

## TRIP TO JAPAN

Written by Doug Berger, 3/4/85

Today awoke about 7 am and departed from my house in N.J. at about 8:30 am with my dad.

We encountered some traffic congestion around the GW bridge and so we opted for an alternative route thru the South Bronx via the Sheridan Parkway rather than the Deagen South, to reach the Triboro Bridge.

I really had never been thru that route before and was amazed and horrified at all the abandoned and defaced apartment buildings. It seems no one has the money to renovate them and so they just stay there staring in our faces. The twilight of a great metropolis.

To complement this landscape are the car wrecks, exiled from society at the roadside, each in a different stage of dissection by the local surgeons.

Well, soon enough we approach the welcoming arms of JFK airport. As you drive past all the dozens of terminals you feel like you're in an international turnstile.

We zeroed in on the Japan Air Line (JAL) terminal and cruised in for a touchdown right next to the ticket entrance. A baggage –hooker with a blunted affect took my bags into be processed. I gave him two bucks for 2 minutes worth of effortless and mindless work as I thought briefly of my days as a pizza delivery man (Pizaro's Pizza) when I would climb 6 flights of stairs and might not even Get a quarter (probably because I already had a college degree).

Well pizza was no where in sight at the JAL ticket counter (sushi maybe) so I got down to the business of orienting myself to the orient. The terminal was really lacking of humanoids, kinda like a martian landscape. Where was everyone? Isn't Japan popular? Why is the snack-bar closed at 11 am on a weekday?

So, down to business, I ate a 75 cent Reese's, a cup of coffee (chock full of sediment), got \$300 in travelers checks from a computer, bought a couple of "Say it in Japanese" books and a novel about Freud, bought some greeting cards (American Indian style) for the people who will be meeting me at Narita, and went to board the plane after receiving some last minute best wishes from dad.

The plane wasn't crowded and I sat next to Mr. Lie, a Hongkongese who I mistook for a Japanese but realized this after my greetings in Japanese were returned with a look of utter confusion. Mr. Lee ended up to be decent conversation in English and offered me some dried Cantonese fruit. This was very interesting, however it left a peculiar taste in my mouth that just wouldn't quit until I popped a tums.

Later I spoke with a Japanese stewardess who was fairly eager to talk and was mildly impressed with my New York Japanese. She informed me that my name in Japanese was 「バーガー ダグラス」。

The view ended up to be mediocre except for about 1/2 hour we passed over some beautiful mountains in Canada (I think).

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The rest of my life in Japan is now history-Ed. 4.26.1998