

EASTER, April 6, 1958

In a little Daiichi Hotel cubbyhole high atop a fourth floor cocktail



Oh yes, I must have finished the last letter discussing Kuwamura bamboo noren (3'x3' @ 1.02 FOB). It is the same as the big one we have only it is fastened on to canvas instead of a bamboo rod, which latter is not very desirable. I do believe that we can land them for about \$1.50 dozen (repeat, \$1.50) and at that price we should be able to do something with them. We should be able to wholesale each at \$2.75 and retail at \$5.00 each. We should try encouraging our customers to use them on the porches and kitchen doorways. Should I buy a few to try in our store? Maybe 4 dozen or so. Should be a small but steady seller, like lobsters and tassels.

I had to leave at 1 PM and rush back to the hotel where I had an appointment with Mr. Iida of International Trading Co of Yokohama. He is an introduction of a Mr. Schonerd of the peninsular. The old gentleman is quite a distinguished looking person and appear quite reliable, but, unfortunately, thoroughly inexperienced in exporting our type merchandise. More of an ore, oil, chemical expert, I believe. It seems that importing into Japan is heading into stormy times due to Japanese government restricting imports and allocating dollars. Mr. Iida brought some interesting wood-cut prints, quite modern and pleasing, but, alas, prices of such hand-crafts are considerably higher than the US printed or silk-screened cards. I do believe that my original idea of machine printing wood cuts as we did the IWATE prints many years ago is the only and best solution to our card problem. Ideas are plentiful and good here and I plan to proceed immediately after having made my first rounds.

Later in the afternoon Ken Kato came over so we went to the various Ken showrooms, at Daimaru. At the Ehime-ken exhibit room I was attracted by a collapsible plastic-coated wired ornament in varie-colored patterns. I had Kato send some samples to you. I bought about 100 dozen assorted, or whatever they had in stock, for immediate delivery. I heard that an oriental was in the showroom just before me buying for some firm in the States (no names revealed) and that samples were taken. I then decided to buy some for immediate delivery and then asked them if I could have an exclusive if we bought a considerable quantity, and the man acted quite happy and agreeable. However, I think that we should test the item first before committing ourselves. Please have Jack take the gadgets and see how reactions are. The little things can be manipulated into many interesting shapes. Experiment with them. I do believe that they should make excellent Christmas tree ornaments as well as party decorations and playthings for the children. It could turn out to be a pretty good number. The price, incidentally, should be around 60¢ dozen FOB Japan. JIM, please take one to customs and have it appraised as to its duty rate. Maybe 30%? Mfg of plastics or some such? If so we should land them in SF for about 90¢ dozen. I suggested a pack in pliofilm bag--8 in pkg. and a dozen such in a box. Pardon me, that was another item entirely, and I am getting ahead of myself. This toy, I believe can be sold individually. I do believe that George Sakai must have been the man before, and again it might be QuonQuon. At any rate we should try to be the first with the mostest on this item, if reactions are favorable in SF. House of Today and Frasers should be good testing grounds. I am intending to change colors later after hearing from you.

I am also having the same item made up into larger units--altogether, in three sizes. The sample sent to you is the smallest, the next about a couple of inches larger and the largest about 9 or 10 inches in diameter. Could be interesting, eh wot?

All this happened on April 1st, and that is no bull. At Kuwamura I asked for prices of the HOTPAD made of the ringed side of a bamboo purse which was sent to us as a sample earlier this year. Looks like a wheel. Getting prices now.

On April 2nd, I was picked up by Mr. Tokano, flunky at the Ichikawa Lighters, and drove over to their showroom. No new designs to speak of nor brag about. Guess we have to depend on ourselves hereafter. They did have one that was made smaller than our CLT-4 short lighter and I thought we could sell these (with brass legs) for about the same prices as our present CLT's. They said that they were made for ladies. They are petite and could conceivably sell in US. I saw a cigaret cup patterned along the lines of our CLT-1 lighter, a perfect tube. It is the size of our CLT-1 lighter and hollowed out like a cup. If lacquered in the colors of our present lighters it could sell, I believe. It is \$2.50 a dozen FOB Japan. Maybe 15% duty? Maybe .167? At any rate, it should land in SF for about \$3.25 a dozen. I think we can sell them for \$6000 a dozen. It should look good along side a CLT-1, CLT-4, and possibly the others as well. At \$1 retail, it should be pretty attractive.



The baby lighter with three brass legs (plated like our present lighter heads) will cost us about \$6.50 dozen. Without legs, it should be about \$5.60 dozen. At \$6.50 a dozen it is slightly higher than the average we are now paying, but at \$5.60 a dozen it should land in SF for about \$8.00 dozen. Samples are now being prepared and will be sent to you upon completion.

I also discussed the possibilities of making salt/pepper sets, candle holders and the like and they were quite interested. I showed them pictures I brought and I don't know how much was absorbed by them but I am anxiously hoping and praying. I gave them some pictures to study. Evidently, they manufacture some lighter heads there. Maybe "assemble" is the correct word. They do quite a bit of premium lighter business, also advertising lighters, such as Pepsi, etc.

Music boxes, I mean musical movements are being produced at capacity and I feel that any extras would not be available in great quantities for export. Various domestic manufacturers of boxes, lighters, etc. have contracted for monthly deliveries way into the future to ensure receiving them for later export. Tami, I'll try some other place. Sankyo's movements are used quite extensively throughout Japan.

At 1 pm Mr. Sugihara of Serizawa Somegami Kenkyujo came to Daichi Hotel while I was having a quick sandwich and coffee at the coffee shop after my trip to Ichikawa Lighter. We discussed the possibilities of producing a small printed (wood-cut) calendar with Mr. Serizawa's approval and supervision and handled through the Serizawa Somegami Co. I was thinking of a 6 1/2" calendar to sell for around \$1.50 similar to the one Eiichi gave us (green one from some optical firm). At any rate, the calendar would be not much larger than postcard size and on Japanese handmade paper to be used on a desk or hung. I mentioned that the calendar from Kyoto was eating into our sales and I thought that since the public was the same and did not differentiate between one from the other and did not have the eye to distinguish the better of the two, I felt that sales would not be as high as last year. Sugihara told me that Kuriyama's calendar did not leave the country until late October or November. That must have caused a hardship to Stephens-Nelson, no doubt. Price of that calendar was around \$1.15 FOB. And if Kaneshima of Kyoto says that a design fee of \$300 was paid Takayama for the designs, then the 3000 that Nelson bought must have cost them 10% more, or landed price in NY around \$1.50 each. If that is the price of a calendar landed in NY then we must expect stiff competition from now on. I don't know the commission paid Nelson's salesman, but if it is the same as ours Nelson would have a difficult time selling them for less than \$2.25 each. If we can sell more of the smaller wood-cut calendar sets at \$1.50 and make a longer margin of profit and we take a slight loss of profit on the larger calendar we may come out better this year than last year. Say we do purchase about 5000 of the large ones all told, and sell more of the smaller calendars? Something to mull over., I reckon. I expect Sugihara today (now 10:30 AM) momentarily to discuss further details.

We talked later of a bamboo holder, a scroll like calendar, etc. More later.

