

A TRAVELER'S IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN

Don Blake, author of the following article, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Blake of Heppner. Don was stationed on Guam for two years as a Navy pilot. In April, upon relief from active duty, he returned to Heppner, Calif.

arranged for a trip around the world, and departed on the first leg of his journey from Seattle. Returning in October, Don spent a couple of months with his parents here, and is now in California. He is a graduate of Heppner high school and the University of Washington where he majored in journalism.

By DON BLAKE

In Tokyo, I went from the airport to the Imperial Hotel with the rest of the American tourists, but instead of checking in I went on to a Japanese Inn for one of the most enjoyable experiences of my trip.

You can stay in Western-style hotels in almost any country in the world today. It will have the

same comforts, probably better service and the same type of people as any good hotel at home.

Unfortunately, however, most tourists miss the best part of traveling and only meet other tourists by staying at these hotels. Granted, they're less expensive than comparable U. S. hotels, but they're still two and three times the price of equally clean and comfortable hotels used by the local citizens.

One of the best countries to illustrate this is Japan. The Imperial Hotel is one of the best and most famous hotels in the world, but if you stay there you'll probably only meet other Americans and never know how the Japanese really live. And what is travel but getting to know how

the people of a country live and think?

I left my shoes at the door of the Inn and tried, in a six-foot-two Occidental way, to become an Oriental. I was shown my room and given a kimono, a standard item in any Japanese inn, that is used as a combination bathrobe, lounging jacket and street attire.

Each room in the Inn was individually decorated in a simple but tasteful way. The wall beams were trees and branches with the wallboard cut to fit every curve of the wood. The floors were covered with tatami mats made of woven rice straw. They are in all Japanese homes and are always the same size. They are about two inches thick, edged in black and always arranged in certain patterns. A room in Japan is built to accommodate a certain number of tatami arranged in a certain way.

There was no furniture other than a few zabutans, the floor cushions the Japanese use to sit on, and a closet and drawers built in one wall.

Knowing I was hot and tired after my plane ride, the girl who showed me my room also showed me the bath. A Japanese bath is like no other in the world. It is usually a small room with a rock or tile floor and a huge sunken bath in one corner filled with steaming hot water.

In Japan, you do not get into the tub to bathe as we do. You sit on a wooden stool about six inches high on the rock floor, wet yourself from a nearby faucet with a little wooden bucket, then soap and rinse. When you're completely clean of dirt and soap you get into the tub to soak. The water is always so hot that it takes several minutes to get all the way in.

Several hotel guests use the same water before it is changed. After all, you're clean by the time you get in the water. The water is heated with wood and wood is expensive in Japan. Many Americans have caused quite a furor and an added expense to their bill because they did not understand the correct way to take a bath. The Japanese are getting used to Americans now and usually explain the way to take a bath with a shy grin and a mighty effort to suppress their giggles.

I had dinner in the hotel. It would have been very difficult to order enough to bring the total bill to one dollar. I had egg soup, rice and a serving bowl filled with noodles, vegetables and pork for 40 cents.

I had a bottle of Japanese beer in the tiny bar in the center of the inn. The bar was covered by a skylight which had a hole in it to accommodate the tree growing in one corner. I speak no Japanese and the English spoken by the people in the bar was limited to a few words and phrases, but the tremendous sense of humor that every Japanese I met had, made the evening truly delightful.

When I returned to my room my bed had been laid out. It consisted of a thick pad covered with a sheet under an enormous, heavy quilt, covered with a second sheet. The pillow was a small bag filled with rice. It was hard but comfortable.

I had read about a restaurant in Tokyo that specialized in wild game. I finally found the name of the place in a brochure, but my troubles had only begun.

To find anything that isn't well known in the sprawling city of Tokyo you must first find out what district it's in then visit the local police station to find it.

The first building built in any block in Tokyo is No. 1, the next building is No. 2, etc., so that before long No. 1 is next to No. 210 which is next to No. 25 and on and on until no one but the police who work there know where anything is. As a result you go to the police to find anything—legal or illegal.

After nearly two hours of searching we found the restaurant in a narrow alley of one of the narrow sidestreets of the city.

It was freezing that night and since we had not made reservations the room we were taken to was bitterly cold. There are no public rooms in the better Japanese restaurants, only small private rooms. The walls can slide back to accommodate larger parties.

Our table was only coffee table high, but fortunately for our Western legs there was a large hole under the table.

Our waitress soon arrived with the menu and a large pall of red hot charcoal which she put under the table below a grating. By the time dinner started to arrive and we had washed our hands and faces with the hot scented towels provided, we were very warm.

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More Boardman News

By MARY LEE MARLOW
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Mrs. Louise Earwood left Monday for Estacada to visit at the home of her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Califf for two days, then will go on to Torrance, Calif. to visit at the home of her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Earwood, until after the holidays.

The meal was one of the best I've ever eaten. As in any good Japanese restaurant our waitress remained with us during the entire meal to cook and serve our meal as we ate it.

Our dinner was a ten course meal which included: 1. vegetable compote, 2. pheasant sake (a Japanese wine with a piece of pheasant meat in it), 3. boiled bees and smoked game birds, 4. clear soup, 5. staked quail, thrush, pigeon and swallow, 6. fried pheasant, 7. wild duck, 8. minged rice (fried rice), 9. fresh fruits, 10. green tea with cake.

The Japanese give as much attention to the preparing and serving of their food as to the cooking of it. As a result every thing served is a delight to the eye as well as the palate.

I want to go back to Japan someday as does nearly everyone who visits there. In fact, I would like to live there for awhile. A person from the West has a lot to learn from an Oriental culture. The innate dignity, centuries of cultural background and quiet sense of humor, to name but a few of their qualities, added to an American's outgoing friendliness, sense of adventure and touch of the ribald would make an unbeatable combination.

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