

JAPAN - 1945

AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS

BY C. C. BEALL



Tokyo still looks like a city, with clusters of buildings amid the ruins. Little people in shabby clothes are everywhere, their belongings piled high in carts

IF YOU'RE on Okinawa on August 29th, as I was, and want to reach Tokyo in time for the Japanese surrender ceremonies, it is necessary to get in touch with Clayton Knight. Clayton knows everybody and can do everything. He will introduce you to Lieutenant General Doolittle, and the general will take you to supper. Then, after you've helped with the dishes, he will rush you away in a jeep for the ride in a C-46. The plane will be waiting for you on one of the many air strips which the fabulous Seabees are building every day. Of course, it will be the last strip you find, and theoretically you will miss the plane. Actually, you will have plenty of time, for there will have been a slight revision in schedule. Instead of leaving last night at 11:30, the plane will leave this morning at 4:26.

A C-46 is a two-motored ship that ordinarily can carry enough gasoline to get to Japan, but not enough to get back to Okinawa. It is a big plane, but there is just enough room for ten drums of high-octane gasoline, six high public-relations officers with cots and bedding rolls, and one curled-up correspondent without much of anything. The correspondent can stand up, but if he



Lt. Charlie Tatsuda, an American-born Japanese from Alaska, "agreed to go on a little trip with me around Tokyo"

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Japanese children, especially the boys, are curious about the Americans, and do not seem to be frightened. They play much the same as children elsewhere. Here, some small Japs play air raid, scanning the skies with great intentness

does so, all he can see is large and violent jets of flame from the motors, all headed straight for, but never quite hitting, the ten drums of gas. So it is smarter to lie down and go to sleep.

Atsugi airfield, our destination, is in fair shape. A blue bus that looks much older than Japan, with a big charcoal engine tied to the rear, has a Jap driver who is just sitting there. Without any word to him we lug our baggage into the bus, climb in and point in the direction the bus is facing. We have no idea what that direction is but it seems better than here. After three shifts of the gears, with no appreciable difference in each shift, we very slowly start.

The hedges that surround every house plus the high, beautifully spaced board fences soon leave off and we have shifted to our last remaining gear. As we go bouncing down the hill we have less opportunity to see much, save straight ahead where a few scattered, moderately tall buildings indicate a village. When we reach these buildings we see that the village is not a village at all; it is the least damaged part of Yokohama. Loose tin, paper partly burned and huge quantities of small flat rubble are all around. Corn and vegetables are filling the spaces once used by houses and people.

We approach two G.I.s who stand at an intersection. They are stationed there to direct traffic, but there is no traffic. There are very nearly no Japanese people, and only an occasional charcoal-burning automobile goes by with an important American officer in it. It seems like the middle of the night with everyone in bed, but it isn't; it is the middle of the day and it has started to rain.

Every few blocks we see two or three Jap policemen standing in front of a sort of kiosk. They are wearing shabby blue uniforms with only a few of their brass buttons left. The little swords they carry seem like children's toys.

They hope you will answer their diffident

Jap policeman, in shabby blue uniform with brass buttons missing, stands in front of a sort of kiosk



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Japs who fled Tokyo during the raids returned to find little but rubble, from which they built rude shelters

salute, because if you don't they will be very unhappy. Not knowing just what to do, we salute in return. We pass the Grand Hotel, Yokohama's best, which is completely unharmed, and we learn that it will house the United Nations generals, together with the American top brass. We are directed to the Bund Hotel, where the correspondents are housed, and we go there.

The dining room is almost filled, but a chair at one of the tables is vacant. I grab this. All the waiters are women. We are served a sort of soup with little flavor, followed by a white-looking meat in stew. The stew tastes terrible. This type of food can be very economical for the Japs, as they can probably serve each plateful over and over again. All the help is almost fanatically anxious to please, but have little to work with, save earnestness. We are told that as soon as our ships can bring in supplies we will be fed Army rations which the Jap cooks will augment with vegetables.

In the evening, a walk of five minutes takes me to the Grand Hotel where the desk is completely manned by colonels and majors of the General Headquarters Public Relations staff. They are putting eagle colonels in rooms, and later kicking them out as one-star generals arrive. They have been doing this all afternoon. Finally Russ Matthews, a civilian attached to the Army, takes over and straightens out the whole thing. The officers will stay behind the desks and be officers, while Russ will run the hotel and do a good job of it.

We are all supposed to carry side arms as the Jap is considered dangerous. I try to go back to the Bund Hotel but am advised against it because I am unarmed. I decide to spend the night in the lobby of the Grand Hotel. A divan in the lobby near a window, with the wind and the rain gently pouring over me, provides my first night's rest.

The main lobby is awake now and gay with gold braid. You are startled to hear a voice say to the desk clerk, "Tell General MacArthur that Admiral Nimitz is in the lobby." The desk clerk, not looking up from his work answers, "What do you think of that?" Then looking up: "Wow! Yes, sir! Yes, sir!!" We will all laugh heartily later. Nimitz and Halsey laugh now. It is only a short time until MacArthur gets out of the elevator, greets Nimitz and then seems genuinely glad to see Halsey. Fifteen cameras click at the proper moment and the officers climb into the general's car and are off to some place.

Frank D. Morris, a Collier's writer, is a good sight to these old eyes as we meet in the lobby. He tells of the gorgeous way the Navy is eating and I tell of the stuff I have eaten and so we are going to join the Navy.

It is about twenty miles by train from Yokohama to Yokosuka and about three miles to the station. The station is crowded with Japs. Most of the women I see wear loose, shapeless trousers and a shirt, and have babies strapped to their backs. They are nearly all carrying bundles in their arms,

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too. The train seems not unlike our subways, but there is no padding on the seats and no advertising and they are even more crowded. The Jap men have taken all the seats and the women stand. Frank and I are the only Americans on the train. We have always thought of the Japs as a sinister lot. But these Japs don't look sinister as they flash big, toothy grins at us. We are both nervous, but on looking around, we can't see much reason for it.

We timidly ask the nearest Jap if we are on the right train for Yokosuka and seven volunteers nod in the direction we are going and point and repeat "Yokosuka." As the passengers thin out, we notice that all the women are standing, and we and all the male Japs are sitting. We try an experiment. We offer our seats to two women, who are scared to death at the idea; in truth, we practically force them to take our seats. There is a look of smiling approval from the male Japs, so we carry the experiment further and in pantomime indicate that they should give up their seats to the remaining women. This they do and bow their thanks for our very kind impudence.

At last we reach the Ancon, a communications ship.

Frank is right; the Navy does live well. We have a meal that tastes exactly like food.

Everybody who has ever written for anything is either aboard the Ancon or scratching himself at the Bund. I am given a cot in one of the passageways, but it's a clean cot and the salt air is good.

We are all waked early, as this is the second of September. It is the day of the final surrender of the Japs aboard the battleship Missouri. We have been given tickets, and Frank and I are on the No. 1 gun turret. It is by far the best place to see finis written to a very large piece of history. American generals of rank and accomplishment are lined up directly below us, while the top officers of the United Nations stand behind the green-covered table that holds the surrender documents.

We can see a launch flying an American flag, and word goes around that this is the Japanese delegation. Soon we see the Japs climb aboard. They are a group of poorly turned-out dignitaries. The leading dignitary has a coat that you might expect to see hanging outside a secondhand store on Seventh Avenue, New York City. The cutaway of the Japanese premier is "cabdriver green," a color little in demand. One top hat, I note, at one time must have had a corner resting against a radiator. It has taken on a bend which is definitely permanent but certainly not intentional. A man in a not-quite-white suit completes the sorry spectacle. The Japs stand expressionless, looking straight ahead. Then come MacArthur and Nimitz, the Star-Spangled Banner, the speech, the signatures and General MacArthur's dismissal. Then thousands of planes, B-29s and Navy, fly over the Missouri. This part of the show seems grand and exhilarating. Without the



In the ruins of their cities, the Japs plant gardens.

The land on which this one will grow was once
the site of a factory

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planes, however, it would have been hard to believe that I have been a spectator at one of the world's great moments.

It is three days later. General Headquarters has moved to Tokyo, the ban is lifted and the general has taken over. With five G.I. photographers I am driven to Tokyo. For all its damage Tokyo still looks like a city. While there is the same sort of rusty tin houses, which are part of a vast rubble, there are clusters of large modern buildings that seem to have escaped the fires.

Our first stop is the Imperial Hotel. All the generals are stopping here. We walk through the lobby and head for the grill, which opens at five o'clock. A polite Jap comes over, bows and leaves six bottles of very good Jap beer on the table. The look of amazement on the faces of my five G.I.s is good to see. It is the first tablecloth some have seen in two years. The beer is followed by a plate, per person, of hors d'oeuvres. They look very enticing, particularly a dark piece of fish, that looks like kippered herring. There is a ripe full flavor about it that has character—a very evil character.

Hotel Lobby—Jersey City Style

We are told the correspondents are now quartered in the Dai-iti Hotel. The lobby of this hotel is modern and could be in Jersey City or Flint, Michigan. It is staffed by the same fluttering officers as the Grand Hotel and with unflattered Russ Matthews running the job. One lieutenant colonel is in charge of information, a much-needed commodity, but so restricted—oh, so restricted!

Each morning the lobby of the hotel is filled, exclusive of correspondents, with civilians, Japanese interpreters and our own uniformed Nisei. The Nisei is an American-born Jap. They have done a grand job as soldiers in the war, and have become the most universally popular group in the service. The Niseis' record in the war with Japan has shown courage, intelligence, loyalty and cheerfulness.

Lieutenant Charles Tatsyda, a Nisei from Alaska, has agreed to go on a little trip with me around Tokyo. We've snatched a jeep and are on our way. It is a very short ride from the hotel to one of the amazing rust cities. These cities are a result of the bombing. Soon after the American planes began mass flying over Tokyo, the people moved most of their furniture and personal belongings into the country on wagons—on their backs, any way. When the bombings stopped, they brought back to where their homes had been the same stuff they had taken away. A typical family, according to Lieutenant Tatsyda who questions them, is named Ishii.

The father was a factory worker. We saw him, a boy and girl and the mother with the inevitable baby. They had come back to find their home gone. But the rubble contained building material to spare. Instead of wood and paper, the new home would be of rusty metal with maybe some wood for uprights. There are thousands of such houses in independent developments with their own little streets and their own vegetable gardens.

As we talk, the customary shyness of the women gradually subsides. They gather around. I see girls that might have modeled for John Powers. Also I see someone like the neighbor next door in Larchmont or the high-school kid down the block. Of course, they are all little and very poorly dressed versions. Every time you see these people, particularly the women and children, you are struck by the question, "How can such little women have such big children who grow up to be such little people?" ★★★

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