

Former Resident Returns After One and One-Half Years in Japan

(Mrs. Merle Sleeper is the former Virginia Fick, who taught school here some time ago. She went from here to Portland where she was a personnel director in a war plant. It was while she was there that Vogue Magazine ran a picture of her as one of the nation's outstanding young executives. Mrs. Sleeper has just returned from a year and a half residency in Japan where she went with her husband, a civil engineer, who was on assignment with National Bulk Carriers. Prior to the Japan assignment they had lived in Bend for five years. She returned last week and he is expected the middle of this month.)

By MILLY RAMSBY

When I asked Virginia Sleeper what kind of a house they found in Japan she said that they lived in a "doll house," and added that before they remodeled it—"about as convenient!"

No water, no electricity, no heating system, no stove and no phone. According to Mrs. Sleeper, it is almost impossible for the Occidental mind to imagine a town of 250,000, the population of Kure, where they lived for a year and a half, to be so completely native. It is partly explained by the fact that Kure, since it was the "Annapolis" of Japan, would naturally be isolated from any infiltration of western customs long ago adopted by the larger cities.

Other than the remodeling costs—a "most liveable" shelter was achieved through the simple expedient of paying \$900 (American) for a transformer for electricity; and a telephone was installed for another paltry \$100.

They soon found out that some practical knowledge of Japanese was most essential if they wanted to use their telephone (The telephone operators were all Japanese with NO knowledge of English). There was no electricity on Sundays—"repair day"—at least none until bedtime. Virginia and Merle Sleeper ate out.

In the entire area there was not ONE western house. And Virginia Sleeper didn't mean "ranch house" style by "western", either. The "doll house" was just that. Small, but ideal for two fugitives from non-modern Japanese hotels. The bathroom, 12 by 15 feet was the biggest room in the house.

It was unique in that it was high on a hill, not roof-to-roof with other dwellings, as the rest of the town; it commanded a sweeping view of the Inland Sea from its setting above the terraced hillside, planned for beauty, with expert and typical Japanese planting achieving a perfect background for each flower or shrub. No lawn at all. They are a rarity in Japan. The over-all effect, according to Mrs. Sleeper, was a living Japanese print—even to the finishing touch of fish ponds with diminutive bridges crossing them.

They were fortunate to find Cheoko, who was their "number-one girl"; intelligent, and eager to learn to cook "American"; she served beautifully; was an excellent seamstress, and sewed for Mrs. Sleeper; she was also an "at home" beauty operator, skillfully shampooing and dressing Mrs. Sleeper's hair. Her father had been a captain in the Japanese Navy. Moreover, she negotiated for "number-two girl," Okeko, who did the heavy work.

Merle Sleeper was sent to Kure by National Bulk Carriers (a New York firm, builders of the largest tankers in the world) as one of three specialists assigned to teach the Japanese American methods of construction. The shipyard at Kure is one hour by air from Pu-pan; and the threat of evacuation was ever present. They were 17 hours from Tokyo and covered Japan fairly thorough-

ly during their year and a half stay.

Living in a completely Japanese area, they made a special effort to learn native customs and they both studied the Japanese language far beyond the placing-a-phone-call stage. She said that learning Japanese was the biggest academic challenge she'd ever faced.

Mrs. Sleeper also studied flower arranging and Japanese dancing. She soon learned how "un-simple" it is to create the simple and beautiful floral compositions for which the Japanese are world-famous.

Kure was also the British Commonwealth headquarters and the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission had sent 25 scientists and doctors into that area to study the effects of the Hiroshima bombing; and their personnel comprised most of the social contacts of Mr. and Mrs. Sleeper.

Although they were not "army" and had no ambassadorial connections, Mrs. Sleeper said that never had she so cherished her United States citizenship. It was an "open sesame" to all doors ordinarily closed to a "foreigner" without official recognition.

Even when their civilian status was revealed when she replied that she WASN'T an army wife—the warm welcome was, "But you're an AMERICAN, aren't you?" and they were admitted to the social life in the colony to the extent of being social chairmen of the entertainment committee of the British Officers Club—a decided privilege, since most of the social life revolved around the club.

The membership included British officers from all over the Empire and Virginia and Merle Sleeper learned much of their various backgrounds—and heard details of Red oppression experienced by British subjects.

One man associated with a large shipping firm was caught in Shanghai when it fell, and was confined within the city under constant surveillance with rigidly limited freedom; and was released from Shanghai only after his firm had paid the Chinese Communist government 20,000 AMERICAN dollars.

This was only 9 months ago, an example of the many refined forms

of extortion. An individual with no financial connections had little or no hope of liberation. Even people of means trapped in the Red areas were subjected to a constant turnover of household servants, all thoroughly trained in spying. They had no social life; and their private life (as we live) was nil.

Mrs. Sleeper said that she played the organ for Sunday Services in the army chapel, to show in a small way their gratitude for the warm hospitality shown them.

Another aside, was that in retrospect, she considers their electric blanket as their most treasured possession. Flimsy construction and inadequate heat were no match for cool nights.

Mrs. Sleeper flew by Pan-American on the trip home; and stopped in the open city of Kowloon, 10 minutes by ferry to Hong Kong. She said that she had been warned by friends to stay off the streets at night, because Reds and other marauders prowled them after dark—and in general she was warned against the communists. The first sign she saw was in

English—with large letters reading: "BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS!" and directly beneath, the irrelevant words, "DON'T SMILE!" In Hong Kong she tried to establish any sort of contact with Dick Applegate, Medford man who was taken prisoner off his boat when he inadvertently went into enemy waters. She found "no trace" of him—at least no one would "talk"—and from meager information given her, the consensus of opinion was that he had been spirited further into Red China.

Possessing a keen interest in "things Chinese", Mrs. Sleeper went shopping, and found shopping conditions perfect; exceeding all her expectations—and CHEAP! dirt cheap by our standards. Frustrating fact, however, is that while making purchases is simple, you can't get past the first U. S. Customs officer with them. The United States embargo is absolutely enforced to curtail any purchase funds swelling the communist coffers, since goods sold in Hong Kong is Communist con-

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MRS. J. B. ELIE, announces the engagement of her daughter, Jacqueline, to Ambrose Purkett, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Purkett, Williston, N. D. Bride-elect is a graduate of Sacred Heart; her fiancé attended school in North Dakota, and is presently stationed at Fort Riley, Kans. No wedding date has been set. — Photo by Guderian

It Happened This Way in New Pine Creek

By IRVIN FARIS

Over 300 predatory birds have so far been disposed of by members of the Goose Lake Sportsmen's Club, according to Art Leikelt who heard the report at the recent sportsmen's picnic up Pine Creek Canyon week ago last Thursday. The variety of birds that were either shot or caught in traps by the two teams that were contesting each other included hawks, nighthawks, crows and owls. The winning team was captained by Roy Markie, and the losing team was captained by Elmer Harter. "Crows" captained by Roy Markie were the losers who had to treat the winners to the picnic. There were 29 members on each team.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Atkinson and daughter, Lynda Lee, of Sacramento arrived week ago today and have been spending most of their time camping and fishing up at Lily Lake. Yesterday a resident of Willow Ranch, and his wife, the former Thais Smith of New Pine Creek, he said fishing had been real good for him up at the lakes. He has caught 38 nice sized fish—the largest measuring 15 inches.

Also camped at the lake is Mrs. Dudley Brown, widow of the former highway maintenance foreman at Davis Creek; her daughter, Frances Anne Smith and her girl friends and husband who have been at the lakes for the past week, fishing, swimming and having a general good time at that playground just seven miles up on top of the mountains.

Word was received by Mrs. Nada Fox at 6 o'clock Monday morning that her mother, Mrs. Edith Story, had suffered a stroke. She was rushed to a hospital at Orville for medical care. Mrs. Fox had just returned the day before from a few days visit with her mother and left her in normal health. The news was received with considerable consternation Monday, and Mrs. Fox left immediately.

The Needle Club met last Saturday afternoon at the home of Mrs. Myra Robnett. There were 13 members, three guests and 12 children present to enjoy the convivial get-together—some doing their fancy work and all visiting. Strawberry sundaes, cake, coffee and punch were served.

Plans were made for the annual Needle Club picnic to be held at the old picnic grounds up Pine Creek canyon on August 16. It never rains but what it pours dept: many local grangers who in-

tended to attend the Pomona Grange picnic over at Round Grove, had their plans frustrated by a coincidence of too many attractions occurring on the same day of more or less a vital nature—a must.

There was a soft-ball attraction at the Willow Ranch softball diamond—Willow Ranch Fire Dept., team vs. the Lakeview Rose Cleaners' nine in an exhibition game. A must-of course—as son Robert plays first bag for the fire boys and wife had to represent the family there while I kept store. Incidentally—it was a whale of a game even if the fire boys got out-fired by two points, 11 to 9. Don't forget this—these soft-ball league games that have been going on during the week-day evenings for the past month and the extra-league games at Willow Ranch and Davis Creek are a real attraction and a first class release from the hubbub. You see one game and you want to see more. It's good clean sport diversion.

Then there was a local cattlemen's meeting Sunday afternoon of the Warner Range Stockmen's association held at the Grange Hall which took several Grangers out of the running to the Pomona picnic. Just what was accomplished at this meeting was not divulged—so we'll let it ride—shrouded in mystery.

Then many wanted to see the Lakeview Gems play the Alturas hard-ball team at Alturas Sunday afternoon. One stockman who forewent this pleasure said he wished he'd a gone—nothin' happened much at the meeting. Incidentally—Lakeview won.



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MR. AND MRS. C. A. SHOOP . . . 2021 Reclamation, announce the engagement of their daughter Diane, to Wilbur Walker, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Haley, Dairy. A late September wedding is planned.

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