

May 3rd, and another dreary cloudy misty day.

Dear Minasema,

The best part of the day is when I sit down to read your most welcome letters. You don't know how much it cheers me up, for this buying business all alone in this large city is certainly not for me. I would much rather have the powdered coffee in the office to a cup in the "coffee bars" here, or Tami's criticisms and Martha's asides to the automatic "Ohajogozamusu" etc. here. In other words, catch the first plane back, old man.

On the 30th I also met the Ichikawa lighter man, Tokano, and bawled him out regarding his poor correspondence record and his poor follow up of our shipments and his poor everything, poor guy. Hai, Hai, Hai, he commented. Evidently Ichikawa has a lot of business and poor Tokano is relegated to quite a few accounts and he is very busy, so he says, and actually has very little time to take care of every account properly.

Last year and early this year Ichikawa had trouble with the Aizu lacquer makers (one of two lacquers) and was the reason for the mixups. Now only one maker is doing our lighters. So he says. So now we should have better production and shipments. Suzuzen man told me that the lacquer industry is presently experiencing a minor depression due to advent of plastics and due to season now being worst selling period for lacquer wares. So our production should be very good now. And also cheaper. I think we had better order another 1000 dozen now to take advantage of this slow period and get in our shipments early to avoid any problems later. Better have stock in the warehouse than to wait for shipments. This may be a big factor in giving us a banner fall selling season. I do feel that the same lighters will still continue to be our best performer. There are millions of people in US who will still want our lighters as presents this Christmas, especially at the price and due to curtailment of spending dough-re-me. So please send me our inventory of the lighters so we can reorder promptly.

Ichikawa brought me some lighter samples but were too high for me to bite. I told Tokano that the prices were ridiculous as compared to the ones we are now purchasing. He is supposed to go back and reappraise his prices and quote me new prices later on. But I indicated to him that I was not very interested in the newer designs chiefly because Ichikawa was unable to produce even the order we made late last year, which is now being shipped monthly this year. I asked him how Ichikawa could accept additional orders when they had difficulty in shipping our present orders. "Hai" he answered earnestly. I told him that if he had difficulty in production, please contact Fukunishi of Aizu to do our work. I told him that Fukunishi was good. Please send Ichikawa Fukunishi's address and mention that we recommend him highly to do our work. But we should order 1000 dozen now to assure us of delivery this year.

Later on in the afternoon of the 30th I went to the Kagawa-ken showroom to see lighter base samples by Aomine and salt-pepper sets in teak by same man. They were not up to the par of the salad servers. He said that he was shackled by the size and had to conform to conventional style limitations so he could not think up anything too original. I was very disappointed. It seems that he is a good free form man but when constricted by what only machine can produce, he is not too good. I'm afraid that I was too enthusiastic about the fellow. His designs were no different from those in US, I'm afraid. So I told Hirai that I refuse to pay any design fees on such items. I told Hirai that I felt that I had to take my business elsewhere to get what I want at my price, otherwise I could not compete in the open market with others who may produce the identical thing in other prefectures. My kokeshi doll maker can produce the same thing out of teak at less cost, I believe.

Hirai produced the ring-ball-puzzle made out of teak (leftovers) for ¥46 each or \$1.56 dozen FOB Japan. I ordered 100 dozen for now. We should sell for \$1 each, I believe. We must print some instruction in English later to sell them.

On May 1st I met Kuwamura and mentioned the fact that you people were not too happy about the hot pads. She said that she will try to sort out the bad ones before shipping, and that they were already ordered and I said too bad and I do believe that we will have to eat the ones she ship to us. It will only cost us \$180 plus landing costs so if you don't like them too much we can unload them on Trade Fair, or Bazaar Bazaar in LA or Balinese Shop in Pasadena at cost. But you should give the item a try before being so discouraged. Forget the item later because it will never look the way you want it to look, and it was a good try and idea originally, although executed in a sloppy manner.

Mrs. Shibata showed me other bamboo samples but since you people cooled off so fast on the hotpad idea I decided not to be too curious about her samples and dismissed her.

Tsunoda also came on May 1st and showed me some samples. Kokeshi dolls which we were not too interested in. They also brought me a sample of the animal bank which I commented upon regarding the dangers of warping and sticking. They also showed me the round clown bank but since the price was high I suggested a cheaper way to make the item to cut costs here and there.

For lunch I ate with Tamotsu Murayama who works as public relations and advertising man for Japan Times. I had met him on the train from Nagoya to Shizuoka. Met him at Nagoya station just as I was boarding the train. He came to my coach while on the train and we chatted and somehow I mentioned that one of our pet dreams was to form a Japanese shopping center in San Francisco and that land was now available in Nihonmachi. He jumped with interest and plied me with question after question. He also said that he could get the backing of important financial interests here in Japan and that it was easy to organize such a plan and to send buildings, exhibits etc. to US to help the project. Shops, equipment, even personnel could be supplied from Japan. Tami, doesn't this sound exciting? He would like to get more details about the land available.

At lunch he said that the governor of Tokyo was definitely interested and that he could also interest other governors to help and to supply exhibits, and he can get financial help here and also in US, like Hearst, and other important names he mentioned. If we can get Christopher to donate the land for such a magnificent project, we can certainly put up a terrific tourist attraction with the help of Japanese interests--especially architecturally, culturally, as well as financially. I shall come back and talk on this subject more thoroughly soon. How can we contact Mayor Christopher and have him OKAY the project in writing so that the Japanese end will begin in earnest. We have to work up some form of brochure in order to present to the Mayor, and I am almost sure that the Governor of California might be interested too. Is this plan too big for us to tackle? This center might turn out bigger than the business we are in at present. It may be worth our while to concentrate more man hours on this project, for we should be in on the ground floor of this program. Tamotsu Murayama wants to be named the promoter for the Japanese end so that he can go with a letter from Mayor Christopher to all the important persons here in Japan to solicit financial as well as moral backing. What say? Excited?

Later in afternoon I went to K. Kato where I ordered for the retail store some wooden puzzles of various shapes, about 12 designs and 24 dozen of each. I thought they could always use about that much annually. In addition to our dog and lion in our store. Also ordered 100 dozen short and 100 dozen long bamboo skewers.

Yesterday, May 2nd I went to Kusunokido and ordered some mulberry bark letter set, notebook and envelop to match (unruled) packed in vinyl envelop at ¥48 ex-factory. 200 dozen sets in all. Also ordered some WAHON or sign-books for the retail store and for our special customers. Also ordered 100 dozen white UNRYU letter sets at ¥61 ex-factory. We can average out the price here and sell at same price with the mulberry bark set.

Then I had to rush off to Serizawa's home in Kamata where I was an hour late. There I saw the new desk calendar sample made of somegami, which was a knockout! Much more exciting than our larger size, I thot. I May be prejudiced. If the printer can catch the hand made look, I feel that we have a tremendous seller on our hands. A calendar that should sell as a business gift--to Gumps, Anthor, Northwest Airlines, many architects, and all sorts of people.

I hope to get the beautiful gift papers printed for us on Japanese handmade papers this year. Please get out the various samples and pick out at least 12 good designs that you think will sell this year for Xmas. If we can work out a retail price of 30¢ to 35¢ a sheet of 20-30 we should do quite well, I believe. The kind of wrapping paper that Martha is asking for is available in Asakusa wholesale houses but the designs are not that good. The ones used in the finer shops are especially designed by starving artists and are not available to the public. I did price one place and it costs about 210 yen per 100 sheets ex-wholesaler. They are indeed cheaper here, but I wonder if I can get any good looking ones. I shall try, or I shall print some myself in rolls for our customers.

Today I bought some OIRI (good luck opening day sign for restaurants) in big red letters on black framesuch as you see in the restaurant next to the Goshado Book store. We have the same Characters used on our cocktail picks. It costs ¥350 ex factory. I also bought some hand painted signs (about 3' x 5') for kicks. Used on opening of restaurants for good luck and success. Some are cute drawings. Called Kaiten Epira.

Also ordered some coin enveloped with wood block prints on them. Tiny size available now. Used mainly during New Years I was told and not available at present. I bought left over stock from last year. Costs ¥12 ex-factory for set of 10. Also bought Makigami roll and matching envelopes at ¥-28 roll and ¥13 for the envelopes set of 10. Should be good for our retail store. And to special customers, and possibly good for wholesale. Man is looking for more samples of the woodcut envelopes. Pretty hard thing to find for no one stocks them during the year.

Well, I seem to finally have caught up with my buying. Seems as though I have found quite a few items. I am now working on foil Xmas decorations. Went to several suppliers. Takahashi is closed during Golden Week so will see him later. At any rate I have seen many exciting new things and will report later.

My Schedule---Moji, May 8 to 11, Kyoto, May 12 to 13, Kobe May 14 to 17 and back in Tokyo May 19. I plan to leave for San Francisco before the end of the month. I will be in Hotel Tokyo from May 19th.