The Propaganda Impact Still Belongs to the Russians: Letters Home from Kobe, 1957-1960

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This article uses personal correspondence of an American couple to examine everyday life in Japan between 1957 and 1960. It uses the notion of "soft power" to show how they were part of a Cold War network of American influence and exchange, connected to world events as they unfolded in this era of transition between the immediate postwar years of the Occupation and later decades of high-speed economic growth. While in many ways embodying American ideals of progress and equality, their experiences also illuminate the challenges and contradictions faced by this couple as they negotiated their place on this global stage.

Keywords: microhistory, postwar Japan, cultural Cold War, soft power, American expatriates, Kobe College, Bank of America, Wellesley College, Stanford University

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An American Couple Abroad

In early June 1958, Heman and Evelyn Greenwood of Jacksonville, Vermont, received an aerogram from their daughter-in-law, Joan Voss Greenwood, an assistant professor of English at Kobe College. Joan, a graduate of Wellesley College and Ph.D. candidate in the English Department of Stanford University, had been teaching composition and literature classes at this prestigious college for Japanese women for about a year. Her husband John, a Dartmouth graduate with a Stanford MBA, worked for the Bank of America at its Osaka branch office.[1] Her seasonal greeting began like this:

> We are eating strawberries constantly these days, and love them. I have them at school for lunch, as the neighborhood is famous for them, and

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[1] On the history of Kobe College, see Noriko Kawamura Ishii, *American Missionary Women at Kobe College, 1873-1909: New Dimensions of Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004). On the early history of the Bank of America, with a focus on its founder A.P. Giannini, see Gerald D. Nash, *A.P. Giannini and the Bank of America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

> Monday I'll pick up six big boxes—for a total of fifty cents—for Teiko-san to make jam from. I had quite a time making this arrangement with the incredulous old farm woman who probably never expected to talk to any of the foreigners she must see going up and down the hill to the college.[2]

This portrayal of the physical and human landscape, replete with everyday details of the young couple's social interactions and personal observations of post-Occupation Japan, is typical of Joan's weekly correspondence with John's parents. As John explained in an email more than sixty years later, Joan wrote to Heman and Evelyn so faithfully, "in part, to express gratitude for their having given her a round-trip air ticket to Japan in 1954 when I was deployed by the Marine Corps to 2/4, 3rd Marine Division, part of the United Nations forces during the Korean War."[3] After a cross-New England courtship in college, John and Joan were married on June 15, 1953, several hours after the Wellesley Commencement ceremony.[4] As Joan informed her classmates on the occasion of their 50th reunion, "While John was in the Marine Corps, we traveled together and worked in

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[2] The collection of these weekly letters from Joan and her husband John, written between 1957 and 1960, were lent to the author by John Greenwood following Joan's sudden death in 2004. Joan was an illustrious member of the English Department at California State University, Fullerton, since the 1960s, where she taught classes in Japanese literature in English translation, as well as a course on haiku poetry. While having never known Joan personally, the author is extremely grateful to her good friend John, their son Neil and especially their daughter Mary Faley and her family for their generosity in sharing with the author their memories of Joan over the past several years. Special thanks also to the members of the Wellesley Class of '53 who shared their expertise and memories of Joan, Wellesley and the status of women in the 1950s, especially Lorine Parks, Sarah Milledge Nelson, Rollene Waterman Saal, and Harriet Feinberg Segal.

[3] Personal correspondence between the author and John Greenwood on February 9, 2015.

[4] Their love affair lasted a lifetime, as recorded in a collection of haiku poems originally written by Joan on "small leaves of memo pad sheets and Post-it notes… staying up late at night, working, penning these poems, and leaving them on a table or counter, somewhere they'd be found by her husband the next morning." See the introduction by editor Irena Praitis to Joan Voss Greenwood in Joan Voss Greenwood, *Stirring Dawn: Selected Haiku and Poetry*, ed. Irena Praitis (Indian Trail, NC: D-N Publishing, 2009).

[Camp Lejeune] North Carolina; Barstow, California; and Nara, Japan."[5] While John was stationed at Army Camp Nara as a logistics officer (S-4), Joan lived with a wealthy couple from a prominent family in Tokyo, the Kishidas, in their half-Japanese, half-European, Cotswold style home.[6] The Kishidas exposed Joan to a wide range of Japanese cultural experiences, "from pachinko to Noh theatre, a win-win situation, as they had no children of their own, and Joan was an eager learner."[7]

Thus, when they arrived in Kobe in 1957, in addition to formal academic study of Asia in college, on subjects ranging from religion and politics to geography and history, they also had a good deal of familiarity with Japanese culture from these first-hand earlier encounters.[8] While in Nara, as John recalls, "I had much free time. Joan joined me frequently and usually for extended periods… Camp Nara had many American

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5 *Wellesley College Class of 1953 Record Book, 50th Reunion, June 6-9, 2003* (Kenilworth, IL: The Kenilworth Press, 2003).

6 In the late 1940s, as vice president of Carrier Corporation's international division, Heman traveled to Japan and became good friends with a Mr. Nakagawa, head of Toyo Carrier Corporation. When Joan came to Japan in 1954, Mr. Nakagawa's driver, a nephew of Mr. Kishida, made the introduction for the arrangement between Joan and his uncle and aunt who generously took her under their wing during her six-month stay in Japan. Joan's host, the first Japanese to earn a Ph.D. in horticulture from Cambridge University, was the brother of the prominent playwright Kunio Kishida and uncle of the famous actress Kyoko Kishida. On the Kishida family's samurai heritage, see J. Thomas Rimer, *Toward a Modern Japanese Theatre: Kishida Kunio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) : 57.

7 According to personal communication from John on numerous occasions. Certain aspects of Japanese etiquette had been overlooked, however, as indicated by the following in a letter sent by Joan on November 26, 1957: "The teacher's luncheon for the Japanese YWCA (Wellesley 1915) was funny—sushi in boxes, which one is supposed to eat, then wrap boxes as if never touched. Mine was a mess of course, as I didn't know this."

8 In an exchange dated February 14, 1958, regarding T. Lobsang Rampa's, *The Third Eye: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Lama* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956), Joan references her academic coursework in the following passage: "The unmasking of T. Lobsang Rompa was particularly funny. I didn't read the book, but I know I've read almost everything he did about Tibet (assuming he is not an authority on eastern languages), and he must have done extensive research, but I never came up with anything like his tale—or his royalties. From what John told me as he read it, it was a clever mix of fact and fancy which sometimes goes directly against Tibetan facts. Oh well, I guess his book would never have qualified in my course in Asiatic Geography."

women civilian employees; and even in the Officers' Club, Joan was not conspicuous."[9] Since Joan was not there in an official capacity, they stayed at the Nara Hotel for a couple of dollars a night, but never asked permission from the Marine Corps because as John recalls at age 85, he "would have been sent to a remote place."[10] In anticipation of their upcoming departure for Japan in July 1957, John writes to his parents on May 18: "Returning to the Kansai area of Japan will be something like going home. Our short stay in Nara, before, was idyllic, and we found Kyoto to be an extremely interesting place." Indeed, as Joan describes in a letter to Vermont on the day after their fifth anniversary in 1958, in the company of the visiting parents and brother of one of her Wellesley classmates, the Greenwoods toured Nara and took their guests "to the main shrines and temples, fed the deer, and had lunch in our old home, the Nara Hotel. Then we came out to Kobe, drove them around, took them for a swim at the Kobe Club and had dinner here. Teiko san did everything very well, and they enjoyed it."[11]

John's parents had first-hand experience with the life abroad of expatriate Americans, having moved to China in 1917 after Heman graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and took his first job teaching aeronautical engineering at Yale University in China, through the introduction of one of his Chinese classmates in California.[12] By the

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[9] John Greenwood, "Four Experiences in Japan," March 3, 2011. This essay was written as part of a Creative Writing class at California State University, Fullerton's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). http://creativewritingroom21.blogspot.com/2011/03/four-experiences-in-japan.html (accessed April 2, 2015).

[10] According to personal communication on January 21, 2015.

[11] The visitors were Dr. and Mrs. Waterman and their son, who was in the Navy. Joan also has this to say about her classmate, Ronnie Waterman Saal: "Ronnie, by the way, is now the book editor for the *Saturday Review*, tho cause she's only 26 she's called associate. But she has no boss, plans layout, does writing. It's quite a job, but she loves it, her writer husband has many of the same interests, and I'm proud of her."

[12] Heman was part of a multi-faceted American effort to transform China in the early twentieth century where "Economic institutions and reform organizations interacted with each other and together penetrated China…. As is demonstrated by the work of Yale-in-China and of rival groups

1930s, after a stint in Brazil with General Electric, Heman moved his family to the suburbs of New York City where John and his future wife Joan both attended Scarsdale High School.[13] Their rigorous academic preparation and family history of American influence abroad, gave them a solid foundation for the opportunities they cultivated in Japan at work, at home, and in the community.

Joan's letters to Heman and Evelyn, often humorous and literary in tone, provide a rare glimpse into the day to day activities and social gatherings that animated their cosmopolitan home in postwar Japan in the late 1950s. These personal correspondences are the foundation for a microhistory of globalization, set in locations ranging from the Sassoon Apartment building where the Greenwoods lived overlooking the harbor, to the campus of Kobe College, to the Osaka branch of the Bank of America, to the Kobe Club where they regularly played squash, swam, and socialized with other foreigners, to the myriad of local restaurants, movie theaters, and neighborhood sites such as nearby Ikuta Shrine mentioned regularly in Joan's 45-yen typed aerograms. As a social history focusing on "a variety of human activities difficult to classify except in such terms as 'manners, customs, [and] everyday life,'" this study is driven by an "expressed desire to examine and reveal the interplay among economics, politics and culture."[14]

This article follows Dale Tomich and Michael Zeuske's lead in

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founded at such institutions as Wisconsin, Princeton, and Brown, education was not simply an outlet for missionary fervor but a means to shape a new civilization in the Far East, one that would be as Christian and professional as American society." Jerry Israel, "'For God, for China and for Yale'- The Open Door in Action," *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (February 1970): 796, 801.

13 Soon after World War II, Heman "was elected president of the American Brazilian Association at a meeting of the board of directors … in the Metropolitan Club," succeeding Joseph T. Wilson, world trade manager of IBM Corporation. "American Brazilian Group Elects Him President," *New York Times*, March 30, 1946.

14 Mark M. Smith, "Making Sense of Social History," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (October 2003): 165, 167.

proposing "microhistory as 'world history from the perspective of the individual'… characterized by a reduction in scale, concern with the contingent, the unique, the fragmentary."[15] From week to week, we can follow world events as they unfold on a global stage while at the same time gaining a sense of how these events are mediated through the lens of domestic space and face-to-face encounters with neighbors and friends. Headline news is literally couched in between regular updates on the progress of Joan's dissertation on one end, with inquiries about Ma Greenwood's latest dental procedure on the other. It is precisely these unique, fragmentary moments of daily life in this particular three-year period of postwar Japan history that make these letters so valuable. While in many ways a personal story, we can extrapolate from the numerous references to economic, political, social, and cultural change depicted in that story to better understand and appreciate the nature of historical variability at the local and international level. It is this complex interplay between local actors and Cold War era international events that exposes the networks and contingencies of world history at the microlevel in a most interesting and engaging way.

For example, on Valentine's Day of 1958, Joan acknowledges her mother-in-law's suggestion to start keeping track of their many visitors, while also thanking her for the latest delivery of news clippings sent from the United States. In the same paragraph, she touches on the Cold War arms race with an indirect reference to the October 4, 1957 Sputnik launch, but in a way that exudes a sense of resignation, not imminent threat. In Joan's letter dated February 14, she notes the spin of the Japanese media in the following passage:

Thank you for the pretty Valentine, and also your note, Mother. A Guest

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[15] Dale Tomich and Michael Zeuske, "Introduction, the Second Slavery: Mass Slavery, World-Economy, and Comparative Microhistories," *Review* (*Fernand Braudel Center*) 31, no. 2 (January 2008): 97.

> Book would be a good idea—we have quite a few empty album like books around—and it would make a nice record. As yet, though, we have had no overnight guests, so it won't be inaugurated for a while. We do keep track of dinner guests, though, in a calendar and usually save the calendars. We also appreciated the envelope of clippings, though we found the page of scientific material on the new satellite, etc. very technical for us while also very interesting. I'm afraid that although I suppose we had to have one, too, the propaganda impact still belongs to the Russians, if Japanese press coverage is any indication.

In conventional political histories of this era, this Soviet accomplishment is generally depicted as "a feat that intensified Cold War fears and generated charges that Eisenhower's conservative spending policies had caused the country to lag behind in missile and satellite development."[16] In contrast to the Greenwood's living room, primary source evidence from the chambers of the National Security Council (NSC) on October 10, 1957, gives a different picture of the tensions raised during discussions of the ramifications of this Soviet first. Records from that meeting include the following summary of comments by Arthur Larson, director of the United States Information Agency (USIA): "While we could not permit ourselves to be panicked by the Soviet achievement, we did wonder whether our U.S. plans were now adequate with regard to the next great break-through. If we lose repeatedly to the Russians as we have lost with the earth satellite, the accumulated damage would be tremendous."[17]

These varied accounts of a pivotal moment in Cold War history speak to the analytical power of social history which provides an "openness to the historical construction of various aspects of the human experience, the valuation of relatively ordinary people as historical

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[16] Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson, *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations: Since 1914*, 7th ed., vol. 2 (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010): 278.

[17] Ibid., 284.

subjects and agents, and some sense of key historical causes and big changes in the human experience overall."[18] Reduced to a clipping tucked in among a calendar of dinner guests and Valentine hearts, we see how the latest Soviet technology has been integrated into the daily life of Americans overseas. Such a perspective compliments recent scholarship that confirms "the Cold War was much more than a diplomatic confrontation and nuclear competition. It pervaded all aspects of life."[19]

In the following pages, the Greenwoods' letters are quoted at length in order to convey both the range of their experiences as well as the level of detail provided about their everyday activities. Joan's academic training as a student of literature is reflected in the vivid portrait she paints of postwar Japan. Almost works of literature themselves, her letters in particular capture the nuance and complexity of social relations among the foreign community and the Japanese friends, students, and colleagues she and John met during their three years as residents of Kobe. These observations are always situated within a framework of the swiftly changing political environment of the late 1950s. Here as well, their academic preparation and commitment to continued intellectual development allow them to place their own experiences in a wider global context. Although these are personal letters to close family members, the public sphere of international relations is ever present in their correspondence.

Grassroots Cold War Soft Power

In addition to hosting dinner guests at home, the Greenwoods regularly socialized with other Americans, Japanese, and ex-patriates from around

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[18] Peter N. Stearns, "Social History Present and Future," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1, Special Issue (Autumn 2003): 12.

[19] Michael F. Hopkins, "Continuing Debate and New Approaches in Cold War History," *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (2007): 934.

the world during their time in Kobe. The following account from November 12, 1957, gives a vivid picture of one of these gatherings:

> Sunday we went to a meeting of the Stanford Alumni of Kansai, which took place in a lovely restaurant, in which a huge Stanford banner was tacked up across the kakemono in the tokonoma. We met a girl I worked with at Hoover, back here working in a TV station as a director, because after being a Fulbright scholar she must return home even though this requirement is waived for her husband, a PhD in electronics needed at Stanford Research. Rather nasty McCarran act.[20] Fortunately we could introduce her to the USIA man at our consulate, who will speak to the consul and try to help. We also met a number of interesting older men who graduated between 1907 and 1913, loyal alumni even though most of them have not been in S.F. since its bridges were built. The funniest is an English professor (though when he teaches I don't know) a member of the prefectural legislature, and at the same time a lobbyist for Hyogo prefecture who spends his time chasing Diet members all over the country. He spends the rest of his time on rocks overlooking the ocean trying to catch big fish all alone in the middle of the night, and he came equipped with a beautiful pole he made himself and ink prints of the actual fish he had caught recently.

The following summer, on July 1, 1958, John makes mention of the same USIA employee and informs his parents about his upcoming fishing trip with the politician from Hyogo:

> Dear Folks; Almost one year has passed since we arrived in Kobe. Time

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[20] Joan is referring to the 1952 McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act that "retained the discriminatory national origins quota system." Michael G. Davis, "Impetus for Immigration Reform: Asian Refugees and the Cold War," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 7, no. 3/4 (October 1998): 130.

has passed very quickly. Almost a year to the day after we arrived, we went to a "going away party" for an American couple who are being transferred from Kobe to Rangoon with the USIA. The party was given by the Kansai Stanford Alumni Club, and as with previous meetings, most of the members in attendance were Japanese gentlemen in their seventies. One, who is a successful politician (member of the prefectural assembly), is going to take us fishing in Kobe Harbor or the inland sea sometime in August. I was pleased by his invitation because he is an interesting fellow, especially in that he is as glib as a successful politician should be, and also since he enjoys answering my questions about Japanese politics and his own activities. (He was in the class of 1910 or 11 at Stanford). Anyway, he is happy, because his party won the last election for the national Diet.[21]

I am sending Pop an airmail edition of *The Japan Times* which used to be *The Nippon Times*. It has some interesting feature articles about the Japanese steel industry, but I think he will enjoy seeing the latest thing in Japanese "international" publications.[22]

As noted in the NSC Sputnik discussions, the USIA mentioned by Joan and John was a key institution in American public diplomacy in the late 1950s. As explained by Martha Bayles, "During the Cold War, the US government worked hard to promote culture… by supporting activities aimed at 'telling America's story' (its ideals and way of life), sharing its

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[21] Here John is referring to the general election held on May 22, 1958. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) received 61.5% of the votes, compared to 35.1% for the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). Masumi Junnosuke, *Contemporary Politics in Japan*, trans. Lonny E. Carlile (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 23.

[22] A "rationalization" plan carried out in Japan between 1956 and 1960 "nurtured the export competitiveness of the Japanese iron and steel industry. It entailed several varieties of officially sanctioned cartels, organized by and for the largest producers… in the direction of integrated mills and reliance on iron ore rather than scrap, which was less efficient and more unstable feed stock." Richard J. Samuels, *"Rich Nation, Strong Army": National Security and the Technological Transformation of Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994): 75.

high culture with foreign audiences, and even at times promoting certain aspects of its popular culture."[23] In 1953, the USIA was created under the authorization of the 1948 US Information and Educational Exchange Act (the Smith-Mundt Act). Martha Bayles describes that, "In the stilted language of its charter, USIA's primary goal was 'to submit evidence to peoples of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance their own legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress, and peace.'"[24]

With regard to the particular relationship between Japan and the United States during these years, developments around the time of Kishi Nobusuke's election as prime minister in 1957 can be summed up as follows: "Although the Japanese realized they were 'not as yet strong enough militarily and industrially to dispense with the present U.S. defense arrangement,' they chafed under the terms of the security treaty and had begun 'seriously talking about "adjusting" relations with the United States in the direction of "greater equality".'"[25] Michael Schaller points out that such a shift in attitude "prompted the NSC's Operations Coordination Board to expand efforts to influence Japanese opinion by placing 'favorable news and features in the Japanese press, periodicals, radio, and television' that stressed the importance of close ties to the United States."[26]

The timing of John's assignment with Bank of America coincides

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[23] Martha Bayles, *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America's Image Abroad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) : 5.

[24] Ibid., 114. In her discussion of USIA, Bayles draws heavily from Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See footnotes 4, 7, and 14 on page 280 of Bayles, *Through a Screen Darkly*.

[25] Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 130.

[26] Ibid., 124. NSC stands for the National Security Council.

almost exactly with the election of Kishi in July 1957 and his resignation on June 23, 1960 in the wake of mass demonstrations over the revised security pact between Japan and the United States. As J. Victor Koschmann explains, "Although the protests failed to prevent ratification of the treaty, they vividly crystallized the political struggle in postwar Japan between the forces of democracy that sought to defend and extend the postwar democratic reforms, and reactionary forces that were reviving prewar and wartime values of remilitarizing the nation."[27] The widespread unrest caused Eisenhower to cancel his visit to Japan and as Christina Klein notes, "The riots, which were widely reported in the U.S. press as a product of communist agitation… produced humiliation for the U.S.: they provided a worldwide audience for the public denunciations of the United States as an 'imperialist' power."[28]

Against this backdrop, it may be argued that Joan's role as a professor of English literature at Kobe College, and to some extent John's job at Bank of America, as well, was embedded in a dynamic of American "soft power" in the Kansai region in the late 1950s.[29] As Takeshi Matsuda has shown in his study of U.S. cultural policy and the establishment of American Studies programs in Japan, funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and cooperation with Stanford University was initially solicited by National War College professor Claude A. Buss with the

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[27] Victor Koschmann, "Modernization and Democratic Values: The 'Japanese Model' in the 1960s," in *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*, ed. David C. Engerman et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2003): 230.

[28] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003): 142.

[29] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). As Frances Saunders notes in her study on the cultural Cold War, CIA operatives were cheered by the news in 1957 that the Rockefeller Foundation was "renewing its largesse" in like-minded efforts "to promote an idea: that the world needed a *pax Americana*, a new age of enlightenment, and it would be called The American Century." Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999): 2, 312.

following proviso: "I would expect to proceed only in step with Japanese desires. We would never attempt to 'force democracy down any one's throat.' I would want to be very careful that Japanese themselves assume a large measure of responsibility and display a degree of intellectual curiosity that only American assistance could satisfy."[30] The realization of such plans is evidenced in the following passage regarding the extension of American Studies in Kansai, with the involvement of Charles B. Fahs of the Rockefeller Foundation:

> Commenting on the problem of communism or Marxism in the universities, Namba Monkichi, president of Kobe College, considered the influence of communism on campus still serious, particularly in the faculties of economics—even at Doshisha University—although he considered Kyoto University and Ritsumeikan particularly bad… The membership of the general committee on Kyoto American Studies was opened up in 1955, the year in which Namba… joined the committee. Fahs was pleased with the participation of Namba in the general committee.[31]

While not expressly political or ideological, in the Greenwoods' letters, we get an intimate look into the private and public spaces of professors like Joan at the start of her career. And more importantly, we see how the

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[30] Takeshi Matsuda, *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007): 168.

[31] Ibid., 199-200. Matsuda traces the history of American cultural centers in postwar Japan "for the most part strategically located near the greatest concentration of U.S. security forces and thus where potentially the greatest local friction might be engendered… The U.S. embassy in Tokyo recognized that the information centers were effectively winning friends for the United States through an educational and cultural approach to which the Japanese proved to be particularly susceptible." (p. 25). During the Occupation, a key figure in the Information Division of the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) was Women's Army Corps Captain Glenna Crew, secretary to CI&E chief Lt. Col. Donald Nugent, who "was well informed on Japan, because she had been a secretary of Kobe College before the war." (p. 32).

private lives overlapped with the public personas of the individuals that come to life on these pages. Through their family and alumni connections, Joan and John had a range of encounters with Japanese friends and colleagues in academia, banking, industry, government and politics. They were both excited about their future prospects, as John exclaimed in a letter sent within the U.S. on May 18, 1957:

> Dear Folks: AT LAST! We go to Osaka on about the 1st of July. I was told yesterday; and we have already started passport applications and physical examination appointments. Joan is very happy. She has many contacts with faculty members of Kansai area universities, as a result of her work in the Japanese collection of Hoover Library, and the area offers unlimited cultural resources for more study and teaching.

The Greenwoods soon arrived in Tokyo and made their way to Osaka by train on July 7, 1957. They unexpectedly found themselves in the company of a prominent American family, as John enthusiastically reports in this hand-written note penned en route in the train, though not yet traveling at bullet speed:

> Dear Folks,
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> In one more hour we arrive in Osaka, and the last leg is completed. We are traveling on the daytime luxury express train, the "Tsubame," which connects Tokyo and Osaka. Our traveling companions in the lounge car were Nelson Rockefeller, his wife, three children and a niece. He is a Dartmouth graduate and his wife a trustee of Wellesley. They were interested in our assignment in Osaka. Also, Nelson Rockefeller spoke well of the B of A's international activities, especially in Latin America. Anyhow, as a result of this 'expense account' routine and the generous accommodations provided by the bank, we are momentarily feeling affluent! The flight from Honolulu to Tokyo was very comfortable. The

food was quite lavish for an air trip—all the champagne we could drink. Mr. Nakagawa's two daughters and Mr. Sato of Toyo-Carrier met us at the airport in Tokyo. Also, two Japanese friends from Stanford days were there as well as the bank's man. So we felt very properly welcomed. Enough for now. We will probably live in Kobe.
Love,

John

This particular letter reveals the ways in which the Greenwoods' experiences intersected with more explicit efforts to sway the direction of U.S.-Japan relations in the late 1950s. Despite the gap in socio-economic status and political influence between the Rockefellers and Greenwoods, the presence in Japan of both families at this juncture in the postwar period played a significant role in shaping mutual perceptions and cultivating closer ties among Americans and Japanese, albeit at varying levels. As can be seen above, there is also a certain candor that is revealed in these letters to home. John's comments about the surprising perks and fleeting nature of the luxuries provided by the Bank of America indicate how different his experiences were at the level of more ordinary Americans at this time.

A View of Kobe from Below

Once in Kobe, in their eager pursuit of stimulating intellectual exchange among friends and acquaintances, Joan and John benefitted greatly from a variety of personal and technical networks of communication, as they kept up-to-date on current events with a wide range of reading material sent from home. As they prepared for their first holiday season, Joan wrote on November 26, 1957:

Here it seems like Christmas already. This morning the large envelope

> sent air mail arrived and was put away in a closet for a while. And the first copy of my *Atlantic* subscription also arrived a few days ago and we are enjoying it very much. The Japan news analysis section is very good. It has been removed from the magazine rack, because the two small kittens we will still have till the end of the week like to teeth on paper, and we'd like to keep this magazine.

About a month later, she thanks "Mother and Dad" by saying, "We are already enjoying the magazines… with the articles in *Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, and *Foreign Affairs*." And soon after the New Year, she writes on January 4, 1958, "John's *Economist* birthday check came, and I also have to say thank you for it, because I certainly enjoy it (I have just caught up on four weeks of them over the New Year holiday). We also received the *New Yorker* yesterday addressed to me, and since no card arrived from the magazine, assume it was your gift." Such presents from home were also useful in the workplace, as John noted in this letter to his parents, dated June 23, 1958:

> Thank you for the Council on Foreign Relations book on India. I very much look forward to reading it, after which I will talk eruditely with some of the bank's Indian clients.[32] Incidentally, the Indians in our neighborhood add a lot of color with the women's saris and the children's big, dark eyes. As Joan may have told you, our Moslem neighbor's children come up occasionally and visit the pussy cats. They

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[32] Soon after their arrival in 1957, John tells his parents about the range of his international contacts at Bank of America in Osaka in this letter of August 31: "Much of my work involves writing to our banking correspondents in the course of collecting money for good exported from Japan. I have a little personal contact with customers, mostly Indians and Arabs, also a few Iranians. I hope this facet of the job grows." Burgeoning economic ties between Japan and India were highlighted on page 4 of the *New York Times* on August 24, 1957 under the headline "Japan Getting India Iron Ore" where it was noted "Morarji Desai, Minister of Commerce and Industry, said today that India had reached an agreement with Japan to supply 7,200,000 tons of iron ore before March 1962."

> are nice little kids who don't remember much about Bombay. Their first language is English, and they almost always address their parents in English, although when there are elderly Indian guests, they speak Gujarati. Most of the Indians in the neighborhood are Hindus.

A couple of months later, the demographics in their neighborhood had shifted, prompting John on August 19 to include the following observations about his compatriots, as well as the latest news on the business dealings of his father's former employer:

> Joan probably wrote about the influx of American families into our neighborhood. A large group of engineers from Lockheed Co. were assigned to a local aircraft factory for several years. Our maid calls the Sasson Apartments, "American Machi," (American Village); and since our new neighbors talk as loudly as any normal American, the area actually has taken on a distinctive American atmosphere in terms of sound… This morning's *Japan Times* carried an article about Carrier's airconditioning an atomic cargo vessel. Love, John

In the closing paragraph of one of Joan's early letters, from July 31, 1957, she adds her own description of their neighborhood, including a reference to apparently more than one "indigent" person roaming the streets near the Sasson Apartments.

> Next time I'll say more about our exotic neighborhood. We have the ward Shinto shrine, a mosque, a Catholic Church and an Episcopal one within a couple of blocks, a Latin Quarter—very plush—nightclub two doors down, a Japanese hotel catering to unaccompanied men—better than TV any night—across the apt. courtyard, the Dominican Consulate nearby, and a combination of shacks and mansions of all kinds climbing the mountain. The most conspicuous indigent has curly red hair and beard and blue eyes—one of many White Russians I guess. In the a.m.

we see HK Shroff of Bombay reading the Koran under our room.

In one of John's early letters to his parents he expresses relief that they live on the third floor, a position that presents greater obstacles to potential burglars. Even with more than a decade of postwar rebuilding and economic recovery, such challenges continued to be part of the Kobe landscape. Just one year before, bureaucrats in Tokyo had released the 1956 *Economic White Paper* with the pronouncement that "the postwar period was over," implying that the post-1945 phase of recovery and rebuilding in the wake of the devastation of World War II had been completed. "It was a signal to begin the process of Japan's unfettered economic expansion that lasted well into the early 1990s."[33] Japan was now poised to rejoin the international community and global economy on a more equal and competitive footing. However, in Joan's letters we see evidence of visible, lingering wartime legacies, especially in a city like Kobe that had fallen victim to widespread firebombings in the final stages of the war.[34] For example, on August 6, 1957, Joan reports:

> We went to an American double feature, a good one, in a nice new theater Saturday for 30 cents apiece. Sunday we took a long walk up the mountain behind the apt. We walked among many of the big old western houses, built in the 1890's I suppose, with very high walls and narrow streets. John says it reminds him in some cases of the Caribbean, and one can see that once it was a very exclusive neighborhood.[35] There are

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[33] David J. Lu, *Japan, a Documentary History: The Late Tokugawa Period to the Present*, vol. 2 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997): 525.

[34] Shinshū Kobe-shi shi henshū iinkai, *Kobe-shi shi, Rekishi-hen IV: Kindai – Gendai* [Kobe City History, History Volume 4: Modern – Contemporary] (Kobe, Japan: Kōbe-shi monjokan [Kobe City Archvies], 1993): 885-891. See also the pictures of the utter destruction and crowds of displaced families in photographs no. 7 and 8 included before the preface to this volume.

[35] When John was in high school, his father arranged for him to visit Cuba where Heman's employer, Carrier, had been contracted to install a refrigeration system for a company there.

> still many lovely homes, but many of the biggest have been bombed or let fall into disrepair, and in many of these are now Indian families. There seem to be more Indians around than any other foreigners, and they live with very bare houses. There are also new houses and apts on bombed sites.

Her observation about the Indian community in Kobe is born out of the population statistics of 1960 which indicate that she and John were among 484 Americans living in Kobe around this time, followed by 395 Indians from South Asia. There were 363 English residents, 241 from West Germany, and 962 classified as "other."[36] In mid-1958, Joan references the "many Indians John has met on the train" during his commute from Kobe to Osaka, in the course of telling her in-laws how much she and John "look forward each day to the evening hours when we can hear the armed forces newscast in English and find out about France, Lebanon, etc." In that same letter, she elaborates on an encounter she had recently with a fellow train passenger while discussing "the French situation" at that time, although it is not entirely clear which elements of French politics were debated. Given the reach of the French empire from

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This connection gave John the chance to explore this part of the Caribbean under the pretext of observing American business practices. During the day, John would wander around the site, clipboard in hand, but with no particular task assigned to him. In 2014, John recalled fondly that he spent free time on dates with young ladies accompanied by their grandmothers. He also speculated that his father arranged that summer in Cuba as an alternative to John's own proposal to go on an excursion to Antarctica, a trip Heman may have worried was due to the excessive influence of the Boy Scouts on his son.

[36] Shinshū Kobe-shi shi henshū iinkai, *Kobe-shi shi, Gyōsei-hen II: Kurashi to gyōsei* [Kobe City History, Administration Volume 2: Lifestyle and Administration] (Kobe, Japan: Kōbe-shi monjokan [Kobe City Archvies], 2002): 792-793. This source indicates that in July 1960 there were 31,700 foreigners living in Kobe, from 51 different countries. However, two thirds of them (21,734) were categorized as Koreans ("*Kankoku oyobi Chōsen*") and 7,561 were Chinese. Especially for the large number of Resident Koreans, their postcolonial situation and classification as "foreigners" was quite different from the ex-patriate community the Greenwoods interacted with on a regular basis. See Satō Katsumi, *Zainichi Chōsenjin no shomondai* [Various Problems of Korean Residents in Japan] (Tokyo: Dōseisha, 1973).

Indochina to North Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth century, it is quite probable that newscasts at the time were not limited to updates on Lebanon. On May 31, 1958, Joan writes:

> Several days ago on the train I made friends with an Indian gentleman by discussing the French situation—for once he couldn't be morally superior to ME, as they so often are, or give ME advice—we could both act superior to the French. He thinks only American and U.K. democracy work; he is not so sanguine about India—an honest comment not always heard. All this started because he couldn't control his curiosity. He had to find out where I went, where I worked, where I came from, why I was reading *The Economist* (it is the easiest thing to manage and to carry with other books on the jammed trains).

It seems that Joan and her Indian friend had found a common bond in their critique of French postcolonial chaos at the time, and it is also likely that Joan's comments are related to the fall of the government of Félix Gaillard in mid-April 1958. As noted in the *New York Times* report of April 20, "M. Gaillard's Government was the nineteenth under France's Fourth Republic. It was the third in a year to be ousted on issues generated by Algeria. Its fall came amid growing doubts about the future of the French parliamentary system." The report continues, "France's failure to find an Algerian solution grows out of the deep political divisions in the country.... To form a Government and keep it in office, a majority of the 596 deputies must be united. One-third of the deputies—Communists and semi-fascist Poujadists—are anti-democratic and consistently oppose the Government for opposite reasons."[37]

Meanwhile, the situation among British cabinet members at the time regarding Western military assistance to Lebanon can be characterized as

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[37] "The World - France: Crisis No. 19," *New York Times*, April 20, 1958.

follows:

> It was felt that the French should be dissuaded, however, as their participation could prejudice the attitude of the Arab states to western intervention. The chiefs of staff were told that, although it was understood that the Americans would play the major military role, the cabinet felt Britain should be associated with any action. The Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Mountbatten, pointed to the difficult position of a US commander who held NATO appointments being employed in operations not supported by all the NATO countries; nevertheless, it was recommended that the British forces should be placed under the US commander in the area.[38]

World News as Everyday Experience

Joan's reference above to headline news from the Middle East, mixed in with personal evaluations of issues like the state of democracy around the world, are common in her letters. And unlike the official, confidential records of the British cabinet stored away in an archive, the aerograms from Kobe come to us situated more broadly in the context of how Joan and John received word of such political developments in the English-language media available to them in Kansai, or through conversation with a wide network of well-read, well-traveled friends and colleagues.[39] In

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[38] Ritchie Ovendale, "Great Britain and the Anglo-American Invasion of Jordan and Lebanon in 1958," *The International History Review* 16, no. 2 (May 1994): 288.

[39] For example, on November 5, 1957, Joan reports: "Sunday night we were taken to dinner by Miss Roehm, a former prof and foreign student adviser at Wellesley, her widowed sister, and a retired housemother. We had a wonderful time with them and they are seeing and doing as much as possible, are lively, interested people, and have had some quite unusual experiences, like going to Korea to meet the families of girls at Wellesley from there. This week they are taking a tour of the Inland Sea, and we will have them here for dinner when they return to Kobe Saturday. They will then spend the winter in south east Asia, mostly Hong Kong, and return here in the spring, after which Miss Roehm is thinking about teaching here for a year." A later correspondence notes their

this way, an examination of the Greenwoods' experiences in Kobe allows us to "recover the history of daily life," while connecting "with more conventional historical topics" so as "to offer a more complete 'portrait of a period, beyond the findings of strictly political or intellectual history'."[40] One summer day in late July, Joan alludes to the midday radio broadcast soon after their arrival in 1957: "Dear Mother and Dad, I am now listening to the noon news on the Far East Network, and I must admit that being unable to understand any other broadcasts makes one appreciate at least this aspect of military operations. And the ads are brief and unobjectionable—Buy bonds, drive safely, enjoy Japan, etc." Sometime later, in the course of describing how she has not "done much but grade batch after batch of papers… and have also done the Japanese studying I didn't have time for last weekend"[41] she laments:

> I haven't even had time to read a newspaper for a week, and with the news incomprehensible over the radio except for general subject matter, and our magazines always at least a week late, I can get very ignorant very fast that way. We did have an aerial put on our radio today, so we can get the English news from now on at least in the evenings from the Army station at Nagoya. We also had to have a tube repaired, and have decided as our anniversary gift, to buy an FM tuner. It can be used for good music two hours a day here now, more later, and will be very useful, as well as a real bargain, in California.

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travels to Cambodia during this time.

40 Smith, "Making Sense of Social History," 168. Here Smith is drawing from Peter N. Stearns, "Toward a Wider Vision: Trends in Social History," in *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

41 Joan and John both had regular lessons in spoken and written Japanese during their stay and comment frequently on their efforts to master new vocabulary and more difficult levels of Chinese characters (*kanji*).

In late January 1958, after they had settled in to their new routine, Joan comments on the latest news from Latin America with this light-hearted expression of gratitude for the monthly news source provided by Heman and Evelyn:

> We had just been laughing over the cartoon in the Dec. 28 *New Yorker*, in which the Latin dictator is telling the newsman he is keeping in close touch with the situation while soldiers with machine guns control the rebellious crowd outside, when the news of Perez Jimenez's overthrow came. This all goes to show not only that bad men can be undone, but that we enjoy the *New Yorker* very much. The stories and articles are very good—I have enjoyed the series on Puerto Ricans, and a story in the first issue that came, Dec. 7, I think, was by Robin White, who was at Stanford with me doing creative writing. He is the son of missionaries in India, so he usually writes about that country, and has published several in the *New Yorker*. Anyway I appreciate the gift very much.[42]

John's letter of January 27 takes a similar tone, yet with even more explicit detail and a demonstration of his astute familiarity with Latin American history and politics. His educational trajectory from Scarsdale, New York, to Hanover, New Hampshire, to Quantico, Virginia, and Palo Alto, California informed the following observation:

> Dear Folks, Thank you again for continuing to keep us well supplied with otherwise unavailable reading material. I was pleased to read that my birthday was celebrated by the news of Perez Jimenez's overthrow in

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[42] Among the many books related to Asia given to the author by John from Joan's library is *Elephant Hill* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959) by Robin White, with a stamp on the inside cover indicating that Joan bought this copy in September 1961 when they lived in River Forest, Illinois. It begins, "As the jutka left off West Veli Street and headed up the drive toward Madurai Junction, the pony slowed from a leisurely trot to a walk. Beth Sumner leaned out to see what the trouble was this time." (p. 3)

> Venezuela. Poor old J.D. Peron has fewer and fewer choices every year for places to spend a comfortable political exile. There must be a special dormitory in the Dominican Republic to house the exiled subordinates of former Latin American dictators.

John also provides rare insight into the workings of the global economy and the nature of economic ties between Japanese exporters and Latin American countries in this May 9, 1958, description of his daily tasks at Bank of America:

> I continue making my modest contribution to Japan's export efforts by processing lots and lots of shipping documents that enable Japanese bankers to finance exports for their customers. We also have a few customers, but most of the papers I see come to the B of A through the Japanese banks and we lend them dollars, pounds, or occasionally deutsch marks, kroners, or guilders. Since the majority of exports covered by the shipping documents I process are going to Latin America, I have acquired quite a bit of practical knowledge of the dodges used by South American buyers to delay paying the Japanese exporters. The rawest trick is to let the merchandise sit in a customs warehouse and tell the correspondent bank in South America that there is a legitimate gripe against the Japanese exporter. Finally, when the merchandise is just about to be confiscated by the Customs Authorities, the buyer generously offers to settle for a 50% etc discount. For some reason, the Customs penalties which accrue during storage always exceed any price that the merchandise brings at an auction, so the poor Japanese seller is lucky to get 50%. This happens so often, I think that some of the South American banks have a form letter describing the situation with the amounts and reference numbers left blank.[43]

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[43] On the role of foreign banks in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s that "provided commercial services

> I also know a little more about the effect of South American countries' moratoriums on their international debts. There are always a couple of countries in financial trouble (Bolivia all the time), and I get a chance to read explanations from our correspondents describing the same sad story in a variety of ways.

We also get a view of the global economy and Cold War posturing, as presented to the general public in Osaka, in this note from Joan, dated April 25, 1958:

> Last weekend we went to a movie Saturday and then to Osaka Sunday afternoon to see the trade fair. The Russian pavilion was such an object of curiosity (I think that was the only motive of the thousands lined up, no matter what the Russian trade official may write home) that we couldn't get in, and everything was crowded. The Czechs, probably with USSR financing, had their own lovely little pavilion stressing glassware and photos of castles, the Germans a slightly bigger one stressing chemicals. Ours was very practical, showing how various products could be used in Japan. A number of the exhibits of countries like Cambodia and Indonesia and the handicrafts of the various prefectures were interesting, too. John went back one lunch hour to see the Russian pavilion, and apparently they are trying to exhibit one of everything to prove that they make it—and sputniks, too. From what I saw of the machinery and what John saw, their things lack style—very important in Japan. And I guess they aren't interested in selling at that.

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such as confirming letters of credit and accepting drafts validated in overseas money markets, and acted as intermediaries for Japanese companies, arranging bond issues and investments," see Catherine R. Schenk, "The Rise of Hong Kong and Tokyo as International Financial Centres after 1950," in *Centres and Peripheries in Banking: The Historical Development of Financial Markets*, ed. Philip L. Cottrell et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007): 93.

A more personal encounter with Russia came across the airwaves when Joan and John apparently tuned into a broadcast of "Meet the Press" on November 10, 1957, to listen to an interview with Alexander Kerensky. This leader of the Provisional Government Russia in 1917 later settled in the United States after World War II, where he was closely affiliated with Russian studies at Stanford University.[44] The Greenwoods of Jacksonville Vermont had heard the same radio program on the 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, as can be pieced together from Joan's reply on November 19:

> We heard Kerensky, too, and enjoyed what he had to say. He really is a sweet old gentleman, courtly in the European way, kind, interested in people. He was very friendly to everyone at Hoover library, and came up to me specially to wish us well in Japan when they had the party for me before I left, and I wasn't even anyone who worked there full time or with him. I have never been able to imagine him as one who could rule sternly either, though I do know he is interested very vitally in Russia and feels he still has a share in explaining the more moderate point of view.

As noted earlier in her Valentine's greeting, Joan openly admitted to being challenged by the technical aspects of Cold War satellites. However, when it came to history, politics, and culture and style more broadly, she was in her element. She and John enjoyed numerous cultural events, most of

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[44] The following is listed in the "Week's Radio Programs" under the section "Today, Sunday, November 10: Leading Events on Radio Today" from 6:30-7: "Meet the Press: Alexander Kerensky, Provisional Premier of Russia in 1917, is interviewed by newsmen" on WRCA, AM 680, FM 97.1. *New York Times*, November 10, 1957, p. 156. The previous week, the same paper ran a full-page spread of eleven photographs entitled "Red Russia, 1917: The Curtain Rises," beginning with one captioned "Rehearsal: In the weeks before the revolution, picked workers from the Petrograd factories were organized into the Red Guard—the shock troops of Lenin's bid to wrest power from the moderate government." Another shows Kerensky's "last stand" as "he exhorts a soldier at a review." *New York Times*, November 3, 1957, p. 216.

which exposed them to a rich program of international offerings in the company of people from around the world, a mini United Nations of sorts, as encountered in Osaka the weekend before she wrote this letter of April 19, 1958:

> We've continued to be very busy. Last weekend we heard the British Amadeus string quartet play an all Beethoven program excellently in Osaka on Saturday. Sunday we went to the N.Y. Ballet, and went along with the younger man who works in Kobe B. of A. and his wife for supper first in the grill of the new Osaka Grand Hotel. Eating in the grill, riding 2nd class, etc were all a lot of nonsense, but the girl seems to put great emphasis on such trivialities, so we went along with her. The food was good, the service awful because it is so new, but the people to be seen interesting anyway: the Austrian family putting on puppet shows—very good ones, Salzburg Marionettes, and the first violinist of the quartet were eating near us, and the lobby was filled with members of the Leningrad Philharmonic—who look rather like the Russians in the U.N., large people in the same baggy brown suits.

The following letters from March 21 and May 31, 1958, respectively shed light on the way Russian literature (as portrayed on the silver screen) and food were an integral part of the Greenwood's daily life in Kobe. They also illustrate the ways they participated in an emerging topography of postwar leisure and consumption with their Japanese neighbors.

> We enjoyed 'The Brothers Karamazov' very much Sunday—and a Russian meal after it—convenient to the theatre and appropriate… Sunday was another nice day, so we went for a drive along the coast. One passes through most of Kobe, as we live in the eastern part, through factory areas, then into suburbs where mountains meet beaches, where many people live and others come for weekend fun. There is a nice aquarium there, too. We drove on, and surprisingly found ourselves on a

wide, gently rolling plain with many artificial lakes and ponds, sloping down to the sea, along which apparently from Kobe to Himeji, the next big city, there is a continuous row of factories. We came home and had borscht, rolled stuffed cabbage and meat pies in our little Russian restaurant—the best full dinner I know of for about 70 cents apiece.

Cross-Cultural Domestic Encounters

Less familiar to Joan and John were the more distant smokestacks of industrial production that drove Japan's thriving export economy. By the time they left Kobe in 1960, the *New York Times* was printing stories about huge-scale developments like this one: "The Prudential Insurance Company has lent $30,000,000 to the Kobe Steel Works, Ltd., one of Japan's largest steel producers… [P]roceeds of the loans, together with additional capital funds raised in Japan, would be used for the expansion of iron and steel production to meet increased demand in Southeast Asia."[45] Closer to home, although the Greenwoods frequently ate out when left to their own devices, they could also count on the resourcefulness of Teiko and her personal connections in the neighborhood for frugal meal planning. Soon after they arrived in Kobe, Joan expressed her appreciation for this situation as follows:

> We are realizing that we are particularly fortunate in our maid. She is such an excellent cook that I don't tell her anything and leave her more or less on her own. We had tempura Saturday which was good; then she stayed till 10:30 ironing, for which I felt badly. Now she is making marmalade. She wastes nothing, has friends in all kinds of shops who get things done for her quickly and cheaply. But she is a little scared of appliances, which she has to be shown very carefully. She comes

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[45] "Kobe Steel of Japan Gets Prudential Loan," *New York Times*, June 15, 1960.

from Matsuyama, southern Shikoku, where she left her husband, who kept their son, a number of years ago, because he and his mother made her life miserable. She doesn't think much of Japanese husbands and is determined never to marry again. Since then she has worked for a German, American, and English family. She is so industrious that her lot before must have been terrible.

Clearly at home with the technology of the modern American kitchen, Joan had to act as a guide to make sure Teiko could manage these newfangled devices on her own. This role of guide extended beyond the walls of the apartment as well, as in this encounter described in Joan's letter of June 21, 1958, which illuminates the complexities of the racial hierarchy in their neighborhood. She writes,

I've just had one of our very rare fights with our maid. She is so kind, but somewhere along the line I suspect her foreign masters and mistresses have filled her head with stupid prejudices she can't analyze. She yelled at some children playing house in our ugly front yard because 'the appearance wasn't nice, what would guest think, the lady on the second floor would be angry—the one who thinks plants are more important than children—and children should always play in their own yards.' I told them to stay and enjoy themselves, seeing they did no harm, and I'm sure she would have agreed before some

Joan Greenwood

> snob told her once to chase children away. And she really hates Indians, won't admit any saris can be pretty—there were a lot of lovely ones at a party at our neighbors' yesterday. Today, to top it off, the two neighbor children, very cute and well behaved, came to see the cats and she had to be nice to them!"

This is one of several instances where Joan's interactions with Teiko reveal differences on a variety of levels, based on culture, level of education, and professional status. Joan's letters indicate a desire to educate Teiko in a way that will help her overcome misguided stereotypes that may have rubbed off from other foreigners and even other domestic workers. On more than one occasion, both Joan and John write about Teiko's uneasiness with their hosting so many Japanese guests in their home. Apparently Teiko had internalized a hierarchy among domestic workers that pushed her closer to the bottom due to the fact that the Greenwoods entertained Japanese visitors with some frequency. Teiko's own position is compromised by the presence of Japanese people who have diluted the purity of the ex-patriate world she had become so accustomed to during her many years of domestic service in the homes of foreigners living in Kobe. Needless to say, Joan was not bothered by this, and if anything, saw this as another opportunity to teach Teiko a lesson about inclusivity and the artificial, problematic nature of social and racial hierarchies.

After several months together, Joan seems to have heard more of the details of Teiko's past, and combines them here with her own commentary on the status of women in the postwar period. John's parents sent Teiko a Mexican basket for Christmas and on January 17, 1958, Joan thanked them with the description below of the interaction in their apartment that followed:

> Teiko-san *was* interested to know the basket came from Mexico, though she had no very clear idea of where that was, even knowing the name.

> So I got out the Atlas and gave her a brief lesson in geography. She is a very bright person, as her imaginative efforts in the kitchen testify, and it is sad that she did not even get enough education to read and write more than a little and to outgrow medical superstitions. But she is an example of female emancipation after the war. Her husband was cruel, and kicked her, her mother in law was crazy, and so she, living on a small island in the Inland Sea near Hiroshima, kicked and bit him back and walked out. She says she will never have anything to do with a Japanese man again, but it is sad that she never sees her little boy as a result of the long trip between here, where she is comparatively well off, and the island. I will never believe apologists who say that Japanese women like to be subjugated.

These encounters between Joan and Teiko are infused with the "principle of reciprocity" proposed by Christina Klein in her study of the American imaginary, *Cold War Orientalism*.[46] In the chapter entitled "How to Be an American Abroad," Klein focuses on publications such as the *Saturday Review* and the role of author James Michener who was for his American audience "an intermediary, or medium, who can make available to the reader the thoughts, emotions, and life experiences of a young Japanese woman… Michener wants to supplant the old knowledge about Asia—that presented it as 'mute,' 'mysterious,' and 'remote'—with a new knowledge that renders it familiar, articulate, and approachable."[47] Although obviously not writing for a public readership in the same way, Joan's letters follow Michener's model of "the middlebrow ideal of a curious and open-minded American presence in Asia."[48] In both her private and public life, Joan was critically attuned to the social forces that

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[46] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 130.

[47] Ibid., 131-132.

[48] Ibid., 133.

inhibited women from taking full advantage of the postwar "emancipation" referenced above. In many cases, Joan notes that the greatest obstacle to the realization of women's abilities and talents could be women themselves who did not seek out challenges or were content to conform to prescribed limitations. We can see this in the way Joan seeks out intellectually stimulating conversation and looks for role models among her peers and others.

After about a year in Kobe, on August 8, 1958, Joan raves about "one of the most enjoyable parties we've been to here, given by our young first floor neighbors, raised in China of White Russian parents, later taken to Israel, now American citizens." The letter gives detailed insight into the international composition of the Kobe foreign community in the late 1950s, along with illuminating first-hand observations, particularly regarding the role and local activities of women at this social gathering.

> Aside from us, the guests were members of the local Jewish community, and we did not feel at all awkward among them. They first of all drink much less than people like the Burkes and their peers, they are all much more intellectual in the sense of being willing to discuss something beyond trivia or to express convictions without having everyone gasp, so most of them were fun to talk to. We agreed they are the most interesting group of people we've met here. They come from all over the world, and among them one can hear Spanish, French, German, Hebrew, Russian, Arabic and English spoken as first languages. They are very sophisticated, most have been driven out of at least one country in their lives—only one family are native born Americans. The women do not take their leisure as much for granted. They either recognize that they aren't doing anything and have ideas, or they do something. The one New York woman studies Japanese full time with our teacher, though she has three small children and teaches at the American cultural center. Another helps with her husband's business. Many give language

> instruction of various kinds. They seem more concerned about the quality of their children's education as a criterion for their future plans, than, for example, some of John's fellow workers. I'm sure you know many such communities, but it was all new to us. They live just as graciously as other foreigners, but they don't seem to think the amenities are an end in themselves, perhaps again because most of them have undergone hardship. Anyway it is a pleasant thing to discover a whole new group of nice, interesting people.

Such enthusiasm over this gathering may be contrasted with the more mixed evaluation of a dinner earlier that year with colleagues from the Bank of America. On January 24, she writes of her fellow Americans:

> Last weekend we had the younger man from the Kobe branch and his wife for dinner. He is very nice, quiet, intelligent. She is often foolishly ignorant, but alert, and a person of more interest than I thought. She was a secretary at our consulate till their first baby was born; since then she has been very ill a number of times which is sad indeed. I say this because the first time I met her she said "I am a great student of the economics and politics of Japan. I have just started to read a fine book (after six years here) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.*" And when I said you might visit, she said, "Oh, it's so much more fun getting around Japan when one doesn't speak the language. I'm glad I don't speak a word of it." And on the other hand I find she is an accomplished pilot—and stunt flyer, was almost an Olympic swimmer, and has considerable ambitions for her career in govt work when her health is straightened out and she leaves here, where the Kobe manager doesn't like wives to work—which of course is the most patent interference in what is no one else's business and which no one should listen to, if it is really true, which from my experience I rather doubt. I think the Kobe manager and his very intelligent Russian wife, whom I mentioned, just aren't tolerant of the verbal foolishness of this girl, which if you pass over, reveals

quite a substantial person in many ways. I didn't mean to bore you, but simply find these different people interesting in their own ways. We also played squash, saw a movie, had a good Russian supper over the weekend.

Postwar Academic Life

While Joan was not an officially employed working woman when she arrived in Kobe in the summer of 1957, she did have professional ambitions that were soon fulfilled as a professor of English literature. In this sense, Joan was part of a trend among American women who experienced "the rising employment of married women, which grew by 42 percent during the 1950s" and among whom "employment rates rose fastest among middle-class women."[49] As noted earlier, Joan was enrolled as a graduate student in the English Department at Stanford when John finished his training in overseas operations in Bank of America's international division and was subsequently assigned to their Osaka branch office. In December 1955, Joan had completed her Master's thesis, "The Development of Theme and Plot in Henry James' Short Stories." By the time she left for Japan, she had completed all the Ph.D. coursework, leaving her to finish her dissertation on Edith Wharton. Her study is described as follows in the foreword to the completed version, filed in November 1961:

> I intend to analyze and evaluate a selection from Edith Wharton's eighty-five short stories and eleven *nouvelles* in order to show that Mrs. Wharton has created works of thematic and technical merit in these genres. I will introduce my analyses by means of a brief discussion of

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[49] Susan M. Hartmann, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994): 86.

> Mrs. Wharton's ideas on these genres and on some of the components of fiction—milieu, character, and style. Her comments on the moral purpose and artistic excellence which she seeks are also helpful when one judges her work.[50]

In her letters to Vermont, Joan provides frequent updates on the progress of her dissertation. While she was alone in the apartment during the day, she applied herself diligently during the first winter break in 1957 to "mostly work on the dissertation." On Christmas Eve, she reports:

> I have got the basic organization in shape, and should begin writing in a day or two, but it is a longer harder job at every step than I imagine, though often enjoyable. My working conditions alone are ideal in one way, but it requires more self-discipline than I naturally have to sit down for 9 or 10 hours a day and really keep at it, though if I don't my conscience won't let me rest.

By January 11, her work had resulted in finishing "a very detailed sentence outline… with examples listed, of over 100 pages, which is a start." She benefitted from an honest intellectual exchange with John who provided feedback along the way, a process for which she expresses gratitude on February 5, 1958, when she writes, "This week so far I have been able to plug along on the dissertation, which John kindly listens to and criticizes, as it is hard to work in a vacuum, and one gets stale on one's own writing." By that summer, Joan was revising a finished draft and preparing one chapter for submission to a Kobe College publication, as she writes on August 16, 1958.

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[50] Joan Voss Greenwood, "A Critical Study of Edith Wharton's Short Stories and Nouvelles" (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1961).

> I went on revising my dissertation and got one chapter in shape to send to Kobe College *Studies*, also to Kyoto U., and wrote a letter to my Stanford adviser on my progress. It was hard work getting it in the best possible shape, and John was very helpful in reading it over and criticizing style and clarity. Working by oneself one tends to think after a while that everything one has been thinking about for weeks is obvious, and therefore it becomes hard to judge the results.[51]

Soon after her arrival in Kobe in 1957, Joan had an interview with Kobe College, facilitated by her status as an alumna of Wellesley College. Administrators at Wellesley had fostered exchanges with prominent women's colleges in Japan going back to the early twentieth century, as Sally Hastings has shown in her examination of ties with Tsuda College in Tokyo, whose acting president from 1919, Tsuji (Okonogi) Matsu, was a Wellesley graduate. In Hastings' discussion of Wellesley English Department Professor Sophie Chantal Hart, she notes that "[d]uring her sabbatical year in 1917-1918, Hart had visited the Philippines, Japan, and China, developing an especially strong interest in Japan."[52] Regarding the early days of these institutions, Joan replies on January 17, 1958, to the Greenwoods in Vermont,

> I was interested to hear the minister's wife had two aunts teaching once in Kobe College. There used to be a lot more Americans and missionaries than there are now, too, and it was founded in 1875 by an American. It's hard to believe it is the same age as Wellesley, and it must

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[51] On June 16, 1958, Joan explained, "Today I was asked to contribute an article to Kobe College *Studies* for next fall. It is badly printed, but it will be a help to me professionally to get something published, and I have the summer to think about what material having to do with my dissertation I will use."

[52] Sally A. Hastings, "Traveling to Learn, Learning to Lead: Japanese Women as American College Students, 1900-1941," in *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility and Labor in Japan*, ed. Alisa Freedman et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013): 202.

> have been quite an innovation in Japan at that time. I also heard that when the first "eta" student came—a long while ago, but I'm not sure when, there was also quite a fuss, even among the Christian students, who, though she was a brilliant girl, did not wish to sit in the classroom with her, much less eat or sleep [with her].[53]

Joan talks about her first meeting with the faculty at this pioneering college in her letter of August 6, 1957: "I went out to Kobe College last Friday to talk to the head of the English Dept, a Japanese lady who graduated from Michigan, spent a year at Wellesley as a guest just before I went and with whom I have many common friends." By October, she adds this about her students: "I will certainly benefit from 2 ½ years teaching them, getting a chance to prepare more advanced courses than I would ever have at home." This quote shows that despite the stereotype of Americans being more advanced in providing educational opportunities for women, Joan was actually able to advance her career more productively at Kobe College than she could have at Stanford.[54] That same month, she describes the campus and her work environment with another reference to a Wellesley graduate from the early twentieth century, a missionary named Miss Buell:

> The College itself continues to make a good impression. I even like the walk up hill from the station, except when the path, actually a dike between rice fields, is covered with a night soil cart. I share an office

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[53] On the history of this outcast class, see Ian J. Neary, "Burakumin in Contemporary Japan," in *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (London: Routledge, 1997): 50-78. Joan's comments may have been influenced by "a usually wide interest in the problem" (p. 62) of discrimination against Burakumin in 1957 and 1958, a time when the Japan Communist Party "produced its own Buraku policy which linked the issue more closely to the reactionary rule of US imperialism and Japanese monopoly capitalism." (p. 61)

[54] Joan's career aspirations melded well with Kobe College's goals in the 1950s to develop research facilities and establish scholarly publications. Kōbe Jogakuin no 125-nen henshū iinkai, *Kōbe Jogakuin no 125-nen* [Kobe College's 125 Years] (Nishinomiya, Japan: Kōbe Jogakuin, 2000): 70.

> with a missionary teacher, Wellesley about 1910, who retires in the spring to Boston, and she is a very bright, lively lady. She taught in China for 30 years, was released by the present regime about 52, and is just finishing out her period for her pension now. She speaks Chinese—of whatever kind—fluently, but she says, although she can read a lot of Japanese, she was too old to learn another Oriental language.[55]

While at first Joan attempted to interact with her Japanese colleagues on a regular basis, after a couple of months, we get a glimpse into the barriers that resulted in her switch back to a more familiar American environment. On November 26, 1957, she writes:

> I have taken to eating a hot lunch in the house where American teachers live, as the heat doesn't go on till Dec. 1, and then I think a hot lunch will be nice, as well as a walk at noon and some conversation. Eating with the Japanese teachers was not as worthwhile as I thought it would be. The men are usually a silent, pompous lot, and I can't understand more than one third of what goes on. Several are very nice to me, but I can't join in the regular conversation without impeding them and I must admit I would prefer black tea to green tea with my lunch, and a warm place to eat it. And since there are only 20 minutes to eat in, why not please myself, be comfortable and not worry about learning about Japanese culture—which is not what they talk about, they gossip about other teachers, etc.—in that time. Things like this are amusing to find out.

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[55] Joan's letter of April 25, 1958, makes another reference to Miss Buell's China connection: "Last night there was an English Dept. dinner for Miss Buell who leaves next week, for one returning teacher, the Fulbright prof, me and another girl my age who is a new instructor just back from getting an M.A. in the states. It was too early for John, and since it was at a small house he wasn't included. I wish he could have gone, though, to share the food prepared by the lady's Manchurian cook. Since Miss Buell spent 30 years in north China it was an appropriate farewell and the "jozei"—like a big ravioli, and other dishes were wonderful."

Over the course of the next several months, the Greenwoods socialized regularly with Joan's colleagues, including hosting a buffet supper of curry on January 10, 1958, that included Miss Buell, who no doubt livened up the gathering, based on the following account: "My wry New England office mate is very quick witted, has a good sense of humor and is quite impossible to shock: not the stereotype of a missionary at all." Such sentiments were repeated at the time of Miss Buell's departure on May 3, 1958, as Joan recounts:

> … after lunch we drove out to Kobe College—it was the first time John had seen it in daylight, and picked up my retiring office mate, Miss Buell, and took her to the ship and through customs with her baggage. But the freighter was delayed by a stevedore strike, so we didn't see her off finally till six tonight, and were glad we could be of help, as she is a fine person. I will miss her scant words of wry New England wit very much—and her very intelligent helpfulness, too. But I am sure we can drop in on her at Wellesley when we return.[56]

Further details of her departure are provided in the next week's correspondence of May 10:

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[56] This is likely an example of the labor union's "spring offensive" (*shuntō*), typical of the "annual ritual" of tactics invented by the General Council of Japanese Trade Unions (Sōhyō) in 1956. Karel van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1989): 92. In April that year, Reuters reported that "more than 150,000 Japanese chemical workers, coal miners and electric company workers began tonight a twenty-four hour strike in an effort to force the managements to grant immediate wage increases and other fringe benefits." "One Day Strike in Tokyo," *New York Times*, April 6, 1958. Later that month, "Thirty-five thousand teachers stayed home today from Tokyo's middle and primary schools and kindergartens. The teachers, members of the Japanese Teachers' Union, were on strike against a teachers' efficiency rating system that went into effect today." "Tokyo Teachers on Strike," *New York Times*, April 24, 1958.

> Last Sunday we went to see off Miss Buell on her Japanese freighter. She was the only passenger leaving from here; in fact the line doesn't like the idea and only took her if she would eat the crew food—not western style. She, who after all her years in China, doesn't like the cold food so common here, said yes, and took aboard a big box of things from Kenwood House, where the American teachers live at the college. There was quite a crowd to see her off, streamers, a record if not a band, and even the crew got in the spirit to keep her company. As the ship turned going out of the slip, the officer on the bow took off his hat and made a huge comic bow.

The Wellesley alumnae network extended beyond the Kobe College campus, as evidenced by Joan's description of an extravagant social event held in December of 1957:

> Last night we went to a huge party given by the International Women's league, an organization backed by wealthy Japanese women with some vague purpose of good will. The head of it is the step mother of my Wellesley classmate in Tokyo, and the woman in the Kansai area is the wife of a big oil company president, who paid for it. All kinds of food, eastern and western, ice cream, drinks, music from Hawaiian guitar to koto, in the New Osaka Hotel ballroom. And we were each given marrons glacees, flowers, and a coin purse on leaving, and a corsage of artificial flowers. It was not as corny as it sounds, though, as I think there was good will in it and I met a number of interesting Japanese women as well as (we decided) another very circumspect, not too sharp foreign service officer and other people. And for an elderly Japanese woman to give a cocktail party for all kinds of people on her own, and also to work in her husband's company and write articles on world politics is quite unusual and probably a beneficial thing in this society.

Although some of Joan's comments like this one imply a trajectory of

emancipation that puts American women ahead of their Japanese counterparts, these are balanced with other instances that are more nuanced and even contradict simple dichotomies of progress and cultural lag. This is the case as she writes in anticipation of the batches of exams and papers to be submitted by her students in early February 1958, "I hope the papers in the novel course are good, as the group reports the girls have given have all been excellent. There is nothing inferior intelligence wise in these girls compared to my students at Stanford or the girls I knew at Wellesley, but the language barrier is a problem." Other comments at the start of the new school year in April 1958 are even more positive and clearly reflect a sense of personal fulfillment in her role as teacher and mentor: "I am having a wonderful time teaching. With either English majors or the one best class of freshmen I have no serious language problems and it is such fun to discuss literature and introduce the students to new ideas—for example, the fight and drink way of life of the early Germanic tribes." A week later, on April 25, 1958, she elaborates further:

> Work goes on as usual. I continue to be busy—what most gives me this impression are the ten minutes between each class when I am besieged by students. I do enjoy it, and am having fun advising my seminar. I was pleased to find the head of the dept. agrees with my theories on scholarship and criticism, which makes it easier to work without trouble; for example that a student should read the author she is studying first, and the critics only very secondarily and cautiously, a point of view not shared by all Japanese teachers.

Meanwhile, Joan sympathizes with John and the boredom he faces at his job by this time. While she is invigorated and satisfied by her teaching and interactions with the students at Kobe College, her administrative obligations are more taxing, as described here on April 19, 1958:

> I have 300 students, and with all the Tanakas and Yamamotos I'll never

know them all. I am having to work very hard, with about 200 tests and papers a week, but it is well worth it even though one set can get tiresome. The only really boring thing is the monthly faculty meeting in Japanese—lasting three or four hours on straight chairs, with every aspect of a problem covered too often, much tea served etc.—from what John says the same routine as in Japanese business. I can at least knit, and as I said I only wish John were so generally pleased with his day to day work.

By the middle of that semester, Joan and John host a "simple buffet" that brings together his colleagues at the bank and a number of women from Kobe College. It is self-consciously of a different character from both the gatherings of other ex-pats, as well as the events more familiar to their Japanese guests. With some trepidation, Joan's June 7, 1958, letter explains,

> Perhaps we are too ambitious, with 40 to 45, but it will be simple and informal and we do have space. So few foreigners bother to entertain their Japanese associates, but I think it should be more fun than the everyone-outdo-the-next-one formal dinner parties. But I have told John to say no married Japanese man may come without his wife unless she is ill or away; I won't welcome anyone to my home who perpetuates such reactionary social policies, because while older women have long since accepted such things, younger women hate them.[57]

A few weeks later, John provides a full description of their unconventional soirée, including the reasons given by his colleagues for their unaccompanied status.

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[57] In the margin is Joan's hand-written comment, "he agrees!" attesting to this being a joint decision between her and John.

John Greenwood, seated in second row, third from left

> We had a big party for all the 'up-stairs' staff of the Osaka branch of the B of A, and some of Joan's younger colleagues at Kobe College. 32 people from the bank came, and about 10 from the college. We ate a lot of beans and drank a lot of beer and orange pop (the boys drank beer and all the girls drank orange punch)…. Everybody was painfully shy at the beginning of the party. We decided that the party was going to be an "American" party without any organized game and with wives in attendance. We got away with a "disorganized" party, but none of the married boys brought their wives. Several made excuses about no babysitters in Japan, which is true to some extent. Buffet supper broke down some of the reticence and showing our photograph albums also helped to loosen up the atmosphere. It was fun but it will be at least another year before we do it again.

Conclusion

In Peter Stearns' overview of social history, he explains the twin premises of this approach to understanding the past, "that ordinary people not only have a history but contribute to shaping history more generally, and that a range of behaviors can be profitably explored historically beyond (though also including) the most familiar political staples."[58] As can be seen in the preceding pages, while Joan and John Greenwood can be characterized as "ordinary people" in many ways, their day to day encounters and willingness to defy convention at times were in some cases extraordinary. For Joan in particular, she was able to advance her career as a budding scholar and set an example for her students that she continued to develop over the course of her teaching at Rosary College in Illinois and California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), even beyond the time of her retirement when she came back to teach classes at the request of the

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[58] Stearns, "Social History Present and Future," 9.

CSUF English Department on a regular basis. In her post-tenure review of August 15, 1984, Dean Tom Klammer wrote: "Dr. Joan Greenwood's long record of invaluable contributions to the department, the university, and her students has continued without interruption." One student in her "Literary Relations: East and West" class wrote the following evaluation: "The instruction I received was of the highest order. Pragmatic and humanistic: this is Dr. Greenwood."

The citations included in the preceding pages just scratch the surface in terms of illuminating the personal and professional trajectories of Joan and John. In order to fully understand and appreciate their correspondences from Kobe, we have to go further back in the twentieth century to the footprints left by Heman and Evelyn who went through the "Open Door" of China in the 1910s. By the time Bank of America sent the younger Greenwoods to post-Occupation Kansai, relations between the United States and Japan had reached a new stage of interdependence in the various realms of politics, economy, and culture. Their jobs in Osaka and Kobe were an integral part of those changes and as Joan wrote in 1957: "I suppose it is an ideal situation to find considerable challenge now, be very happy with one's work, and yet always be looking ahead."

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