

OUR FIRST YEAR AT ICU 1959-60

Benjamin C. Duke

In the spring of 1959, in the midst of preparing for the final Ph.D. oral examination at Penn State, a letter arrived from ICU inviting me to join the faculty. Having never heard of ICU, and having absolutely no interest in or knowledge of Japan, I was puzzled by the invitation. Nevertheless, with no consideration of the consequences, having precious little time to think through my actions, a positive response was returned. Within a few weeks a formal employment contract was sent from Dr. Maurice Troyer, then Vice President for Academic Affairs, requesting an early reply to prepare for the September semester of 1959.

The arrival of the formal employment contract could not have come at a more inconvenient period, one week before the final Ph.D. examination. Again, with no time to even locate ICU on a map, my wife and I hastily decided to sign the contract. It was dutifully completed, sent off to Japan, and our attention was again devoted to the successful completion of the doctoral program.

In the summer of 1959, following graduation, we began to realize somewhat the consequences of our actions. What was ICU? What was Japan like? How long would we stay there? Where and how would we live? We had no way to search for the answers to any of these questions in central Pennsylvania, U.S.A. In addition, we knew of no person who had any knowledge of Japan.

By August we received word from Dr. Roy Miller, acting on behalf of Dr. Troyer, who was then on leave, that our visa would not be ready for the September semester. We would have to wait until the winter semester. This was our first indication of the bureaucratic intricacies involving the Japanese government. Finally, in October, we received the visa approval. A letter of notification of our arrival at Haneda on December 4, 1959, was sent to ICU.

Our flight to Japan was long and tedious on one of Japan Airlines last propeller-driven planes, as the jet era had just been introduced into the Pacific. There were several memorable stops on the way to Japan including Wake Island and Guam. The stopovers gave us an opportunity to witness the remains of World War II as old Japanese tanks and big artillery pieces still littered some of the beaches and jungle areas. It provoked us to wonder what kind of people are the Japanese?

Upon arrival at Haneda on a cold and bleak December morning, we were surprised that no one from ICU was there to meet us. Knowing only one word in Japanese, Sayonara, which was of no use upon arrival, we made a call to ICU. The secretary in somewhat halting English expressed amazement. The university had not received our letter notifying them of our arrival time. They had made no arrangements for our arrival. This was just one of many surprises we were to experience as we began our new life in Japan.

Hastily a car and driver, along with an available graduate assistant, was dispatched to Haneda for the two-hour drive to pick us up. After the very long flight across the Pacific Ocean, another two hour delay was not well received. Unfortunately, neither the graduate assistant, Mr. Momona, now professor at Kyoto University, nor the driver could speak much English. The long drive back to ICU, over very bad and bumpy roads, was made in complete silence as we looked out in wonder at the strange countryside. Virtually the only conversation my wife and I had during that trip was the simple question, "What are we doing here?" Over the next year or so we

were to ask ourselves that same question many times.

Dusk was settling in as we arrived on the campus. Again there was no one to meet us as we were driven to an apartment in the East Grove building, the old structure still standing across from the library. Soon Mrs. Sunshine Henne, wife of the Norwegian professor, Henry Henne, arrived with blankets and sheets. She also tried to explain how the ancient kerosene stove worked. However, we had no food. The Hennes kindly invited us to their home for dinner. Thus our first meal in Japan was with a Norwegian family, with whom we developed a close relationship.

Unfortunately the new ICU library was just under construction directly across the road from our apartment. In order to complete the building quickly, the workers labored 24 hours per day. That meant that the lights were on all night. The sound of machinery continued all day and night. They were then digging the foundation to move the dirt over in front of the Honkan to make the so-called Bakayama. We were later told that the architect Raymond detested the appearance of the Honkan and wanted to have it torn down. When that proved economically unrealistic, he decided to try and hide the building as much as possible with the Bakayama.

With the movement of the dirt, great clouds of dust rolled across the campus when the wind blew. The result was a covering of dust over all our furniture, including the beds and tables, since the windows in the old apartment house did not fit tightly. With the constant problem of dust, and the continuous cacophony of building machinery throughout the day and night, we asked ourselves daily what are we doing at ICU, as our first Christmas in Japan approached.

Because we arrived unexpectedly, just as the winter semester was to begin, there were no courses scheduled for me to teach. Another young faculty member, Professor Sanuki, tried to explain the unusual situation. The department chairman, Professor Nishimoto, quickly scheduled a graduate seminar in which five graduate students enrolled for a late afternoon

class. In those days, because ICU was very poor, the little heat provided in the Honkan was turned off every afternoon at four o'clock. We teachers wore heavy clothing for teaching. After four o'clock, the classrooms became very cold within an hour. By the time the class ended at six o'clock, all five students plus this teacher had their overcoats on. It was a very strange environment to teach my first class in Japan. It is of some interest to note that three of my first five students are now university professors, and the two female students became wives of men who later served on the faculty and staff of ICU, Dr. William Moore and Mr. Arai Tosh.

My first faculty meeting was also a curious event. At that time there were many elderly Japanese scholars on the faculty who completely dominated the discussions. We younger faculty listened. These distinguished individuals included President Yuasa, Dean Hidaka, Professors Kojima, Okabe, Kanda, Harashima, Shimizu, Sinoto, Nishimoto, and a long list of others. Dean Hidaka, former Vice-Minister of Education and founder of the ICU graduate program, stands out in my memory. He was a powerful figure in the Japanese educational world and expected to be treated accordingly. Consequently when he spoke, always in Japanese since his English learned in pre-war Japan was very poor, everyone remained silent. He always grew particularly tense when he discussed his troubles with the then-radical Nikkyoso, the Japan Teachers Union. Dr. Troyer, the outspoken but very thoughtful American, was one of the few who dared to present an idea contrary to that held by Dean Hidaka. Nevertheless the two giants of early ICU became close colleagues as the international faculty worked together to construct this new university.

As our first Christmas holiday in Japan approached, we looked longingly to our homes in America feeling set adrift in this strange new land, and on a strange new campus. Christmas eve has a very special meaning to most Christians so we looked forward to that time in Japan with some trepidation. In fact, since few Japanese celebrated Christmas, the construction

workers at the new library site worked all night long on December 24, Christmas Eve. As we longed for our families in America, we looked out across the road to notice that among the construction workers carrying materials back and forth under the lights, a number of old women labored hard to keep up with the men. Suddenly our problems seem inconsequential in comparison, as Japan struggled to break the bonds of postwar economic depression.

Christmas morning, 1959, was another memorable experience. As we began to prepare breakfast, two workers knocked on our door. Speaking no English, but carrying paint brushes and cans of paint, these men to our surprise were hired to paint our apartment. It just so happened that their first painting day fell on Christmas morning. We realized rather painfully that they had no idea it was Christmas, and that we were truly in a non-Christian land. How thankful we were to have been invited for Christmas dinner by Dr. and Mrs. Glen Brunner, who served as Vice President for Finance.

Our first New Years in Japan was equally memorable. Professor Nishimoto had earlier begun a tradition of inviting all non-Japanese ICU faculty families, plus a few of his Japanese neighbors, for a typical o-setchiryori New Year's dinner. That means all the food, including a variety of tiny whole raw fish, beans, etc., was cold. We had never tasted anything like that type of food before.

The Kandas and Nishimotos showed us how to eat with ohashi and encouraged us to try all the various types of food. In order not to offend our kind Japanese hosts, we complied as best we could. After several hours, we returned home. With the smell of fresh paint on the walls, and the very strange mixture of food in our bodies, my wife and I became very sick and remained so for the next few days. Such was our first New Years in Japan.

The winter of 1959-60 remained bleak with the ICU campus in a rough state. The roads and walkways were very poor making walking rather dif-

ficult. The ICU Church was being completed with the congregation holding services in the Diffendorfer Auditorium. Almost all the land surrounding the campus was farmland, much of it under rice cultivation. At one end of campus, about where the American School in Japan is now located, ICU kept a large herd of cattle and many pigs. One felt that this was a rural university in rural Japan.

In spite of the cold dreary atmosphere surrounding this new university in 1959, the personal atmosphere inside was completely the opposite. Dr. Yuasa and his wife made everyone feel at home. He epitomized everything a president of a Christian university should be. Not only was he warm and thoughtful, he could reveal his dream of ICU as the University of Tomorrow in such eloquent terms so that before we realized what was happening to us, we became entangled in his dream. His vision became our vision. His hopes for the university became our hopes. We had within six months become part of ICU and ICU had become part of us.

What attracted us was not what ICU was, but what it could become; not what it had accomplished, but what we firmly believed it could accomplish. That was Dr. Yuasa's dream, and he could elaborate on it at great length both in Japanese and in his superb English. He captivated us with his vision of the future of ICU.

When Dr. Troyer returned from leave in America a few months later, we were further drawn into the ICU family as this senior American professor and his wife took this new and young American couple under their broad wings. Slowly we began to adjust to our strange living quarters being invited into the homes of the Yuasas, Troyers, Gerhards, Kojimas, Gleasons, Kleinjans, Geeslins, Nishimotos, Kidder, Worth, and many others. Ironically, six years later when the Troyers retired from ICU, we were asked to move into their home which we have thoroughly enjoyed ever since.

There were other young faculty members who joined ICU in 1959 at the same time that we did. Among them were our first neighbors, Carl and

Sachi Furuya, who arrived at ICU just a few weeks before we did. Living next to the ICU church pastor for a number of years was not always an easy task, not because he was our pastor but because he played a rather squeaky violin, accompanied on the piano by his wife.

Six families lived in that old apartment building called East Grove Apartments. It had few modern facilities but we all grew to love the place and the close friendships that grew out of that intimate encounter. We were a strange mix from the American Dukes and Cubbages to the British Morrells, the New Zealander Newells, the mixed Japanese-American Furuyas, the Mixed American-Japanese Moores, and the single Wurfel and Kawashima. We all learned to live with no heat after 10 o'clock P.M. and, on occasion, no heat on Sundays when the arbeit student overslept and failed to keep the coal furnace going which provided our only source of heat.

During our very first summer in Japan, the graduate students decided to climb Mt. Fuji in order to hold a farewell party for Nakano Terumi who was leaving for graduate study in America. Since we were about the same age as many of our graduate students, we were invited to join the party. About twenty students participated.

When we gathered for the departure from ICU, we noticed the large number of boxes of all shapes that were piled up to take on the trip. Each student had been assigned to carry one of the boxes up Mt. Fuji.

Since we planned to spend the night at the eighth station, we left ICU early in the morning to reach that point before dark. The path up Fuji san proved to be jammed as we slowly made our way up and up and up. Finally arriving at the eighth station, our party was lined up tightly in two rows with blankets thrown over us, as we joined hundreds of other climbers on the floor for a very restless and noisy night. With some embarrassment I realized that the top of my head was touching the top of the head of one of my female graduate students, such was the packed conditions of the eighth station on Mt. Fuji.

The magnificent view of the sunrise on Mt. Fuji the next morning was worth all the trouble getting there. We pushed on to the top of the great mountain where we proceeded to have a farewell party. The many boxes were opened and out came all kinds of farewell gifts. In addition all the food and drinks for a farewell party was spread on the ground. This included champagne and special champagne glasses for it. All in all it was a wonderful party on the top of Mt. Fuji. Included in our group was not only the ICU professor Nakano, but also Professors Akutsu and Ishimoto who were then graduate students.

The graduate students of education in the early 1960s were indeed a unique group. In some ways, that group may have been the most distinguished students ever graduated from ICU. For example, out of the 20 or so graduate students who climbed Mt. Fuji, about half are now professors at well-known universities in Japan. Including the three currently on the ICU faculty, Nakano, Akutsu and Ishimoto, others are teaching at such prestigious institutions as Tokyo University and Kyoto University. Upon Professor Nishimoto's 88th birthday, the former graduate students of the early 1960s returned for the celebration. It was on that occasion when the many current professors fondly recalled the party on top of Mt. Fuji.

As our first year at ICU came to an end in 1960, we had made many close friendships with our Japanese and non-Japanese colleagues and students. In many ways it was the most memorable year of our lives. When we first went to Japan, we had intended to stay for only a short time. Looking back on that first year, we now realize that we had become so deeply committed to ICU that we could not possibly leave it after our first contracted period. However, neither could we envision that nearly thirty years later, we would still be on the faculty. We now realize that our first year at ICU was not only the most memorable year of our lives, it was also the most important one since it set the pattern for our entire adult life. If we had an opportunity to relive our lives, we would have

made the same choice as we did in 1959. We would commit ourselves to ICU.