

Kekkon Shiki

(The Wedding Ceremony)

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After the initial excitement and rush of deciding to get married, the overwhelming mountain of decisions comes bearing down. Where? What? When? Who? (of course my bride was already decided, it was all the other necessary people that needed to be decided).

A lot of the things we had to decide were frustrating at first... but in Japan, many of the "problems" turned into humorous situations. A few of them are included in this newsletter.

Fortunately, the wedding day itself was essentially problem free... there were no major disasters! The day was very memorable to us and our families... even my parents, Jennifer and Carrie (my sisters), and my aunt Anita were able to attend the festivities in Japan.

Tidbits

Instead of boring you with lots of narrated details about the wedding... I decided to toss in some brief tidbits about the wedding before we actually get started. The actual wedding semi-details are presented at the end.

In Japanese style wedding ceremony, it's just the happy couple and the minister standing in front... no wedding party/mob.

My wedding ring was originally my great grandmother's wedding band. It still has the inscription 11-19-10 (1910!) when she was married just after immigrating from Sweden.

Eiko had a going away party every nite during her last week at work... it was a great encouragement to her. She misses

some people at work... but she is happy to be done.

Preparations (Who What When Where?)

Like any wedding, the preparations phase can be very difficult. After a couple of weeks of

Sorry to everyone that this newsletter is so late in getting out... 3 main things have occupied my time since we got married: 1) organizing our new home, 2) studying for the National Japanese Exam on the 9th of December, and 3) several radical changes are occurring at work (our lab was reorganized and we may be transferred to Tokyo.). Hopefully the next newsletter will be sooner!

searching, we selected a place to hold the wedding. The location is called Taiko-En and it is the same place that MEW used to wine and dine the *gaijin* when we came for our final interview. Taiko-En used to be the home of the Japanese baron Fujita which was converted to a ritzy restaurant with several banquet rooms. In the garden, there is a western style chapel that seats around 70 people. One of Taiko-En's primary sources of income is hosting weddings, so they have a battalion of wedding coordinators. It's pretty much *one stop shopping* for wedding chapel, flowers, minister, return gifts, and attire.

Our wedding co-ordinator at Taiko-En was really helpful. I didn't really notice until a few weeks before the wedding, but our wedding co-ordinator was a man. It was obvious that he was male by gender. It's just that all of the wedding coordinators that I knew in America were women. He was not femme or anything and he turned out to be very organized.

Simple Schedule

16	April	Engaged
27	July	Married at City Hall
4	August	Ceremony, Reception, Friends party
5-16	August	Honeymoon in Banff, Vancouver, Canada
18	Aug	California Reception
29	August	Return to Work

Clothes

We went to try on tuxes and dresses (respectively). The first tux the lady at Taiko-En had me try on was a black glitter tux... something you would see in such high class places as Las Vegas or Disco Movies from the 70's. Teamed up with a white glitter vest with gold buttons.... the pants were designed to be worn high... and I mean high... they came up to the nipples on my chest. The whole getup was totally outrageous. Next choice was an all white one... that one did not get



The formal Kimonos for Japanese Weddings which we wore during the Japanese Reception.

much consideration. I finally got the lady to switch the white vest in the original tux for a black vest. The black vest turned out to be made of "normal" tux material... and I quickly inquired as to where the rest of the tux was... she told me I could not wear that kind of tux since it was especially for the father of the bride. I insisted and she brought it out.... it turned out to be a normal tux! With normal pants including pockets. I told her it was the one I wanted... but she started to protest saying that the other normal people were going to wear that style of tux and that I should have the really special one so that they would know that it was me getting married. I quickly informed her that I would be the only gaijin in a tux anyway... so everyone should be able to figure out that it was me getting married. I prevailed.

But the story does not end there... noooo... next came the shoes. I had seen a couple of pairs of regular shiny black wrinkled leather tux shoes in the showroom. But there again... she went to get the special shoes! The shoes that she brought back were perfectly smooth black patten leather shoes... a little on the femme side if it were just that, but these shoes had big black bows on the toes! The bows were made with 1 inch ribbon and were wider than the shoes. Even Tinker-Bell had plainer shoes than these! You can guess which shoes I selected.

But the story is still not over. We then began picking shirts. The first two shown to me were tailored like regular tux shirts. The noticeable exception was that they were silver and shiny. The light was not so good... so I asked her if they were silk. She said no ... and was trying to think of the name of the material in English. As I looked... a sinking feeling hit me. I warily asked her, "They are not made of POLYESTER are they?" "Oh YES, yes, polyester, polyester, very good, very good" was her excited reply. "NO, NO, NEVER", was my reply in a laughing voice.



The ceremony attire...
traditional white dress with tux.

She was gone about five minutes, but was finally able to come up with a nice 100% cotton shirt. Whew!

Eiko then tried on some nice dresses and selected one that she thought she liked. My sister Jennifer had offered her veil to Eiko and it matched the selected dress perfectly.

Then it came time for the bill. The 2 hour rental of Eiko's dress normally costs 100,000 yen... but she got it for the summer discount of only 80,000 yen (\$600) My tux was 50,000 yen and the formal kimono was another 50,000 yen. With the summer discount, mine also came to 80,000 yen. As my eyes were popping out at the rental prices, someone made a comment about discounts. Eiko translated for the saleslady to me that there were no gaijin discounts. I was mentioning something about a tux rental only costing 10,000 yen in America and jokingly replied back to Eiko, "what about discounts for cute gaijin?" The lady looked at me for half a second, smiled, crossed out the 80,000 yen and wrote in 70,000. Eiko and her mom were

very surprised and we all issued many "arrigato gozaimashitas" (thank yous). I am still giggling about that one.

But of course, about a month later, the dress rental company sent Eiko a postcard informing her that the *new* summer wedding dress styles were going to be displayed the following week. Sensing eminent danger, I tried playing her off saying that she was *really* happy with the she had already picked out. But she wanted to be sure... I lost.

So on the appointed day, I took off from work early and with her mom we headed down to Taiko-En. We arrived to find an entire auditorium full of the newest summer wedding dress fashions... western white dresses on one side and extravagant kimonos on the other. We started mingling among the hoards of anxious sales girls and apprehensive fathers. Eiko found the original wedding dress that she had picked out and decided it looked rather old and grey... like I could not see that thought coming the week before? Anyways, she begins sifting through the racks of dresses and finally selects one that she wishes to try on. She returns from the dressing room in dress that I admit looked newer (but I don't know if better). The sales girls swoon around her telling her how beautiful she looks in that dress.

Now this particular dress did not have a price tag hanging from it like most of the dresses. This was a sign to me that we were wading in very murky waters indeed. My Japanese listening ability is still pretty limited but numbers (and prices) is one area that I have fairly well mastered. Finally her mother asks how much? The hushed reply was 200,000 yen. **200,000 yen !!!!** My mind screams... that is over \$1,500 for a two hour rental of some white cloth! Sensing my immediate revulsion, they tried to improve the situation by saying that 200,000 yen was an excellent discount from the original price of 280,000 yen. No... they didn't make much progress with that

statement either. Had I known the original cost before she tried on the dress... she would not have even tried it on.

Eiko kept staring at the dress in the mirror... the sales girls kept bobbing their heads in affirmation... I kept silently slowly shaking my head. We were at the stand off phase of the deal. The girls seemed to give in... there was some hurried hushed conferencing. The eldest sales girl emerged with the pronouncement, "Special Summer Discount 160,000 yen." Try as I may, I could not convince myself that renting that dress was in any way a rational responsible thing for a new family to spend money on. But as we all know, love is not really a rational aspect of our lives... I must be really in love... we rented the dress.

The Inevitable Paperwork (Do you want to be on TV?)

It's official, all the papers were signed on 27 July 90. It did not take too many hours... and we only had a few mistakes on all the forms... but the countries of Japan and the United States of America now recognize our marriage as official.

To start off this long process, we first went to the U.S. consulate in Osaka and filled out a bunch of forms. We needed two witnesses, so I convinced two visiting American lawyers into being our witnesses... both of them lived in the LA area and had been waiting innocently in the lobby. After about an hour of collecting information, forms, signatures, and stamps, we were finished. Not married, but finished with the first step. The US government could now officially recommend to the Nation of Japan that Steve Palm and Eiko Kato were "responsible" adults worthy of the privilege of getting married.

After that first gauntlet at the consulate, it was officially lunch time. While waiting for the next office to reopen after lunch, we had a nice lunch in a little Italian cafe

near the consulate. Then we headed to the Osaka City Hall to present all of our paperwork. Only a couple of mistakes in the preprocessing... the American names had ended up in the form "Palm Ray Stephen" instead of "Palm, Stephen Ray". Luckily the city hall officer was very nice. (Japanese government offices are known for their particular desire for preciseness in paperwork.) Additionally, the U.S. consulate had deduced that since this was a Japanese form, the addresses of the witnesses should



be where they are staying Japan. It makes some sense except that City Hall was not too interested in putting the Osaka Hilton as the official permanent residence of the Witnesses. So a phone call back to the consulate retrieved their real American addresses. A couple of more signatures and *Hanko* stamps later... they presented us with a nice marriage certificate in Japanese. We were officially married!

Now we had to return to the U.S. consulate so that the United States government would officially recognize the marriage by translating and notarizing the marriage certificate. We had

started at 11 and finished about 3... not bad for the number of forms and people we had to deal with and considering the previous progress Japan and the US have had in the recent trade negotiations.

We were able to take a few pictures of the paperwork phase. We had unknowingly smuggled my camera into the U.S. Consulate. We took one picture of Eiko and I with the two witnesses. At the Osaka City Office, we took a picture of Eiko, I, the man who filled out the forms, and the

certificate.

And the big surprise/gift/treat of the day. When we first arrived at the consulate... there was a TV crew filming miscellaneous things/people/activities in the consulate. After a little while, the consular told us that the crew wanted to film a couple in the process of getting married. About 20 minutes later, the crew started filming us. First they interviewed the consular, then they interviewed me... in Japanese... I understood most of the questions... Eiko had to help me a little... then they interviewed Eiko. A little bit later... they filmed us transferring forms

and being asked questions. Coincidentally, the segment aired around 1AM on August 4th.

The Ceremony

As I mentioned before, Taiko-En holds many weddings in their facilities. On our particular day, there was only one other ceremony scheduled in their wedding chapel, but it was scheduled from 10:00 to 10:30. Our ceremony was supposed to start at 11:00. The Taiko-En coordinator absolutely assured us that we could start our wedding at 11:00. As you can guess... we started a little late since the previous ceremony was late.

To make it more exciting, our "dress rehearsal" for the wedding was scheduled between 10:30 and 11:00, immediately preceding our ceremony. No drawn out rehearsals the nite before... everyone has less than 30 minutes in order to "get it right"... the first time. Although the ceremony started about 10 minutes late, it proceeded flawlessly... much to everyone's relief. Preston Bennett, the pastor from our local

church in Hirakata, conducted the service in Japanese with small explanations in English for my family.

For those of you who missed the original ceremony, or the screening at the California Reception, there is a VHS tape if you really want to see it.

Reception in Japan

While the actual ceremony was Western style, the first reception (held in Japan) was very formal traditional Japanese style. Everyone sat on the floor in two opposing rows. Eiko and I sat at the head of the room. Each person had their own individual miniature table while Eiko and I shared one large one. We were served traditional Japanese food throughout the 2 hour event which included speeches by both sides of relatives, watching traditional Japanese dancing, and Eiko playing the *Koto* (stringed instrument similar to a harp). Every word was meticulously translated into Japanese or English, and Mr. Tajima, the assistant director from

my lab, was the Master of Ceremonies.

California Reception

For the many friends and relatives that could not join us for the ceremony and reception in Japan, we decided to hold another reception in California. The restaurant was on the bay in Newport Beach near where I used to sail with UC Irvine. We really appreciated all of the relatives and friends from as far back as elementary school who came. Even Mr. Yamamura, the MEW colleague who introduced Eiko and I in Japan, was able to attend.

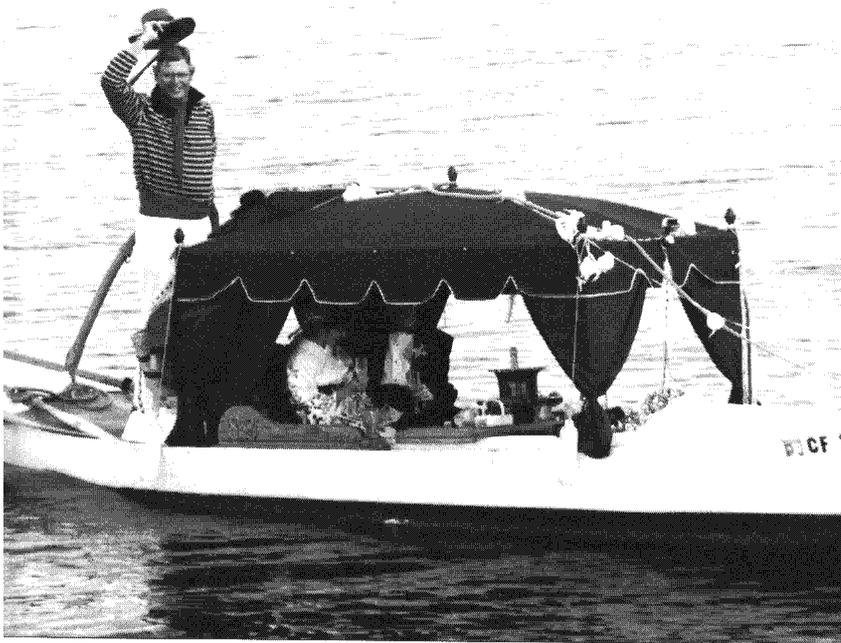
Our Honeymoon

Our honeymoon lasted a little over 3 weeks. The first half was spent in Banff and Vancouver, Canada. We enjoyed 70 degree weather... a blessed change from the 95 degree and 100% humidity weather that blankets Japanese summers. We spent most of the time relaxing except for the days when I was teaching Eiko to drive a car. The latter half was spent in Orange County and San Deigo, for the reception and then some final respite jet skiing in Mission Bay.

Owari

Well... that's the quick summary of our wedding events...

So until next time... which I hope will be sooner... I may even talk about what it is that I do at MEW... as soon as I figure it out!



The climax of the California reception entailed Eiko and I sailing off into the sunset in an Italian gondola.