



ILLUSTRATION BY RIC DEL ROSSI

Though from different worlds, these pen pals proved that girls like much the same things.

sure Kiyoko's parents would tell us," Mom said. "And as for Carol traveling that distance alone—well, she's 18 years old, she has a tongue in her mouth, and she knows where she's going."

I was real proud of myself when Mom said that.

I had never been more than 250 miles from Londonderry in my life. I had never been in an airplane. And until I took off for Tokyo, I had never been so much on my own—or so thoroughly excited in all my life.

When we landed in Tokyo, Kiyoko and her parents were there to greet me at the airport. I recognized her immediately—and she spotted me, too. It was like greeting an old friend, even though our friendship had existed only on paper.

Thereafter, it was like a fairy tale come true. Kiyoko's family maintained a true Japanese home—shoes off before entering; eat with chopsticks; sleep on a *stong*, or straw mattress. I loved every minute of it, and within a few days I felt like one of the Tanaka family.

Kiyoko and I went sight-seeing. We swam at Motosu Lake, and made plans to climb Mount Fuji—but gave that up when our ambitious program left us exhausted.

Of course, throughout my month's stay, Kiyoko and I pounced on every spare minute to talk, talk, talk. Kiyoko's English was excellent now because her father had engaged a tutor, and we were able to expand on many of the things we had only skimmed over in the letters.

As my visit drew to a close, Kiyoko was packed and ready to take off for America. It was also her first trip away from home, and her eyes were filled with tears when we boarded the plane. We stopped for three days in Hawaii, and when we reached California we visited my aunt and uncle in North Ridge for a week. Kiyoko giggled with delight as we took in such things as Disneyland and the Hollywood movie studios, and made a quick trip to Mexico.

I knew our friends and neighbors in New Hampshire planned to go really all-out in their welcome for Kiyoko, so we decided to don Japanese kimonos before our plane landed at Manchester. Kiyoko was almost overwhelmed by our Yankee greeting. We were personally welcomed by the mayor and the governor, and it seemed as if we shook hands with half the people of New Hampshire.

Before Kiyoko went home, we took her on a grand tour that included New York City, the United Nations, Jones Beach, and all the important places in Washington, D.C. Thanks to organizations like Letters Abroad and World Education, we were greeted by various dignitaries along the way. We even had lunch with the Japanese ambassador to the United States.

After more than two months of daily companionship, Kiyoko and I agreed that we were a pair of 18-year-olds who were pretty much alike for all the differences in our nationalities, culture, and background. We agreed on our likes and dislikes in food, clothing, boy friends, entertainment, and movie stars. And we both decided that we'll wait at least five years before we marry.

But more important, we agreed that the peoples of the world would have a much better chance of living in peace if more people from opposite ends of the earth could get to know each other the way we have—that the pen, as the saying goes, can be much mightier than the sword.