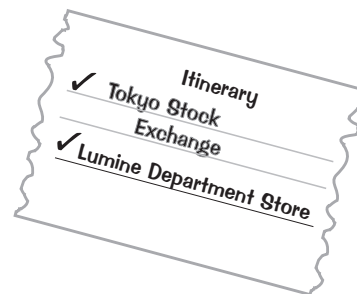


Weather - Sunny & pleasant
Tokyo - Tuesday



This was our last full day in Japan. The time here has passed so quickly, yet in many ways it feels as if we had compacted a year's worth of experiences into 15 days.

A group of us decided to go to the Tokyo Stock Exchange this morning. This meant taking the subway system again and making one transfer from the red line to the orange line — no problem!! The subway was not difficult at all. It's laid out the same way as the Metro in Washington, D.C.

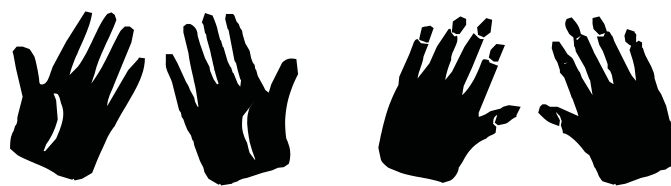
One very nice thing about Japan was that I could safely stop anyone on the street and ask directions. The people invariably were helpful and would usually walk with me until they were sure I would end up in the right place. This was how we made it to the stock exchange. People pointed us in the right direction and finally we were there.

A Visit to the Tokyo Stock Exchange

There were four guides at the stock exchange who spoke English and gave us a most informative and interesting tour. The Tokyo Stock Exchange is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M. and from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. Surprisingly, our guide said that since the Tokyo market responds to what happens in London and New York, there is not much action on Mondays when these other markets have not yet opened. I would have thought that Tokyo would lead the way since morning comes here before it does in much of the rest of the world.

The Visitor's Center was set up with video and animated high-tech presentations that explained all that was going on. It reminded me of the displays and exhibits one sees at Disney World and Epcot Center.

One thing that was particularly interesting was the use of hand signals when trading is done on the floor of the stock exchange. There was a display with an automated robot showing the various signals. The trading floor itself looked like pandemonium to the average observer. I could see activity everywhere with hundreds of people pushing, shoving, shouting, and constantly communicating via hand signals. When a big trade was made, we heard applause and whistles. To my ears, these were the same sounds I associate with a high school basketball game.



買い Buying

売り Selling

I noticed that the only women on the trading floor were clerks. No women were involved in the active trading on the floor. I asked our guide why this was the case. He said that there was no law prohibiting it, but that the activity on the trading floor gets too rough for women. The men, he claimed, often get bloody noses and torn clothing. Somehow, this explanation did not seem 100% accurate since women were physically on the trading floor already as clerks.

The 150 most active stocks are traded on the floor of the exchange, but the rest are traded via computer. We went to another part of the building to see this. While the men on the floor seemed quite young, perhaps in their twenties and thirties, the men doing the computerized trading were older, probably in their forties or fifties. Some were wearing slippers with their shoes placed neatly under their desks while others were wearing shoes. I noticed again that there were only men doing this work.

This evening a group of us ventured out for dinner — our last night in Japan. It was the evening before Sports Day, a national holiday in Japan, and the restaurants were very crowded. We tried several places, but they turned us away because there were no available tables. The custom of waiting for an empty table didn't seem to exist. If the restaurant was full, they just turned us away with no suggestion of waiting.

We finally found a Chinese restaurant on the 7th floor of Lumine Department Store, one of five restaurants located there. It seemed strange to me to have so many restaurants in department stores, but this is commonplace in Japan. Tables were available, but it was necessary to divide into two smaller groups. I enjoyed the conversation and the Chinese food, which was quite different from the Japanese food we had been eating for much of our trip. It was a nice evening.

We returned to the hotel early to face the challenge of fitting everything into two suitcases and finding something clean enough to wear on the plane tomorrow. As we were packing, all of us wandered up and down the hotel hallway dressed in *yukatas*. It was like a party in a college dorm, all low key but with lots of laughter and reminiscing. It was the perfect way to end our time together.

