,000 people, 75% live in urban areas, and 25% live in Japan's ten cities that have over 1,000,000 people each: Tokyo (12M), Yokohama (3M), Osaka (2.6M), Nagoya (2.2M), Sapporo (1.6M), Kobe (1.5M), Kyoto (1.4M), Fukuoka (1.2M), Hiroshima (1.1M), Kawasaki (1.0M). Another book notes that the Tokyo-Yokohama-Kawasaki corridor is virtually one city, and the world's largest, and that 40,000,000 people live within fifty kilometers of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. All this seems to indicate that urban Japan is the real Japan these days. (This reminds me of people who think the "real America" is in some small town in Iowa. The "real America" is New York, Los Angeles, and so on, or at least those are just as real as a small farming town.)

October 26, 1996: Kyoto National Museum and Eel Festival (Kyoto)

What better way to end our stay in Kyoto than by going to the Blessing of the Eels? (Why am I so sure that many people reading this will have an answer to that question?)

It was raining when we woke up, but it had stopped by 9:30 when we went out, and it was merely overcast. Still, we were happy that we had decided to forgo walking through Arashiyama (Western Kyoto) or going to Toei Uzumasa Eiga-Mura (Toei Movieland). The former is described as a good place for a "pleasant walk in natural surroundings" (but not, one suspects, on an ugly day) and the latter seems to be like the Universal Studios Tour, though perhaps with fewer rides; in any case both were mostly outside and somewhat pricey (¥2000 each). We had coincidentally decided to do some things today that didn't require good weather.

We stopped in Lawson's for something for breakfast, and discovered the buns were back (maybe they run out faster during the week than on the weekends). I had a pastry, while Mark had two steamed pork buns. We also got snack stuff: rice crackers, squid jerky, and some snack consisting of rice crackers, peanuts, and dried whole fish (which are about a centimeter long). Mark also picked up another small souvenir: a chopstick rest shaped like a hot pepper.

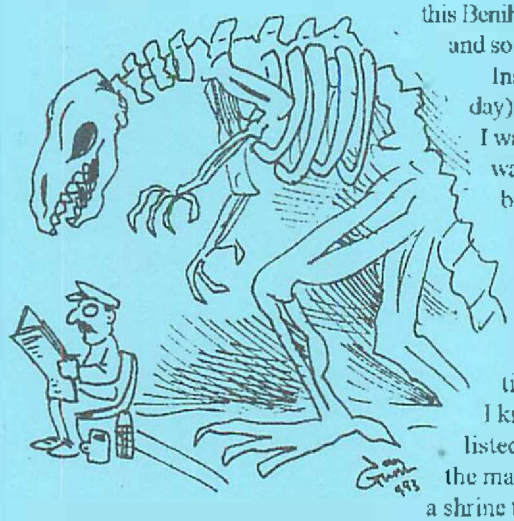


We walked to the Kyoto National Museum, about fifteen minutes from the Seiki. It was open, but amongst all the Japanese was English saying that the main hall was closed. This seemed to make seeing the museum a bad idea, so we sat on a ledge at the entrance and tried to formulate an alternate plan. Then a woman came out from the ticket office with a newsletter in English which explained, among other things, that the main hall was now used for special exhibits and the permanent collection was in the New Exhibition Hall. This solved our dilemma—we went in (¥400).

This museum is like the Tokyo National Museum, but on a smaller scale. There were a lot of labels in English (although these were much briefer than the corresponding Japanese labels). I notice that on the Japanese labels they often give hiragana translations above the kanji as a guide to pronunciation and to help with unfamiliar kanji. (This is similar to train station signs, which always show the hiragana as well as the kanji for the town.) In the museum they have a sign saying that no pens are allowed. They suggest that if you need to make notes, you should use pencils. I guess palmtops are okay, too. One nice thing about museums is that they do have places to sit down.

The one piece I found most impressive was "Yamaraja and His Attendants" (a grouping of five statues bigger than life-size). They may have been twice life-size; a later section said that twice life-size was the standard size for a Buddha statue, so maybe that applied here as well. (Obviously there are many that are larger than this, and many smaller. But I guess the main one in a temple should meet this standard.) It was a bit disappointing, though, to discover that the metalwork exhibit, which rotates among the items in the collection, was yet more bronze mirrors rather than swords or armor.

We spent about two hours in the museum, then left and looked for lunch. We passed a Benihana restaurant, but it was not at all like the "Benihana of Tokyo" restaurants that pass for Japanese back in the United States. We haven't seen anything like that here, and



this Benihana was just another restaurant serving somewhat Westernized food (cutlet, spaghetti, and so on).

Instead we ate at the Curry Shop, where we had "curry rice" (sort of like on our first day). Mark had cuttlefish in his; I ordered something that seemed to read "chi-zu ry-zu," but I wasn't sure what it was. It was, just as they said, curried cheese and rice. The cheese was something like shredded mozzarella. It may not sound like a very good combination, but it wasn't bad.

We had some problems finding Mishima-jinja Shrine, which is where the Unagi Hohjo-E is held. And what is the Unagi Hohjo-E, you ask? Why, the Blessing of the Eels, of course. When I plan a trip, I try to put something original in, something we wouldn't see on a package tour. In Lithuania, for example, we went to the Devil Museum. I can't claim I planned this one ahead of time, but when I read about the Unagi Hohjo-E in the magazine *Kansai Time Out*, I knew it was for us. The only problem was that none of our maps or tour books listed the Mishima-jinja. I asked at the front desk at the Seiki, and someone drew it on the map as being next to the Kyoto National Museum, very close by to us. Well, there is a shrine there, but it is not Mishima-jinja but "Toyo-something" (from the hiragana). They were able to direct us to Mishima-jinja, which we found after only two or three wrong turns.

We were (naturally) the first to arrive (at about 13:40 for a 14:00 ceremony). We felt a bit strange and out of place, but they welcomed us in and asked us to sit and have tea by the side of the shrine area, where benches had been set up. Another gaijin (Sonya) arrived about ten minutes later and we talked to her for a while; she has lived in Sapporo for four years and teaches English there. About 14:00 some Japanese started showing up (and a few more gaijin—in fact, the group was probably one-quarter gaijin). We were going to stay outside the shrine area, but they gestured us in to the benches with everyone else. Since taking notes during the ceremony would probably have been considered tacky, I will have to work from memory, and since it went on for about an hour, I'm sure I will forget something.

The ceremony (service) was led by a Master of Ceremonies with microphone (very traditional). There was the head priest in a gold robe and indigo pants, two assistants in purple robes and turquoise pants, and two women musicians whose costumes I don't remember (they were out of my line of sight most of the time). The pants have gaps on either side from the waistband down to the knees and are worn over white trousers, but the younger assistant was wearing striped undershorts under the white trousers, which showed through and made it difficult to take him entirely seriously. They also wore black wooden shoes with rounded-up fronts (not pointed, but flat across, sort of like if you took a rectangle of wood and then folded up the front in a straight line, except they also have sides and a back). They were wearing the specially shaped black hats. The ones we saw at the Jidai Matsuri were plastic, and I thought that was just for the festival, but apparently the real ones are plastic also, or at least look plastic. They carried polished wooden paddles, about forty centimeters long and eight centimeters wide. The clothing, I am sure, is worn out of tradition, but the paddles must have some meaning. Sometimes they carried them or held them out in front of them, almost as it they were reading from them; other times they stuck them into their waistbands.

The beginning consisted of the assistants waving leafy branches decorated with zigzag paper strips in front of the altar, over the offerings, and over the congregation (for lack of a better term—there were about thirty of us). Various prayers (I assume) were said, with the congregation standing for some, and then sitting down again. Sonya said she couldn't really follow what was going on, because the Japanese used was somewhat archaic (like a modern Italian trying to follow a Latin mass?), but she did notice that the Master of Ceremonies did ask the congregation to rise or sit, using the most respectful form of the verbs. This was clearly a situation where the proverb "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" applied: stand when and how everyone stands (head and upper body slightly bowed), sit when they sit, and hope you can figure out if there's something they're going to do that you shouldn't (like Catholics take Communion at Mass and non-Catholics don't).

Then the assistants opened the altar and with great ceremony moved the offerings into it. The last offering was a live eel in a plastic bag of water, in an aquarium tank. There were then more prayers and readings, including the head priest reading from a folded paper with the ritual written on it (one assumes).

They then lit a candle (?) in the altar, and after some more prayers took the eel out again, carried it over to the pond by the side of the shrine, and released it into the water. They lit a paper torch from the candle at the altar, and used it to start a fire in a receptacle by the pond. I couldn't see it too well, but it sent up quite a flame. People then were called up to the altar by the Master of Ceremonies. One of the assistants would give them a leafy branch, which they would present at a table in front of the altar, bowing several times to the assistant and towards the altar, and clapping twice after placing the branch down. After this, they would go over to the fire and put a special stick with a prayer written on it in the fire. (All of this part applies to only the Japanese.) Then there was a sermon or a speech from the head priest, who apparently mentioned something about the large number of gaijin attending (at least that's what Sonya heard, and the other speaker also mentioned "Americans"). But Sonya thinks it was just that they were surprised. They certainly didn't seem offended, and when we left we were given the same gift bag that the Japanese got, which was a small white shopping bag containing a bento of nine small pastries with red bean paste and black sesame seeds, three packets of tea, and a temple booklet, sort of like an almanac, with events or something for each day, etc., except since it is all in Japanese we will probably have some difficulty figuring it out.

Oh, and the purpose of all this? Once a year (or perhaps twice—Sonya thinks they may have a similar festival in the spring) there is this service at this temple to thank the gods for the previous year's eel catch and to ask for a good one for the upcoming year. (And if you think this strange, it was no more strange than the Blessing of the Animals at a church in New York each year.)

By now, it was almost 16:00 and had turned colder and windier (though it hadn't rained since we were out, and in fact the sun was even shining a bit), so we returned to the ryokan to warm up and have some hot tea. This ryokan has one nice feature for weather like this—heated toilet seats. Then again, since most Japanese homes are kept fairly chilly in the winter, and people rely on clothing or quilts more, it's not surprising that you find these. We had thought about having a fancy dinner our last night in Japan, but didn't want to spend a lot of time searching someplace out, so we had dinner at a Chinese restaurant down the street.

October 27, 1996: Osaka and Return

Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home. The weather was sunny today, and not as windy as yesterday; one thermometer said 11 degrees Centigrade. We finished packing—it's always the last few odds and ends that are the problem. Everything pretty much fit into our two suitcases and one shoulder bag, although a few items were in a separate bag for carrying around Osaka. One nice thing about the paying-in-advance system that they have for rooms: you can just leave when you're ready without having to check out.

We went to the bus stop to catch the 207 bus to the Hankyu-Kawaramachi Station for the train to Osaka. We discovered that at this hour the 207 bus seems to run only once an hour; luckily we arrived fifteen minutes before it came by. The train station ticket machine was easy to figure out—there was a map in romanji. It was ¥380 each to Osaka, which is pretty cheap for that long a ride. I'm sure Japan Railways would have been more expensive, even if we took something other than the Shinkansen.

In Osaka, we were looking for coin lockers, but first took the connecting overpass from the Hankyu Umeda Station to the JR Osaka Station, since we would be leaving from there. The coin lockers were easy to find, and we were trying to fit our three bags into the ¥400 lockers when we saw some much larger ¥500 ones. This made it a lot easier. The coin lockers here have a sports scene covering them so that from a distance they look like a wall with a mural rather than coin lockers. We decided to buy our tickets for the train to the airport now, and discovered that we needed to allow more time than we had thought. Someone had told us it takes twenty minutes, but from here it takes about an hour on the limited express. This meant we had about five hours in Osaka.

Unencumbered, we then spent a fair amount of time trying to find the Osaka Tourist Information Office. Even with the Lonely Planet guide saying which exit to go to, we had problems finding it; it is a very small and not well-marked office. We bought a map and city guide here, since the books say not to try going anywhere without a subway and bus map. Looking at the map, however, we decided there was nothing worth going to in the time we had. Osaka-jo Castle would have been our first choice, but it was being renovated and was supposedly wrapped up so you couldn't even see the outside. Panasonic Square was moderately interesting, but probably a lot like the Sony showrooms in Tokyo. The Science Museum might have been a contender, but we suspected a lack of English would be a problem. In the end we decided just to wander around the central area near the station, which has an enormous underground shopping complex. (The map/guide claimed it is the largest in the world.)

Most of what seemed to be open at 10:00 on a Sunday morning was pachinko parlors, video game arcades, and other amusement-oriented establishments. There were some other businesses open as well (drugstores, bookstores, restaurants, and so on), but there were also a lot of shuttered shops. Maybe what I said about Sunday being just like any other day is true only in Tokyo, or only in parts of Tokyo.

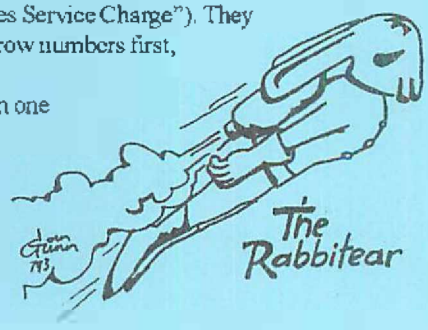
We walked around above ground a bit as well, passing a Toei Movie Palace, where we picked up flyers for *Escape From L.A.* There were stores and restaurants open here within a block of the main street, but everything further away seemed closed. We stopped at one for lunch, and we both had unagi donburi (eel on rice), having been inspired by yesterday's ceremony, I suppose. We walked as far as the river, then walked along the river, and back on a different street. We also walked some more through the underground area, where we stumbled across, of all things, the Sherlock Holmes Pub, done up like a British pub, with some additional Sherlock Holmes decor, and serving such delicacies as bangers and mash. There may not be any Holmes manga (at least that I could find), but they do know about Sherlock Holmes. There was also an area that had musical instruments sort of sculpted into a wall, and buttons on them so you could play them. For example, there was a button on each of a range of about a dozen keys on the piano, and as you pressed each one, the appropriate note was played.

Eventually it was time to leave, and we retrieved our luggage, packing our day stuff into my suitcase to minimize the number of bags we would be carrying. (At the last minute, we bought a Daruma doll, which was in a box about twenty centimeters on a side that didn't fit in anything, so we had to carry that separately.) We managed to find the track for the train, though I was starting to get nervous when, fifteen minutes before the train, we couldn't even figure out where the tracks were. The trains on this track run every few minutes, so we almost got on the wrong one, but the right one was well-labeled as going to the airport. The ride took almost an hour and was unremarkable, except for going over the world's longest floating double causeway or some such.

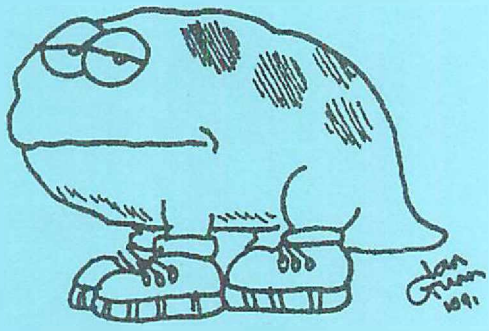
Kansai Airport is a new airport, having opened just about two years ago. It is very futuristic looking, with lots of modern touches, like luggage carts designed to be used on escalators, and automatic machines for checking boarding passes. There is also a higher departure tax than for Narita, unless Narita's has been raised recently: ¥2600 per person (versus ¥2000 for Narita). Luckily we had extra yen with us, although you can also pay by credit card. To pay by cash, you put your cash in a machine, and it gives you a card that is read by a machine at the entrance to the departure area. Then you go through the security check and an immigration check. Most countries, if I recall correctly, don't make you go through any special check to leave the country, but Japan does. (On the other hand, most countries other than the United States don't ask you to fill out a customs declaration when you enter.) When you arrive in Japan you fill in a two-part card; they keep one part and put the other in your passport. When you leave, they take that part back. I guess they want to make sure no one is staying illegally, but how would they be able to find you if they decided you were? At the gate, you put your boarding pass in a machine, and it returns the stub to you, and on a display screen tells you by name that you can board.

Before boarding, we changed our excess yen back into dollars. We had more excess than usual, due to my cautious estimates, but it's just as well, because we would not be able to change money easily the last two days (Saturday and Sunday), and also because we needed a big chunk for the departure tax (actually, the "Passenger Facilities Service Charge"). They said they were going to board our flight by row numbers, which seemed to mean the first-class row numbers first, then all the economy class at once.

The flight was, as usual, uncomfortable. I thought I would enjoy a chance to sit in one place and not have to walk anywhere, but I had forgotten how cramped the seats are, and how they are constructed so as to give you a crick in your neck if you're (un)lucky enough to fall asleep. There was a family next to us on the plane who were returning to the United States after six years at the base on Okinawa. The children were seven, nine, and twelve. The mother was worried about what the United States would be like after being away so long, especially for them. She said the youngest is very friendly, always saying "Hi" to people, and



she was trying to explain that he couldn't do that in the United States. I suspect it will be quite a culture shock, although if they live on base it won't be quite as drastic.



Andre Codrescu is an author who was born in Romania, but came to the United States and became an American citizen. He went back to visit Romania, which was still very repressive and a place he would not want to live in. What he liked best about the trip was that when he returned to the United States, the immigration officer looked at his (United States) passport, stamped it, and said, "Welcome home."

We cleared immigration and customs in Los Angeles very quickly not having to wait for checked luggage helps. We killed a couple of hours at the Los Angeles airport, then boarded our last flight. This was a little bit roomier (each seat was eighteen inches wide instead of seventeen), but still not what one would term spacious. There was one final gotcha our flight was not listed on the arrivals board (and had arrived early to boot). So when Jo arrived, she didn't see it listed and thought she either had the number wrong, or it was in a different terminal. Luckily, as she was heading for the office to ask, she saw us.

Would I recommend Japan as a travel destination? Yes, with a couple of provisos. First, while it's not terribly expensive, it's not terribly cheap either. It's probably on a par with Britain or Scandinavia. If you're looking for a cheap vacation, almost anyplace else in Asia will be cheaper. Second, I wouldn't recommend it as a first travel destination. It's difficult enough not knowing the language, and dealing with people who don't know English—you should at least have a working knowledge of changing money, buying train tickets, finding hotels, etc., before trying to do it without a common language.

Given that, my Ten Rules for Affordable Travel to Japan are:

When to go: The best time seems to be September or October. June, July, and August (especially) are very busy times and it's hard to get cheap airfares. May is cherry-blossom time and probably just as bad. December is also busy.

Guide books: The Lonely Planet has the best information on hotels and getting around. Call the Japan National Tourist Organization (in New York) and get their brochures, including maps of Tokyo, Kyoto, and Japan. Stop in their offices in Tokyo and/or Kyoto for lots of useful pamphlets and information.

Airfare: Shop around. The "bucket shops" (ticket consolidators who place ads in the back of your newspaper's Sunday travel section) are a good place to start. I've heard of fares under US$500 from the West Coast; we paid US$956 from Newark.

Long-distance ground travel: Rail is the way to go, but it's expensive. Get a JapanRail Pass, but maximize its use by compacting all your long-distance travel. If you are doing a Tokyo-Hiroshima-Kyoto loop in some form within a seven-day period, the one-week pass is cheaper. If you are going to Tokyo and Kyoto, being able to fly into one and home from the other will save you a couple of hundred dollars in ground costs getting back. (Tokyo uses Narita Airport; Kyoto uses Osaka's Kansai Airport.)

Local ground travel: Learn the subways and buses; taxis are expensive and the cities are too spread-out to walk. The Tokyo subway system is very simple, and color-coded (for those rare stations where you can't find a map labeled in romanji).

Hotels: You can get reasonable double rooms for around US$75/night. Singles are cheaper, or you can try youth hostels for even less, if you don't mind all the rules. Reserve ahead; given that no one seems to require a deposit, it's probably safer to line up your rooms before locking in your plane ticket. (Note: all the cheaper places seem to have Japanese-style beds—futons on the floor—though with Western toilets. If you can't sleep on the floor, it will cost you.)

Eating: Your best bets are the restaurants with plastic food in the window with prices on it. Learn the Japanese characters for the numbers; a lot of places show prices that way. Cheap dishes include noodle soups, pork cutlets, some Western dishes, and even sushi. Large department stores often have food departments where you can buy take-out sushi by the piece. We averaged about US$35/day each for food, including all snacks, beverages (see below), etc.

Drinking: Beverages such as sodas and coffee cost about three times as much in a restaurant as from the ubiquitous street vending machines (US$3 versus US$1). To save money, stick to the machines. Restaurants serve water or small cups of tea, or both, free with meals. "Coffee shops" are even more expensive than restaurants (US$5 a cup).

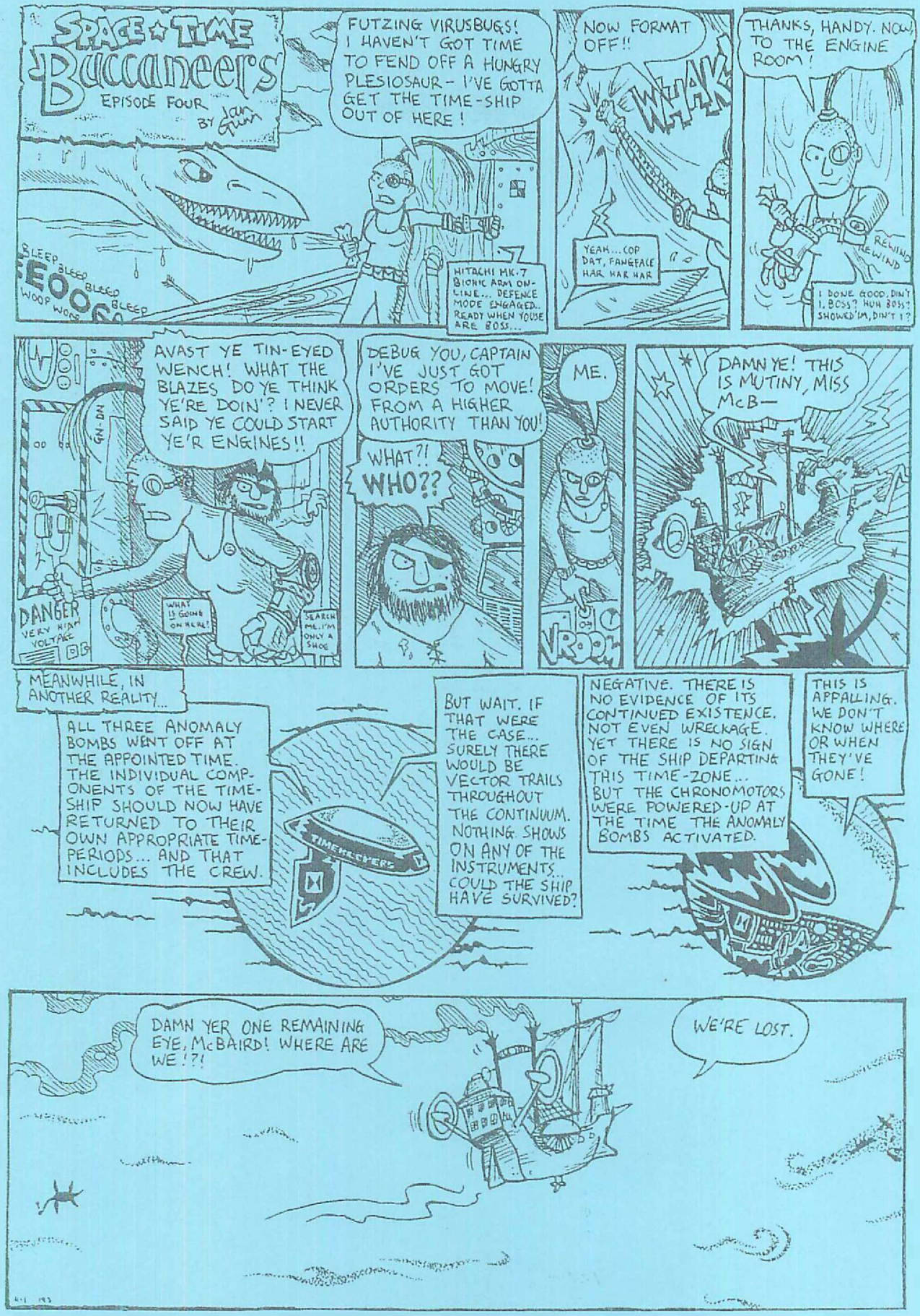
What to bring: Not much—you'll be carrying your own luggage through big train stations and such. Bring comfortable shoes. You will be on your feet a lot. In the fight between "comfortable" and "easy to take off at the door," comfortable should win. A compass is useful, and not something everyone thinks to bring.

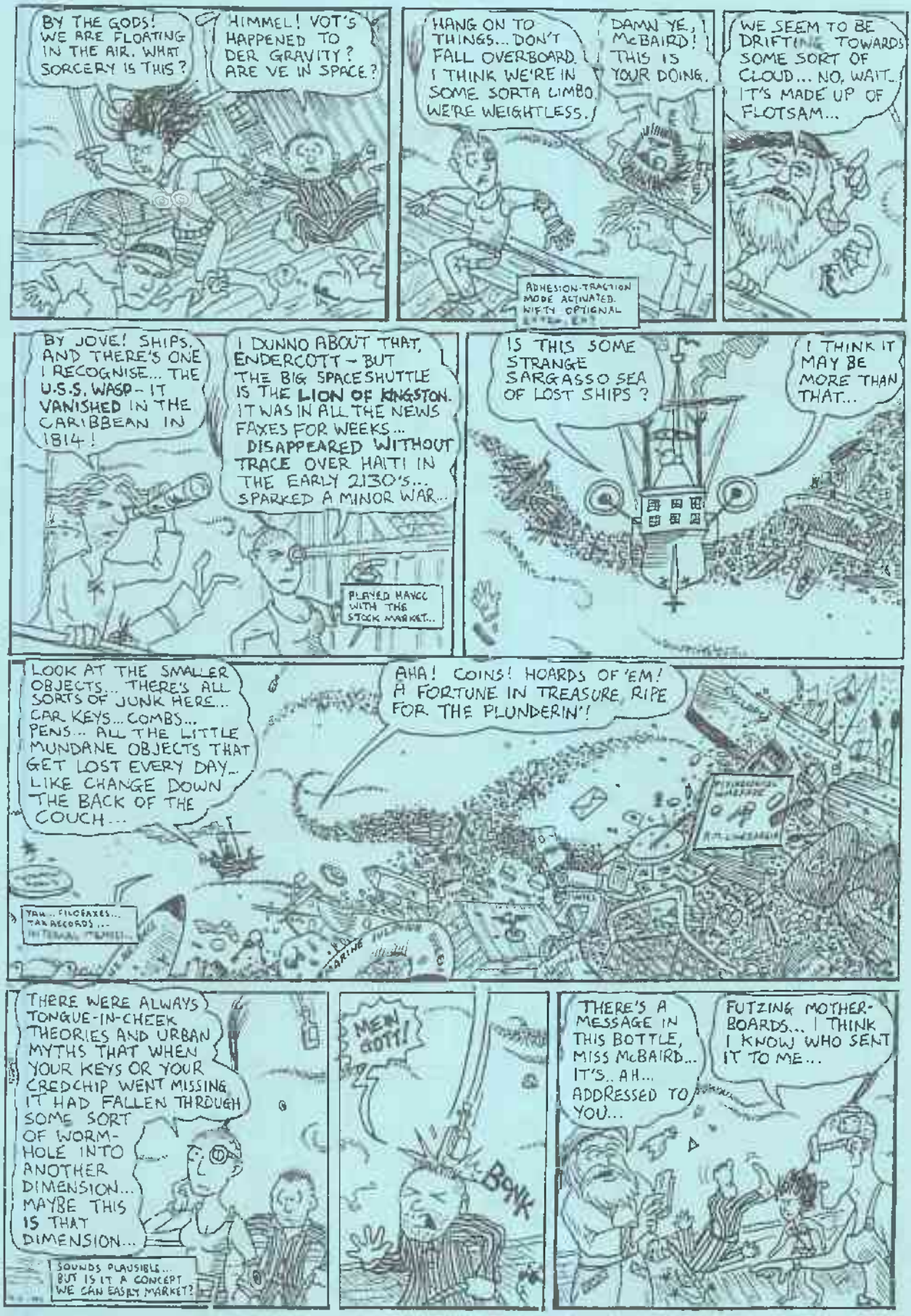
Money: Bring traveler's cheques. There are ATMs, but they are not usually on networks like Plus or Cirrus (the one at Narita Airport is), and most don't take North American bank cards. Cash advances against credit cards can cost a bundle in finance charges, unless you pay the money in first to create a credit balance. (This does not apply to debit cards.) Very few (cheap) places take credit cards (or debit cards).

And our cost break-down:

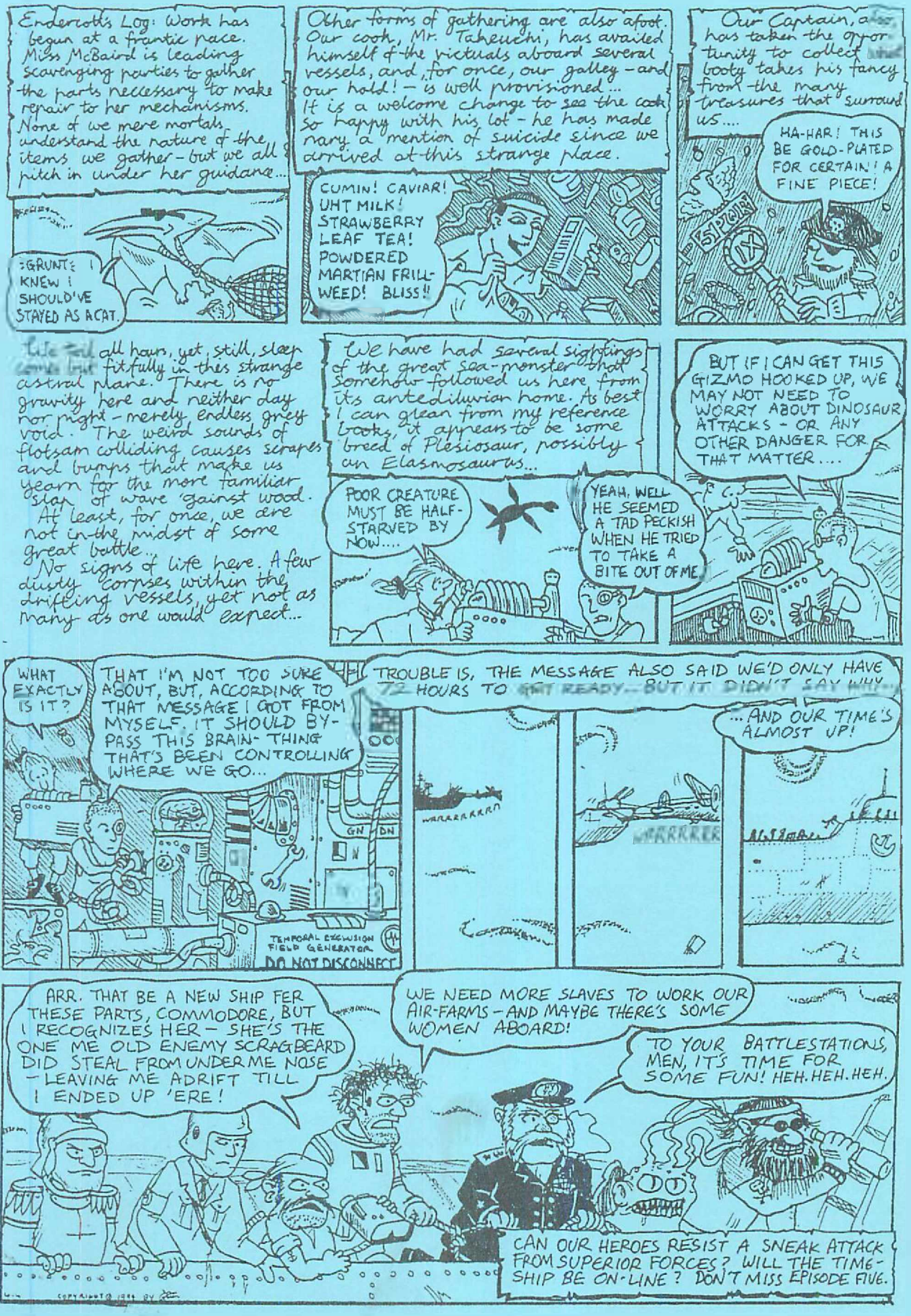
Airfare	US $1959
Ground Transportation	786
Hotels	1361
Meals	567
Film/Developing	219
Miscellaneous	527
Total US	$5409

"Nippon, the floating kingdom. There was a time when foreigners were not welcome here, but that was long ago—a hundred and twenty years. Welcome to Japan." —the end of Stephen Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* (1973)


SPACE ☆ TIME Buccaneers
EPISODE FOUR
BY Jon Gum
FUTZING VIRUSBUGS! I HAVEN'T GOT TIME TO FEND OFF A HUNGRY PLESIOSAUR - I'VE GOTTA GET THE TIME-SHIP OUT OF HERE!
BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP
EOO
WOOP WOOP
HITACHI MK-7 BIONIC ARM ON-LINE... DEFENCE MODE ENGAGED.. READY WHEN YOUSE ARE BOSS...
NOW FORMAT OFF!!
WHAK
YEAH... COP DAT, FANGFACE HAR HAR HAR
THANKS, HANDY. NOW TO THE ENGINE ROOM!
REWIND REWIND
I DONE GOOD, DIN'T I, BOSS? HUH BOSS? SHOWED 'IM, DIN'T I?
AVAST YE TIN-EYED WENCH! WHAT THE BLAZES DO YE THINK YE'RE DOIN'? I NEVER SAID YE COULD START YE'R ENGINES!!
DANGER VERY HIGH VOLTAGE
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
SEARCH ME. I'M ONLY A SHOE
DEBUG YOU, CAPTAIN I'VE JUST GOT ORDERS TO MOVE! FROM A HIGHER AUTHORITY THAN YOU!
WHAT?! WHO??
ME.
VROOM
DAMN YE! THIS IS MUTINY, MISS McB—
MEANWHILE, IN ANOTHER REALITY...
ALL THREE ANOMALY BOMBS WENT OFF AT THE APPOINTED TIME. THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS OF THE TIME-SHIP SHOULD NOW HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR OWN APPROPRIATE TIME-PERIODS... AND THAT INCLUDES THE CREW.
TIMERECOVERS
BUT WAIT. IF THAT WERE THE CASE... SURELY THERE WOULD BE VECTOR TRAILS THROUGHOUT THE CONTINUUM. NOTHING SHOWS ON ANY OF THE INSTRUMENTS... COULD THE SHIP HAVE SURVIVED?
NEGATIVE. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ITS CONTINUED EXISTENCE. NOT EVEN WRECKAGE. YET THERE IS NO SIGN OF THE SHIP DEPARTING THIS TIME-ZONE... BUT THE CHRONOMOTORS WERE POWERED-UP AT THE TIME THE ANOMALY BOMBS ACTIVATED.
THIS IS APPALLING. WE DON'T KNOW WHERE OR WHEN THEY'VE GONE!
DAMN YER ONE REMAINING EYE, McBAIRD! WHERE ARE WE!?!
WE'RE LOST.


BY THE GODS! WE ARE FLOATING IN THE AIR. WHAT SORCERY IS THIS?
HIMMEL! VOT'S HAPPENED TO DER GRAVITY? ARE VE IN SPACE?
HANG ON TO THINGS... DON'T FALL OVERBOARD. I THINK WE'RE IN SOME SORTA LIMBO. WE'RE WEIGHTLESS.
DAMN YE, McBAIRD! THIS IS YOUR DOING.
ADHESION-TRACTION MODE ACTIVATED. NIFTY OPTIONAL
WE SEEM TO BE DRIFTING TOWARDS SOME SORT OF CLOUD... NO, WAIT. IT'S MADE UP OF FLOTSAM...
BY JOVE! SHIPS, AND THERE'S ONE I RECOGNISE... THE U.S.S. WASP - IT VANISHED IN THE CARIBBEAN IN 1814!
I DUNNO ABOUT THAT, ENDERCOTT - BUT THE BIG SPACESHUTTLE IS THE LION OF KINGSTON. IT WAS IN ALL THE NEWS FAXES FOR WEEKS... DISAPPEARED WITHOUT TRACE OVER HAITI IN THE EARLY 2130's... SPARKED A MINOR WAR...
PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE STOCK MARKET...
IS THIS SOME STRANGE SARGASSO SEA OF LOST SHIPS?
I THINK IT MAY BE MORE THAN THAT...
LOOK AT THE SMALLER OBJECTS... THERE'S ALL SORTS OF JUNK HERE... CAR KEYS... COMBS... PENS... ALL THE LITTLE MUNDANE OBJECTS THAT GET LOST EVERY DAY... LIKE CHANGE DOWN THE BACK OF THE COUCH...
AHA! COINS! HOARDS OF 'EM! A FORTUNE IN TREASURE RIPE FOR THE PLUNDERIN'!
YAH... FILOFAXES... TAX RECORDS... INTERNAL MEMOS...
THERE WERE ALWAYS TONGUE-IN-CHEEK THEORIES AND URBAN MYTHS THAT WHEN YOUR KEYS OR YOUR CREDCHIP WENT MISSING IT HAD FALLEN THROUGH SOME SORT OF WORM-HOLE INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION... MAYBE THIS IS THAT DIMENSION...
SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE... BUT IS IT A CONCEPT WE CAN EASILY MARKET?
MEN GOTT!
BONK
THERE'S A MESSAGE IN THIS BOTTLE, MISS McBAIRD... IT'S.. AH... ADDRESSED TO YOU...
FUTZING MOTHER-BOARDS... I THINK I KNOW WHO SENT IT TO ME...


"THE CAT IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS ?"
OH-OH...
OH, NO YOU DON'T !
DAMN!
GOT 'IM!
I DUNNO WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT I THINK YOU'VE GOT SOME EXPLAINING TO DO, FURFACE!
SHE'S SUSSED ME... BETTER MUTATE INTO SOMETHING WITH DECENT VOCAL CHORDS
ALRIGHT :ARK!: YOU FOUND ME OUT - I'M NOT A CAT, I'M A FERRET... OR TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, I'M A GENETICALLY ENGINEERED BIOMORPHIC SYNTHOBEAST FROM THE 48th CENTURY.
... BUT MAINLY FERRET
I CAN CHANGE SHAPE AT WILL, AND, YES, I'M SENTIENT. I'D HAVE TO BE SMART TO FOOL YOU ALL THIS TIME.
YOU'VE BEEN MASQUERADING AS A CAT? WHY?
ARE YOU KIDDING? SLEEP ALL DAY, ALL THE FISH YOU CAN EAT. LOTS OF ATTENTION AND NO HEAVY LIFTING. IT'S A GREAT LIFE!
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THE SUNGLASSES WERE DUBIOUS
THAT'LL CHANGE NOW, YE FOUL DEMON!
EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND GERIACTICALLY ITCHY-EARED WOSS-NAME ON MY SHIP DOES HIS FAIR SHARE O' TOIL!
HEY! I DO MY BIT... I'VE BEEN GETTING YOU OUT OF SCRAPES FOR YEARS, YOU GUYS JUST NEVER NOTICED!
TERAMOTO... I WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS NOTE, PUT IT IN A BOTTLE, AND KEEP IT SOMEWHERE SAFE. VERY SAFE. I'M GOING TO NEED IT ONE DAY... AND WHEN I DO, I DON'T WANT TO BE ABLE TO FIND IT.
SVEN, GLADYS - LOOK AFTER FRITZ'S HEAD...
I-I THINK I UNDERSTAND...
A POX ON YE, WENCH! YE'R FERGETTIN' AGEN! 'TIS ME WHAT GIVES THE ORDERS 'ROUND HERE!
YEAH, CAP. THAT'S RIGHT. AND I THINK YOU SHOULD ORDER ME AND ENDERCOTT BACK TO THE BRIDGE FOR AN URGENT OFFICER'S CONFERENCE - SO'S WE CAN WORK OUT OUR PLAN OF ATTACK
AH. A COMMITTEE MEETING AT LAST. I'LL DRAW UP THE AGENDA
DAMN YE! I'LL-
BETTER INCLUDE ME IN THIS. I'VE MET THESE TIME-KEEPERS BEFORE.


Endercotts Log: Work has begun at a frantic pace. Miss McBaird is leading scavenging parties to gather the parts necessary to make repair to her mechanisms. None of we mere mortals understand the nature of the items we gather - but we all pitch in under her guidance...
:GRUNT: I KNEW I SHOULD'VE STAYED AS A CAT.
Other forms of gathering are also afoot. Our cook, Mr. Takeuchi, has availed himself of the victuals aboard several vessels, and, for once, our galley - and our hold! - is well provisioned... It is a welcome change to see the cook so happy with his lot - he has made nary a mention of suicide since we arrived at this strange place.
CUMIN! CAVIAR! UHT MILK! STRAWBERRY LEAF TEA! POWDERED MARTIAN FRILL-WEED! BLISS!!
Our Captain, also, has taken the opportunity to collect what booty takes his fancy from the many treasures that surround us....
HA-HAR! THIS BE GOLD-PLATED FOR CERTAIN! A FINE PIECE!
Time has all hours, yet, still, sleep comes but fitfully in this strange astral plane. There is no gravity here and neither day nor night - merely endless grey void. The weird sounds of flotsam colliding causes scrapes and bumps that make us yearn for the more familiar slap of wave 'gainst wood.
At least, for once, we are not in the midst of some great battle...
No signs of life here. A few dusty corpses within the drifting vessels, yet not as many as one would expect...
We have had several sightings of the great sea-monster that somehow followed us here from its antediluvian home. At best I can glean from my reference book, it appears to be some breed of Plesiosaur, possibly an Elasmosaurus...
POOR CREATURE MUST BE HALF-STARVED BY NOW....
YEAH, WELL HE SEEMED A TAD PECKISH WHEN HE TRIED TO TAKE A BITE OUT OF ME.
BUT IF I CAN GET THIS GIZMO HOOKED UP, WE MAY NOT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT DINOSAUR ATTACKS - OR ANY OTHER DANGER FOR THAT MATTER....
WHAT EXACTLY IS IT?
THAT I'M NOT TOO SURE ABOUT, BUT, ACCORDING TO THAT MESSAGE I GOT FROM MYSELF, IT SHOULD BY-PASS THIS BRAIN-THING THAT'S BEEN CONTROLLING WHERE WE GO...
GN
DN
TEMPORAL EGRESSION FIELD GENERATOR
DO NOT DISCONNECT
TROUBLE IS, THE MESSAGE ALSO SAID WE'D ONLY HAVE 72 HOURS TO GET READY... BUT IT DIDN'T SAY WHY...
...AND OUR TIME'S ALMOST UP!
ARR. THAT BE A NEW SHIP FER THESE PARTS, COMMODORE, BUT I RECOGNIZES HER - SHE'S THE ONE ME OLD ENEMY SCRAGBEARD DID STEAL FROM UNDER ME NOSE - LEAVING ME ADRIFT TILL I ENDED UP 'ERE!
WE NEED MORE SLAVES TO WORK OUR AIR-FARMS - AND MAYBE THERE'S SOME WOMEN ABOARD!
TO YOUR BATTLESTATIONS, MEN, IT'S TIME FOR SOME FUN! HEH. HEH. HEH.
CAN OUR HEROES RESIST A SNEAK ATTACK FROM SUPERIOR FORCES? WILL THE TIME-SHIP BE ON-LINE? DON'T MISS EPISODE FIVE.

Fanzine Reviews

By Lloyd Penney

OSFS STATEMENT 233, Nov. 1996 · Ottawa Science Fiction Society, c/o 251 Nepean St., Ottawa, ON, CANADA K2P OB7 · Edited by Lionel Wagner, full-sized · E-mail: ck508tireenet.carleton.ca. · For members or exchange.

There aren't many SF clubs left in Canada who publish a clubzine that does travel around, and get exchanged, but the Ottawa Science Fiction society in one of them. For just over ten years now, Lionel Wagner has assembled the *Statement* for OSFS combining club news and other goodies for fans in the Ottawa area, and combining the talents of Ottawa's fannish artists with its traditional goldenrod cover. Lionel's work has gone largely unrecognized by Canadian fandom, and few clubs can boast a zine editor who's been doing the job for the club as long as he has.

Issue 233 has the usual club information, such as a list of other organizations in town, like apas, cons, parties, BBSes, and other club and special interest groups. There's also a calendar of coming events in local fandom. Many clubs underestimate the importance of such a calendar and such a fiat of other organizations; such pure info in all that connects many fans to the grapevine. When a club fails to provide this info, as I have seen in some clubzines, it withers, wondering what happened.

Being able to put a number like 223 on a clubzine is an impressive feat, and OSFS is one of two clubs in Canada able to boast about that. (The other is *BCSFAzine*, the clubzine of the British Columbia SF Association in Vancouver. Its latest issue, dated December 1996, is number 283.)

Ottawa fandom has a history of publishing under pseudonyms, and writers like The Ol' Perfesser and Ann Elid get references from time to time. There used to be a lot of local content, with columns from many fans on SF, comics and gaming, but these have died off, being largely replaced with interesting messages, conversations and articles downloaded and hardcopied from the Internet. One exception is a regular feature entitled *Whispers* from Hollyweird/Whispers from Elsewhere, by Charles Mohapel and Tohmas Branes, which details SFnal entertainment news and strange stories from the newswires, which is always a fun read. The other is a regular reprint of *Ask Mr. Science* from *BCSFAzine*.

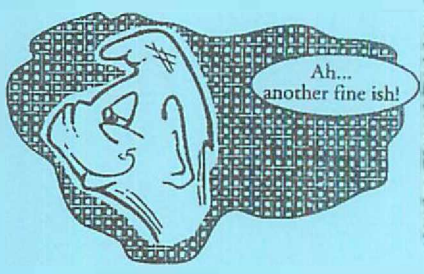
Issue 223 also has an article from itinerant convention fan Andre Lieven, about convention economics and how much to charge for membership, reviews from Glenn St-Germain, a comics column from columnist, letterer and comic creator Janet Hetherington, and books and a con list from Beulah Wadsworth. As for a letter column...while other letters appears from time to time, I can say that I'm the only fanzine fan who LoCs the *Statement* regularly. Then again, I think I'm the only one who gets it regularly. They haven't had many trades, so contact them and arrange one. They'll enjoy the new zines, and you'll enjoy a good clubzine.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK 68, 69, Sept.-Oct. 1996, · Melbourne Science Fiction Club, P.O. Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, 3005, AUSTRALIA · Edited by Paul Ewins, regular British size (A4) · For members, trade, sub or The Usual.

I'll stay with clubzines for right now, for I believe these zine's are more important than fanzine fandom thinks. They're often the first exposure to fannish publishing many fans have, and if we want fans to keep publishing, and enlarge our numbers, we need to support the clubs in their efforts. Clubzines are the perfect link between the club members and the rest of the fannish world, and that link works both ways. To get a look into the fun and frivolity of Australian fandom, get a regular mailing of *Ethel*, and get your letters of comments in.

Issues 68 and 69 see the end of Paul Ewins' editorship, and there's no word about who his replacement will be with issue 70. He says that his departure has nothing to do with Australia's win of the 1999 Worldcon, but many of us have suspicions... As with the OSFS *Statement*, Ethel has the usual clubzine elements, with when the next meeting is, membership info, a report from the club library, trades (many, from all over the world) and a calendar detailing when club meetings and cons are coming. (In case you're wondering, this zine takes its name from a series of Australian children's book, with the title character being Ethel the Aardvark. I'm sure Ethel would be a welcome change from the Bananas in Pajamas. Makes a better zine title, too.)

Paul provides his usual waffling editorial in each issue, Karen Pender-Gunn writes about neat sites on the Web. Ian Gunn blethers about something interesting in his regular column *Gunnshots*, Phil Wlodarczyk writes about computer games, and the usual book and movie columns appear. Issue 68 has articles about the First Annual Australian Costumers' Ball, and 69 has remembrances of Aussiecon II, as Aussiecon III is staring them in the face. It also has a great article from Paul on why *Star Trek Pisses Him Off*. (His words and title.) Sixty-nine's cover will raise a few eyebrows, with a sex-planet theme, and some familiar faces of Ozfandom blended in. (Issue 69...we should have expected it.) Because the MSFC is the Gunn's home club, there 's plenty of art and cartoons from Ian, plus art stuff from



Art by Sheryl Birkhead

Phil W., Sheryl Birkhead and Peggy Ranson. The local occupies a good chunk of each issue, and fans write in from all over the world.

WILD HEIRS 17, 18, September and October 1996 · edited by Arnie & Joyce Katz, Tom Springer, Tammy Funk, Ken & Aileen Forman, Ross Chamberlain, William Rotsler, Marcy & Ray Waldie, Ben & Cathi Wilson, Ray Nelson, Rob Hansen, Shelby & Suzanne Vick, Bill & Laurie Kunkel, & Cora Burbee; known collectively as The Vegrants · 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107, e-mail WildHeirs@aol.com · 8 1/2 x 11 · Available for trade, loc, art or article.

There's plenty of cooks to spice up this broth, and *Wild Heirs* is always a spicy read. These two issues came together, and I sent in my usual four-page loc. This zine always is the cause of my largest LoCs, up to 10-12k in size, because it's jam-packed with comment hooks and fascinating ideas with which to insert my opinionated words. Suffering from a surfeit of editors (19, that's not too many) means lots of editorials/columns, lots of articles and lots of Ray Nelson and Bill Rotsler cartoons and Roes Chamberlain covers.

The editorials in issue 17 cover Toner, the fanzine party (not a convention) that was staged in Las Vegas the weekend before L.A.con III. A semi-regular feature of this fanzine is the Heritage Reprint, which spotlights some of the best of fanwriting of the 40s and 50s, like those of F. Towner Laney, Charles Burbee and Elmer Perdue, just to name a few. These reprints makes fandom that much more three-dimensional for me, for it gives me a look at those who fanned before us. Two chapters of Martin Tudor's TAFF report finish up 17. Eighteen has a fan camping article by Ken Forman, and a GoH speech by Greg Benford.

The efforts of the Katzes have turned Las Vegas, a sleepy fannish backwater, into the current centre of the fanpubbing universe, seeing that Seattle pubbing fandom seems to be in hibernation. Plenty of titles (*Folly, Swerve, Doodlebug, Brodie, Dalmatian Alley, Vegas Fan Diary*) have come from the Katz pubbing empire, and the team of writers he has assembled rivals in numbers of the denizens of Harry Warner's fanwriter dungeon. The addition of former L.A. fan and *Delineator* editor Alan White should add even more twinkle to this stellar grouping, and some of his distinctive cartoons are in these issues. The writings of this team makes it look like Vegas is the place to be fanwise, and even if it isn't, it makes for great reading. Neither issue has a locol, but an all-loc issue is promised for #19, with LoCs from around the world.

What' s the appeal of this zine for me? Tradition, fannish foolishness, great fanwriting and cartoons, solid connections with fanzine fandom, fanhistory aspects...it's got all the ingredients that spark my interest. Plus, the fact that it doesn't take itself seriously at all, reserving seriousness for remembrance of our fannish past, and the tone of the zine is genuine hospitality in paper form. Plead with Arnie for an issue, and make sure he spells everything right (grin).

Letters of Comment

December 12, 1996

Dear Ken and Elisa:

Many thanks for issue 38 of *Proper Boskonian*...

First of all, Ken, congratulations on successfully editing your run of *PBs*. As an itinerant fan who moves from one interest to another, I understand wanting to get on with fresh projects, and doing it by committing time management with your other projects.

I can see by the fanzine column here (and in a few other fanzines) that I will have to get myself organized, and send out another raft of whiny letters, saying "Pleeeeeze, PLEEEEEZE send me your fanzine." Worked once before, so let's try it again. I'd like some more of the great British fanzines I've been hearing about (I think the UK in now having the same kind of mini-renaissance in fanzine publishing North America had a couple of years ago.) I'd also like to get Barnaby Rapoport's *Zina*. (Not to be confused with *Xena*, I guess.)

Great article by Richard Harter, and I have read a copy of *Personal Notes*. I'd like to see the articles in #10, but it's a shame it's electronic only...

Looks like Nomi Burstein has done her homework on the literary instances *in Babylon 5*. No doubt, she had access to video tapes with all the episodes on them, or she's been keeping steady notes going all this time. And, of course, there's the assistance of the *Lurker's Guide*. I remember some of the references mentioned...I also remember my reaction when we finally found out Bester's first name. "I KNEW IT!" As everywhere, litfen and mediafen alike here watch the show, and I did take some delight in explaining to some mediafan friends why I knew Bester's first name had to be Alfred, and then pulling a handful of Alfred Bester books off my shelf to their astonishment...

This past week has been an egoboo-filled week for me, quite delightful. First of all, there's Bob Devney's letter, describing me as being a Veritable Fannish Institution. Perhaps I should be IN one, but being a VFI (read: OldPhart) at age 37 can be dangerous to one's fannish career. I am pleased that a lot of my letters are published, though; excellent return for the investment in postage and envelopes. (*Mimosa 19* arrived today, and being consigned to that issue's WAHF column brought me down to earth real quick.) Then, there's Joe Mayhew's cartoon about me being an alien? Hey, folks, to me, you're the aliens. (And then, *Independence Day* just makes me wonder...when you come up, just show your birth certificates, no passports required.) Joe drew me all wrong...my irises are pointier, and my ears are much larger and furrier. I've been referred to in a few Cartoons, but for some reason, no one knows what I really look like! Finally, I got down to my friendly neighbourhood SF shop and the *Locus* article on runners-up for the Hugo ballot showed that I had received six nominations for Best Fan Writer. It's time for lead weights in the shoes, for I have had reason to float, with my trademarked shit-eating grin on my face.

Yours, Lloyd Penney, Veritable Fannish Institution. (Bob Devney said so)

Letters of Comment

12-28-96

Dear Lisa and Kenneth:

Received *PB*-38 today, and welcome it was. Since I last wrote you, I actually attended two SF conventions, my first since the 1993 Corflu. Not Worldcon, but Ditto 9 and Orycon 18. You should be able to read all the details in the next *FOSFAX*.

The two conventions were part of a 4-week vacation. My next lengthy vacation will be a 24 days adventure to the Antarctica area in November 1997. This obviously will take all my available vacation time and spare money, so I see no chance of attending any SF cons in 1997. Oddly enough, the Post Office has given me 15-28 February as a winter vacation slot, which would have enabled me to attend Boskone 34 if I had had the money.

So, what to LOC in this issue. Flying Saucers again? Pass. *Babylon 5?* Another pass. (No TV set since 1985.) Readercon? Indeed I'd like to attend one some day, if not this year or next year. I like small cons. (Although Ditto 9, with only 13 attendees, may have been TOO small. I fear that Richard Brandt lost his shirt on that hotel contract.)

Fascinating to read about the 1971 PBs. 1971? Pause to remember.... I was in the US Navy, stationed at HQ London, kitty corner from the USA Embassy where anti-American demonstrations over the Vietnam war were a daily event. Despite actually being in the armed forces, I gave little thought to Vietnam. I was more interested in drinking as many of the British beers and ales I could find, most served at room temperature. (By the way, these beers and ales are NEVER served warm, as some Americans claim. They are served at room temperature, which is not the same thing in the UK.)

O yes, as a Postal Worker I survived the holidays. Unlike Las Vegas, Los Angeles had no shootings. My whole attitude towards Chritma is still BAH! HUMBUG!

Yours Aye...Harry Cameron Andruschak

12-29-96

Dear Kenneth,

Thanks for the many issues of *Proper Boskonian* you have sent my way. I've enjoyed them, especially seeing the Ian Gunn artwork. Nice to see a zine presenting lengthy fanzine reviews; now if we could only get some into the prozines... Evelyn Leeper does a wonderful thorough job of convention panel reports.

It was good to see a new, but excellent, writer like Michael Burstein remark about how it is still possible to see fandom as a step to being a pro, and that you can be both a fan and a pro. I'd hate to see the close relationship between the two become extinct, even though a pro may have to cut back considerably on their fan activity.

The reviews of early issues, and then the long article by former editor Richard Harter made a great nostalgic piece.

Best wishes, Eric Lindsay *(Gegenschein)*

(Sorry, but I cut this letter due to length; you can find ***Gegenschein*** *at http://www.maths.uts.edu.au/staff/eric/ain99 --Editor)*

January 3, 1997

Dear Ms. Hertel:

Re: Proper: PROPER BOSKONIAN #38, I enjoyed the cover and worried about the back cover. Is this a tribute to Escher? Am I missing any references? Is this a European city or one in otherwhen?

More good, fun, and thorough reviews by Bob Devney. I appreciated being reminded about the post card/e-mail experiment and other interesting info in *The Freethinker*. I liked FTT's attitude toward illustrations, though I have to admit that sometimes I like my text broken up with pictures. The *Opuntia 28* review had some gems (the type reference and 90% of everything...how true). Interesting that *Proper Boskonian* is reprinting early issues—a great idea. *Zina I* (a paperback...so light in weight...) sounds like fun too. (Thanks for all the quotes, Bob.)

I enjoyed Richard Harter's recounting of *PB*'s early years. Looking back is interesting and funnier than it was then. (Working with stencils, etc. sounds horrible.) "The Literary Roots of Babylon 5" was very good. (Well, I didn't miss all the references.) Note to Evelyn Leeper: I love the in-depth con panel reports...

Lots more to #38 of course, but I have to take the pack out now.

Sincerely, Joy V. Smith

1-4-97

Dear Kenneth,

Just a note to thank you for the copy of *Proper Boskonian* 38 that you sent. I was sorry to see the Blish content reduced to a fairly uninspired review of *The Tale That Wags the God*, but I guess it's better than nothing. Chris Drumm has now got copies of the Blish bibliography if you want to strong-arm NESFA into buying a copy (list price is $10.50). I was again very happy with the way it turned out, although Virginia Kidd spotted an error as soon as she got her copy, I did a new edition of the Anne McCaffrey one at the same time, although there's keen nothing since.

Thanks for the information on *The White Papers*, which I've now been fortunate enough to acquire — a great volume, and one of the best NESFA have done to my mind. I'm only sorry I didn't get asked about the bibliography in the Program Book until it was too late to do a proper job, but then I've always been a perfectionist.

Rumour has it that *His Share of Glory* is now due in February - I hope this time the date is correct, as I'm really keen to see that volume appear.

All the Best, Phil Stephensen-Payne *(Imladris)*

***(His Share of Glory** is available now from NESFA—Editor)*

1-7-97

Dear gang:

The article by Gene Stewart on "SF, UFO's, and a Sense of Wonder" would be more credible in the absence of articles by Gene Stewart on how SF should try to discredit UFO's and how SF should avoid all that SF detail. He seems to be mounting up and riding off in every direction. The cross-section appeal to UFOdom would seem to be con-

Letters of Comment

traindicated, since from all indications UFOdom is gnostic. "We don' need no steenkin' sensawonda!" The UFOfan already knows it all and basks in the light of his knowledge, existing at a height of wisdom unattainable by sci-fi fans who are so deprived and depraved as to actually **believe** the lie spread by MJ- 12 that there is no air on the Moon.

If Babylon 5 has a transport named in homage *Marie Celeste,* it may have sound literary roots but poor historical ones. The "sailing ship found adrift in the sea in 1872 by the crew of the ship *Dei Gratia"* was named *Mary Celeste.* The sound literary roots come from a story, "J. Habakkuk Jephson's Statement" which was about a "sailing ship found adrift in the sea", said ship being named *Marie Celeste.* The story itself was actually by an impoverished doctor seeking to get away from detectives -- Dr. A. Conan Doyle.

Yes, Blish was nuts about James Branch Cabell. Almost every one of his novels has a Cabell reference; usually the name of a character but sometimes something else. As with the motto of the Traitor's Guild revealed in "Beep"/The Quincunx *of Time,* which is the same as Dom Manuel's motto in *Figures of Earth,* namely *"Mundus vult decipi"* [Lat. "The world wishes to be deceived"].

"How anyone can deny all that film footage and those personal interviews with survivors, military personnel, and unrepentant former Nazis themselves is inconceivable to me." says Joy V. Smith, who clearly has no acquaintance with the paranoid style. For example, if two accounts correspond, that proves a conspiracy, since the accounts were clearly written by the same conspirator. Whereas if they disagree, that proves a conspiracy, trying to promote a clumsy lie. Special effects can account for the film footage (at present there is a book out pointing to nineties digitzed movies as proof that the famous Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination was faked). And so on.

Can Bob Devney send Johnny Carruthers his "whole paragraph attacking his attack on slightly pudgy ex-cadet Shannon Faulkner"? Or send it to us *(FOSFAX c/o* FOSFA. Post Office Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281; or jtmajor@iglou.com)?

Joseph T. Major

1-10-97

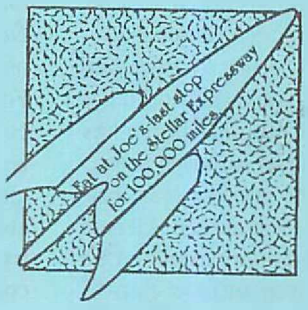
Dear Lisa—

Where did Joe Mayhew come up with the idea for his back cover art? I know he wasn't at the Worldcon in Scotland but the scene reminds me of the old part of Edinburgh, with its steep streets and stairs walkways. There was even an ancient *camera obscura* near the castle.

Ken violated one of the unwritten rules of fan editing in his editorial. Never apologize for an issue being late. Once they have it in hand, fans don't care.

Best wishes—Teddy Harvia

(This one's late too.. I will take Teddy's advice--Editor)



Art by Sheryl Birkhead

1-16-97

Dear Kenneth, Lisa and George,

Thank you very much for sending *Proper Boskonian* to my husband.

Orbita Dicta was really interesting. So was *SF, UFOs and a Sense of Wonder.* The *Babylon 5* article was interesting too, although I don't watch the series much these days. My husband and I have just moved into a house where all the heat drifts upstairs. The TV is downstairs and we generally only watch it when the weather allows. Perhaps when the weather allows I'll get back into watching the show and try to figure out what I've missed.

I really liked the article about James Blish also but then I'm always a sucker for anything dealing with fannish history.

Sincerely, Lisa Major

1-29-97

Dear Ms. Hertel:

I enjoyed the cover art, "Mac," and, as usual, the magnificently thorough con and con panel reports from Evelyn Leeper, which I love. My favorite was "Funny Stories from R & D." "Dinosaurs" was very good. As for "Death of the Book," when I get up from the computer, I lie down on the bed or sofa and read books and magazines to relax.

I loved the *Hollywood Cliches*! And enjoyed "Space & Time Buccaneers." (Hey, Ian. Do you know that AOL is looking for cartoons?)

And Bob Devney has more great and enjoyable zine reviews. Since I can't read them all (no time, no time), it's wonderful to see what's happening and what's funny. (Thank you!)

Appreciatively, Joy V. Smith

1-29-97

Dear Lisa—

I received your first issue of *The Proper Boskonian* today & was quite impressed. I like its fannish, lighthearted style. I'll miss Ken Knabbe but I know I'll enjoy what you have to show us.

What I need to know is whether *you* have seen a copy of *Challenger* No. 5, my genzine, or whether the copy I sent to Ken stayed with him. If you *don't* have it, please drop me a post card or a call, and you'll get one ASAP.

I guess you'll be at San Antonio. If you spot a bald fat broke old ugly* fanboy in glasses and a New Orleans Saints hat, come up & say hello.

All best—Guy Lillian III *(Challenger)*

*Or *fabbo*, as I like to say

(All fanzines that NESFA receives are kept in the clubhouse for all members to look at and enjoy—Editor)

Letters of Comment

1-31-97

Dear Lisa:

Received PB-39 today, and wonder if my LOC on PB-38 ever arrived. Not even a WAHF listing?

Ah well, I haven't been doing much except enjoying life and saving up money for my Antarctica vacation, now rescheduled for 7-30 November.

I see you have forgotten, on page 9, my favourite Hollywood sci-fi movie cliche: "That's odd, my watch has also stopped!"

I missed the 1996 Worldcon, so I suppose there is an academic interest in Leeper's account. But I cannot honestly say that anything I read makes me regret that I was unable to get the time off from my work at the Post Office to attend. And in all honesty I didn't try very hard.

However, for your amusement, I enclose a copy of the magazine all us Postal Workers get as part of our wonderful job from our ever so enlightened management. It may be of interest if you were the editors who once asked about the origin of the phrase "to go postal". Or was that *FOSFAX* or some other zine? In any case, hope you enjoy it.

Yours Aye, Harry Cameron Andruschak

(PB 38 & 39 came so close together that few letters had time to arrive; your older loc is above—Editor)

February 7, 1997

Dear gang:

Evelyn Leeper's con report begins with imposing, if not indeed tedious, proof that Worldcon is getting so big that nobody goes there any more. Or if they do, you cannot ever find them. You will, however, be surrounded by thousands of people having the same problem. "Having to break away from programming to run to another building to vote for site selection is a real nuisance," except for the people who run the con.

"LACon III had ten panels on various aspects of Japanese SF and fandom". Gee! Do you think it could be because of the substantial Japanese membership of the con, facilitated by its being on the Pacific Rim, and led by GoH Takumi Shibano?

"Religion in SF Books and Movies": There is still an anti-religion bias, which I note by seeing the references later on to James Morrow, who profoundly dislikes religion. His attitude would be more coherent and better founded if he knew about what he disliked. But the point raised from the audience about "civic religion," with ritual instead of belief, is sound. People in the public eye are often compelled to admit to some practice of religion, but anyone in the public view who tries to actually practice religion is disesteemed. (Steven L. Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief* could have gone into this like it said it would, but it did not.)

"The Future of Religion": The Old Catholic Church has not been split off from the R.C. for several hundred years, but for only about a hundred and twenty, over the matter of papal infallibility. (At one point in his lurid career, Aleister Crowley tried to take over an Old Catholic organization.)

"Funny Stories from Science Research and Development": This went over very well at the office, but then there are a lot of technical types here. I even thought of something to go with the liquid nitrogen ice cream; [in my case, Diet] Coke with dry ice. You put the dry ice in the glass, where it sinks, and emits strange huge brownish bubbles. As for the barbecue matter, there is a Web site dedicated to precisely that.

"Dinosaurs": "[Greg] Bear had just finished a sequel to Doyle's *Lost World*." Which one— *The Poison Belt* or *The Land of Mist*? And how did he like it/them? I would think that *The Land of Mist*, with Challenger taking his belligerent style to advocating spiritualism, shows how scientists can be tricked even more than most people, because the scientific method is so heavily based on assuming that people are telling the truth. Perhaps a continuation of *The Poison Belt* would be better to sell than a continuation of *The Land of Mist* because the audience would be more interested in another book on dinosaurs than a book on debunking, or worse yet, advocating.

"Film Presentations at L.A.Con III": "Someone in the audience asked how the filmmakers plan to tell much of story in such a conflict-less land as Dinotopia." To answer the question, in a curious reversal of sequence, Alan Dean Foster has written a book, *Dinotopia Lost*, which brings conflict to Dinotopia. Some pirates are blown there and bring conflict, violence, carnivorousness, and other such unpleasant things with them.

Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* "will have the next quantum leap in special effects." I think they were thinking more in the sense of "a transition from one state to the next, higher, state." Mark Leeper was pre-disenchanted by the sense of "how can you make a film without bullets?" and according to all reports, not without cause. For example, unless "Casper Van Dien" is a name of some great-grandson of an American soldier, with all other ancestors being from the Philippines, something is very wrong here. And in general the Word regarding Robert A. Heinlein 's *Starship Troopers* is that it is no more than a shoot-up, a film you cannot make without bullets. They can make it without the philosophical musings (it may be a philosophy you disagree with, or one you dislike the presentation of, but it is still a philosophical book).

I wonder if there is not some problem with only being able to understand the current episode of *Babylon 5* if you have seen the entire series. It sort of serves as a too high threshold keeping out new viewers.

As *Batman: the Animated Series* also known as *Batman and Robin* takes off from the "new Batman" of *Batman: the Dark Knight*, so does *Superman: the Animated Series* take off from the "new Superman" of after his temporary demise. For example, the Luthor who is "a captain of industry" in the comics is, or so I understand, Lex Luthor II, pretending to be a relative of the original, dead of cancer, but in fact a clone, imbued with the original's memories (but, presumably, able to grow hair, for example). Anyone who wanted to try to understand the Kuhnian concept of "paradigm shift" could do so by following the comics.

Letters of Comment

To the entire LoC column (i.e. Bob Devney), thanks. E. R. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros*: "There . . . audience." Said audience being Edward Lessingham, the superhero of the Earthly parts of the Zimiamvia trilogy, who invisibly observes the events of the book for our reading pleasure. He presumably gets out before the scene at the end, which switches the characters into an endless loop, and even denies them the power to escape from this grand-scale version of Lupoff's 12:01 through suicide—never ask for what you want, you might get it.
Joseph T Major

2-10-97

Dear Kenneth Knabbe, Lisa Hertel *et alia* -

#38's cover was great, with the amusing stickers & licenses on the UFO/RV. Also, I generally like reading black print on yellow paper. Most intense contrast, I'm told.

Speaking of Blish, which EdKen was, in his Editorial Ramblings, I came across a copy of an old Belmont PB in the thrift-shop the other day. It's called *A Pair From Space* but is not focused on extraterrestrial breasts. Rather, it's an omnibus of two novellas. One is "We, the Marauders" by Silverbob. The other is "Giants in the Earth" by James Blish. The book's from 1965 and hasn't been read, *tant pis*. Or *tant mieux*, from a collector's POV, I suppose. In any case, I'm always glad to find more Blish. Is someone who reads too much of his work at one go liable to being called "Blished out"? Sorry.

Zineophile by Bob Devney--Great reviews. They're detailed, precise, and often cut to the quick of what's right, or wrong, with a given zine.

PB: The Gory Years by Richard Harter, FN - First, it's funny. Second, it's informative. Third, interesting. With those three strikes against it, what can be done but to sigh, nod, and praise the damned thing. Ghood stuff. Makes me nostalgic for times I never had. Far from babbling, Harter is concise, witty, and pertinent. What kind of fan is that? By the way, nine is where most of the big symphony composers stop, too. Hm.

By Ian Gunn -*Fanimals* "Sticky Beaks" -All too true, alas, alack. And everyone thinks Nixon had problems with surreptitious taping.

-Space*Time Buccaneers" -Sense of wonder with wit and hilarity. Episode 2 is great and I hope this barnacled tale continues for umpteenth ishes. Great 'toon.

Readercon 8 by Ken Knabbe The live e-mail with Wm. Gibson was a great fix, and in years to come I imagine telepresence will increase, as real-time video conferencing becomes affordable. Hotels might also begin to make this available. Think of having Arthur C. Clarke in attendance, for example. I hope he's doing well enough to benefit from the next few years of technical applications of this sort.

The panels you cite sounded interesting, and your details of what worked and what didn't seem right on target. Wish I could attend. You made Readercon sound just right.

Bob Devney's *Orbita Dicta* --Closest thing to virtual attendance I've seen; excellent report. Really brought it to life.

"SF, UFO's, and a Sense of Wonder" by Gene Stewart Thanks for presenting my essay in such a clear, dignified form. Spotted only one typo, can't recall where. Thanks, too, for pubbing the bibliography, which surprised me. Let's hope any & all responses are kind. huh?

I'm a C. S. Lewis aficionado, too, and he once made the point that fans are the proper folds to review things, because they appreciate the form and know what has gone before, and can place each work against a rational, understandable context. I wrote the essay in that spirit.

The Literary Roots of Babylon 5 by Nomi Burstein – To Nomi is to love me? Almost wrote "Naomi," but I cross-checked both by-line and title page, so Nomi it shall be. It's a nice name. What's the origin?

This article is fun, revealing, and makes me eager to catch some more B-5. Of course, over here in the depths of the EU, we is not be gettin' mucha any kind o'TV show, no-suh. Culture slaves, cast off your Trainspotting. You have nothing to lose but a Bad Habit.

Okay, I'm back. It's fascinating, spotting all this oblique lit-ref going on in a TV show. In a post-literate society, it's refreshing, but may also simply be a better ploy than pilfering other TV shows & movies, the way most of Hollywood tends to do. *Independence Day* was so crammed with filched scenes, right down to dialogue echoes, that any chance for originality evaporated before the first White House explosion. Is JMS perhaps simply mining a better vein of gold?

I'm not sure. While the reference game is fun, Meyers' *Silverlock's* been done, and Niven-Pournelle-Flynn's *Fallen Angel*, too, and derivative is as derivative does. It's a danger to have too much referential fun, is all I'm saying. I hope Straczynski keeps tight hold of the reins and doesn't lose control of his exceptional bandwagon. If the vision is truly his, and if he is true to the vision, then he and his show will do fine. His greatest strength is that he came from print himself. He knows the word comes first.

A Case of Conscientiousness: James Blish and ***The Tale That Wags the God*** by Bob Devney—Another superb piece by the inestimable Devney. If Blish deserves intelligent readers, here's the proof. BD illuminates both the man and the book(s).

Letters[3]—All the letters were fun to read, but only one elicited comments.

Joseph T. Major—I'm shaking my head over that silver-and-green nonsense. It's sad that people so mistrust one source of information that they forget to think and end up placing all trust in alternative channels. Or channelers, alas.

Orson Scott Card is certainly treading on sore toes with his Alvin. I'm still reeling a bit from having read *The Mormon Murders* by Naifeh & White-Smith, (no claimed relation). It reports on the bombings that terrified Salt Lake City awhile back, but some of the background stuff is equally alarming.

I read, "Come Back to the Raft, Huck Honey" and was once again boggled by academia's idea of a good time. Or book.

Your locs are the best. Thanks for the stimulation and erudition.

Letters of Comment

Guess that's about it. PB-38 was everything a zine should be. I look forward to #39. And I may cobble up another article or review. Of late I've read *Idoru* by Gibson, *Kaleidoscope Century* by John Barnes, Martyn Bedford's *Acts of Revision*, and even *Going Digital* by Nicholas Negroponte, among much else.

Tschuss – Gene Stewart

(Nomi says her name is a variant of Naomi, based on the traditional Hebrew—Editor)

2-14-97

Dear Lisa—

I laugh at everything Ian Gunn does (even the serious stuff), but his science fictional natural history of the lungfish had me gasping for air. It was every bit as believable as the truth about them. I can hardly wait for the sequel on coelacanths. ("Reports of their extinction are greatly exaggerated.")

Evelyn C. Leeper and I attended the same Hugo Nominees party in L. A., but she drew different conclusions from what she saw than I. Such parties are typically crowded, loud and hot. At the LoneStarCon 2 party I saw no one inside who was not staff or a nominee. The Texas fan who guarded the front door said that in the 2 hours he was on duty he let no one else in. The only party crasher I know of is the pro who came to the backdoor without a badge and when challenged, said, "Do you know who I am?" "Well, no." "I am *Famous Writer.*" The guard, Diana Thayer, unaccustomed to belligerent pros, let her in. I stayed in the party only about 30 minutes before going out onto the patio to breathe and mingle with my non-nominee friends. I did return a couple of times for more drinks.

Evelyn's Criticism of the drinking boots LSC 2 handed out to the nominees is based on faulty memory. The wineglasses ConAdian handed out in San Francisco had only a maple leaf on them to indicate who they were from. The famous flashlights Mike Glyer gave out in Glasgow made no mention of Intersection. The handouts with the most complete identification are Intersection's shot-glass (from Winnipeg) and Magicon's coffee mug (from Chicago). But I treasure them all (even the notepad from ConFrancisco, that I have misplaced, and the flashlight, that has totally corroded inside).

Beast Wishes, Teddy Harvia

2-22-97

Greetings Folks—

Great to see that design on the cover; seems several zines died that were going to use it—glad the curse has ended. Excellent Worldcon event coverage by Evelyn, as always. Always look forward to those in-depth reports!

Best—Brad Foster

(Many people liked Brad's cover; I've received many compliments—Editor)

2-23-97

Dear Lisa:

Hello, new editor, and welcome to the position of editor of *Proper Boskonian*. A daunting task, but I'm sure that Ken Knabbe's still around to help and answer questions. Issue 39 is here, and I'll try to write some intelligent comments.

We'll be at Astronomicon 6 in Rochester, New York, so I'll be mailing this letter from Rochester, to use up the US postage I have at home. I hope the rates haven't changed lately...

You used my Mike Ford review...great! You should have also received some fanzine reviews, plus a loc on issue 38. Did I submit the only Ford review? I'd be interested in knowing what happened at Arisia and Boskone...couldn't go, as usual.

The geeks will use e-mail, and the old-fashioned will use a quill pen? Does that mean the rest of us will use a computer and WP programme, and simply mail it? Some fanzines already look down at those of us who will remain e-mail-less for the foreseeable future, and inflict the PO on those long-suffering faneds.

One thing that made us smile in Evelyn Leeper's L.A.con III report was one of the con's ribbons, "Place Party Stickers Here". Yvonne and I have been doing that, affixing blank grosgrain ribbons to our Worldcon badges to hold bid stickers and pins, for some years, since the 1988 Worldcon. At Magicon in 1992, Mike Glyer was in Treasury, and noticed that Yvonne (one of the Treasury workers) was wearing a blank ribbon on her name badge. When he enquired, Yvonne told him that it was to store pins and stickers so that her name on her badge wouldn't be obscured. Mike said he thought it wee a good idea, and I guess it was good enough to make it part of the Whole Ribbon Collection.

One useful addition to a pocket programme, besides all the programming grids...a blank grid for yourself so you can write down the programme items you'd like to get to, plus space to write down party times and rooms for each evening. Your Personal Worldcon Social Planner, you might say.

Skateboarding fanac and fanzines? This, I'd like to know more about. I figured that any skateboarding zines would be electronic. Rock music makes me smile when it claims it invented the idea of the fanzine, and the few I've seen have been generally unreadable.

Lloyd Penney

3-3-97

Dear Lisa,

"Hello, sucker!" You do know what you are letting yourself in for in taking the editorial duties of PB? Actually, at the moment, managing PB should be more fun than being at the helm of either the Bruins or the Celtics. Possible topic of debate: Who do we dump first; Harry Sinden or M. L. Carr? Speaking of no longer being in high school, I graduated in 1970 when the Bruins with Bobby Orr and Company won the Stanley Cup. I have a nephew who's half way through high school and two nieces who have long since graduated. One thing for sure, nobody ever gets younger, only older.

Kenneth Knabbe did a great job at PB and you will too if you

Letters of Comment

take it slowly as you allow your own style and voice to emerge.

"Mac" by Joseph M. Freehan was evocative and deeply moving while only running to four pages. By all means add fiction from time to time when you have a hole or two to fill.

Ian Gunn's *Hollywood's Cliches* where funny and dead on target. I can imagine he can come up with some more since he hasn't exhausted the subject

Okay, okay , I was wrong. Evelyn C. Leeper's entitled to interject her own opinions into her con reports. It does make it seem like she's doing more than just cataloging what took place. And you're always free to disagree with her. I still marvel at her conciseness at reporting the most important aspects of each con and con panel. Re: "Style Vs. Substance": While I've always been drawn more to story telling (substance) than style, I feel that that the latter, or author's voice or point of view are equally vital. I'm not crazy for writers who show-off via style with no story behind it. Yet how a story is told and by whom I feel can be as important. As much I as dearly love Stephen King there are times when his voice and style can be full of it. Talk about literally running off at the mouth. King and Tom Clancy need to have a good talking to about doing too many overlong novels. Having majored in English and have studied and enjoyed poetry (and in getting older and mellowing more!) I'm not totally against style. At least style in sf/ fantasy/horror/mystery and the classics as opposed to what's called style in mainstream literature.

Keep Devney chained up doing fanzine reviews. He continues to do a great job in detailing each zine he reports on. Sorry that I'm not one for joining world cons or I'd be able to nominate both Leeper and Devney for their superb fan writing. Lately it seems like the only place I've been in and out of a lot is the hospital. Yes, I'm all in favor of seeing doctors and nurses undergo what they dish out to the poor patients. I have read of doctors making the worst patients. I can believe it.

The back covers of both PB 38 and 39 came off the staples. Maybe better or longer staples next time.

Sincerely, Ray Bowie

(Bob Devney say it would be "an honor just to be nominated" for a Hugo...thanks—Editor)

E-mail of Comment

E-mail should be sent to pb@thor.com.

22 Mar 1997

To: pb@thor.com

Thanks for sending Suzle and me *Proper Bosk 39*. I just read it (I know you sent it awhile ago, but I'm just catching up) and wanted to let you know. I don't have a lot of comments, though; Evelyn and Mark Leeper are a bit overwhelming in their detail, for instance, and I was reduced to skimming in places.

Bob Devney is pretty detailed, too, but since fanzines are a primary fannish interest of mine, I appreciated it. One thing in his review of *Apparatckik* caught my eye: his mention of the "callout quotes" that *Apak* uses. I presume from Bob's enthusiasm that he's never seen such a thing before, so I get to tell him that the use of odd-ball quotes from letters and general reading as filler, decor or separators between letteers or articles in zines is an old custom. They're generally called "interlineations" or "interlinos." (If NESFA has a copy of Fancyclopedia II, you can look it up.)

Some fanzines have even devoted a section of their page pages to collections of these, rather than scattering them throughout: *Hyphen*, *Egoboo* and one or two of the Nielsen Hayden's zines (*Zed*, *Izzard*) made this a practice. The best ones are still boggling and funny.

We're looking forward to your next issue.

Jerry Kaufman (JAKaufman@aol.com)

5 Feb 1997

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for sending the zines and for Bob Devney's kind words about *The Freethinker* in #38. I see that I made Evelyn Leeper's WorldCon report on page 26 of #39 as the audience member from the South. Evelyn was correct in thinking the Hugo Nominees Party was sponsored by LoneStarCon 2. I helped set it up.

At one time, I read every *Star Trek* novel that came out. However, this was before *Next Generation*. Since then I can get my *Star Trek* fix whenever I wanted. Of those I read, I thought *The Final Reflection* was the best. Unfortunately, one of Ford assumptions was that Klingons have shorter lifespans than humans. This has been contradicted by the later shows.

Good luck with future issues!

Tom Feller (CCWS74A@prodigy.com)

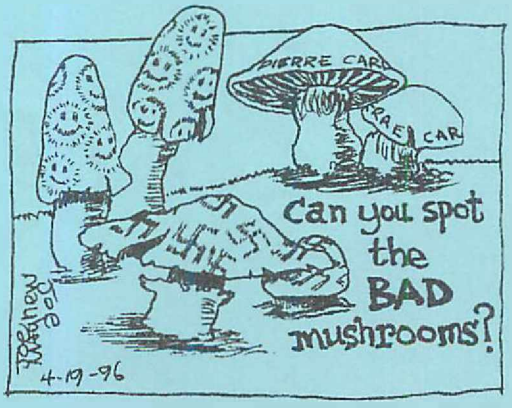
24 Jan 1997

Lisa:

Just came across these items, please pass them to the appropriate person for the Ford bibliography:

Gaming Related: The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society #19 Game Designers' Workshop (1983); Pride of Lions; Skyport Authority; *The Klingons*, FASA 1983 (John M. Ford, Guy W. McLimore, Jr., Greg K. Poehlein, David F. Tepool); *The Klingons, 2nd Edition*, FASA 1987 (Writing credit is given as: Fantasimulations Associates (based on original material by John M. Ford)).

-- Michael Feldhusen (mikef@pharlap.com)



Art by Joe Mayhew