

to "conquer" the mountain, but merely to "feel part of it", to become at one with nature. It's a fact that Japanese sensitivity to the beauties of their surroundings is probably more refined than westerners', but if you want to put their claims of indifference to conquest to the test, try suggesting that they stop, say, one hundred feet short of the summit. Were it not for the polite Japanese willingness to tolerate lunacy in foreigners, they would probably lynch you on the spot.

Visitors to Tokyo should find little difficulty in tracking down mountain climbing groups. Chris Spencer of our Embassy is an enthusiastic participant. No Japanese university is without its mountain climbing club and such groups as the International Friendship Club, which specializes in getting foreigners and Japanese together, has many keen adherents.

Mountains to climb are in unlimited supply, for the country as a whole is 94 per cent crag. The Japanese have a saying that you are a fool if you haven't climbed Mount Fuji once. It's an easy five to eight-hour jaunt, with no special equipment needed and lots of way stations provided. The mountain itself has sacred associations and many Japanese look on the climb as something of a pilgrimage. Many thousands of people from five year olds to ninety-five year olds make the hike annually, usually climbing by night with torches so that they can witness the truly memorable sight of dawn breaking from the summit. But the trip is not without its disillusion. The lava gravel is grating and irritating and the main pathways are strewn with the litter of the thousands who've gone before. The Japanese saying that starts off with "You're a fool not to climb Mount Fuji once" goes on to say "but a greater fool if you climb it a second time".

In any event, there are thousands of other splendid peaks in the Japanese Alps. Often the Japanese countryside presents startlingly varied and even uniquely oriental vistas and the adventure of climbing is an exhilarating one both physically and spiritually.

And for the real devil-may-care there's nothing like an active volcano to add to the excitement. One in particular which I can recommend highly is that on Oshima Island, south of Tokyo. It's possible to thread your way down into the crater of this volcano and grope through the steam and the sulphurous fumes, which ooze through the rock like a scene from Dante, until you are right on the edge of a sea of seething lava. You can get some photographs which you will think are wonderful, but don't expect to impress the folks back home. The only time I showed them, my mother merely sniffed and said disdainfully: "There he is, making an ash of himself again".

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Geo. Cowley

SOME UNFORGETTABLE INCIDENTS AND THE UNFORGETTABLE PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THEM

My first posting, some years ago, was to Indochina.

As you can imagine, I sallied forth on that long flight via the Aleutians, Japan and Hong Kong feeling the thrill and excitement, and fearful uncertainty, of a "first posting". This trip was taking me to Indochina and, as far as I knew, to Saigon. So, it was with rather a disappointed heart that I found upon my arrival there that I was to continue my flight to Hanoi. By this time I was thoroughly weary of plane travel and the idea of living behind the bamboo curtain suddenly had no appeal. However, with a couple of days' rest in Saigon the spirit of travel once more asserted itself and, as I was being driven to the airport, I was keen to carry on with my adventure. I had become accustomed, by now, to travelling in a well-appointed and comfortable aircraft. Occasionally during the long trip from Vancouver to Hong Kong, the Captain would wander nonchalantly through the cabin, pipe in mouth, stopping now and then to speak to a passenger and, to all intents and purposes, created an air of calm and security. He, like his crew, was smartly attired and this in itself gave one a feeling that the plane was under the firm control of very capable people.

So, with an air of 'everything will be fine' I boarded the plane which was to take me 1000 miles north to Hanoi over jungles, swamps and mountains. First of all I noticed that the seat didn't feel as comfortable as the one I had become accustomed to and, then, the floor had no soft carpeting. In fact, I was quite sure I could see right through a crack. However, I settled in with seat belt and once more decided that 'everything would be fine'. No sooner had I convinced myself than a man appeared, hastily making his way to the pilot's cabin. The sleeves of his white shirt were rolled up above his elbows and his dark curly hair stood straight up on end. This was the pilot! I had a moment of panic wondering whether to stay or do the sensible thing by getting off as quickly as possible. My self-reassurance had been knocked flat. I couldn't help feeling that with a plane like this and a pilot like that, there would be no hope of a successful trip. Four hours later I arrived in Hanoi - 'everything was fine'!

My tour in Hanoi proved most interesting although at times a bit frustrating. But there were always amusing incidents to liven such frustrations. By the time Xmas rolled around the Canadian staff felt something should be done to mark this