

TOKYO LETTER

Golden Week

The seven-day span from April 29 to May 5 is popularly called "Golden Week" in Japan. This period contains three national holidays—the Emperor's Birthday on April 29, Constitution Day on May 3, and Children's Day on May 5. If May Day, the day of celebration for workers in Japan since 1920, and the weekend are added, Golden Week has only one or two working days. Some companies close their office or plant for the whole week, believing this is a more attractive alternative to an inevitable drop in working efficiency.

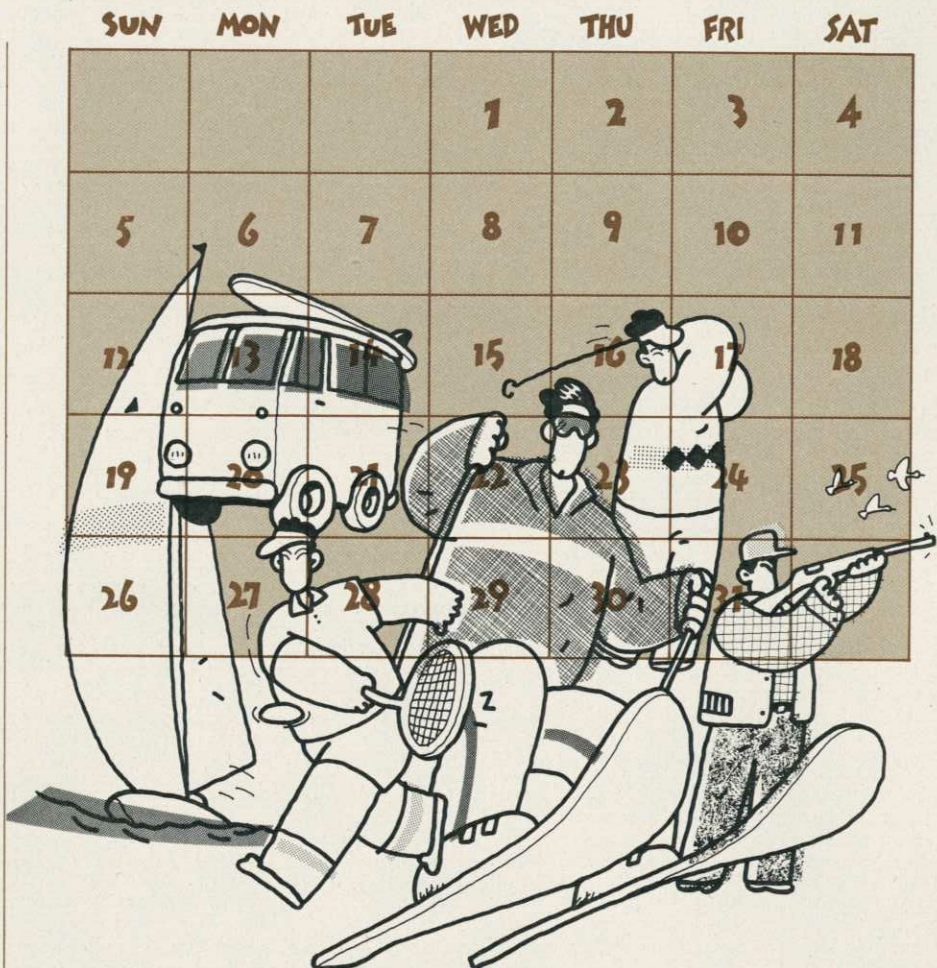
Children's Day is traditionally the boys' festival called *Tango no Sekku*. *Sekku* means a festival day to celebrate the change of season. *Tango* means the fifth day of May. Another such traditional festival is *Tanabata Matsuri* or Star Festival observed on July 7. According to legend, the stars Altair and Vega, representing a shepherd and his weaver sweetheart, have a once-a-year rendezvous on the Milky Way. Many of the Japanese festivals based on folklore or legend came from China many centuries ago and were blended with traditional events observed in Japan.

The Cruel Season

Golden Week comes at one of the best seasons of the year for leisure and recreational activities.

According to a survey on leisure activities conducted in 1979 by the Leisure Development Center, dining-out and sight-seeing trips are the most popular ways in which the Japanese spend their leisure time. Principally because disposable income is not increasing in the current low-growth economy, an increasing number of people are reducing their travel activities to one-day trips in order to save hotel expenses. In order to save money for dining-out, Japanese usually economize on food expenses at home.

As in the United States and European countries, husbands and fathers in Japan pay the restaurant bill. When they dine out with the family, ¥10,000 notes, which are popularly called "Shotoku Taishi" (Prince Shotoku) because his likeness is printed on them, disappear without the



slightest effort from emaciated wallets. Though in a different sense, April and May for Japanese husbands and fathers are the "cruel season" T.S. Eliot describes in one of his poems.

If you should look down from the air on the Japanese archipelago (377,000 square kilometers) during Golden Week, you will see highways (total length of national expressways 3,010km) congested with millions of cars (24.6 million at the end of 1981) crawling slowly like a colony of ants. *Shinkansen* bullet trains (total rail length in 1981, 1,069km) are sardine-packed. (During the Golden Week in 1981, *Shinkansen* superexpress trains carried 3,746,000 passengers). Traveling on congested highways or in crowded trains is not the best way to enjoy a holiday. But once they arrive at sightseeing resorts, holidaymakers can enjoy mountains fresh with verdure and a refreshing breeze that comes wafting across a shimmering lake. Salaried workers can feel some satisfaction that their hard work is rewarded

when they see their wives and children laughing and enjoying themselves in the bosom of nature.

More Japanese Take To Leisure Activities

Westerners often accuse Japanese of working too much. According to a poll taken by the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) in 1980, 60% of the respondents said "the Japanese work too hard" and 40% said "I work too hard." The Japanese, who nowadays sometimes feel disgusted at themselves for working so hard, have begun to show great interest in leisure activities.

The 1981 White Paper on National Life reveals that the majority of Japanese are aware of the importance of leisure activities today. As many as 41.3% of those surveyed said they wished to work no more than others do and to enjoy leisure activities, and 11.1% said that they preferred leisure activities to work.

TOKYO LETTER

Tsukuba Expo '85

Japan is now preparing for an international exposition in 1985, which it is hoped will produce many new ideas and help to lay the foundations for a better, brighter world in the 21st century.

Tsukuba Expo '85 will be held for 184 days under the general theme of "Dwellings And Surroundings—Science And Technology For Man At Home."

The Japan Association for the International Exposition, Tsukuba 1985, is now pressing ahead with construction on a site near the Tsukuba Science City, in Ibaraki Prefecture, some 50 kilometers northeast of Tokyo.

At the same time, efforts are underway to attract as many domestic and international participants as possible. Invitations have been issued already to some 3,000 Japanese companies, as well as 161 countries and 54 international organizations.

Association officials report that there have been many inquiries and expressions of interest at home and overseas, raising hopes that this third international exposition to be held in Japan will be the biggest and most significant in long-term results.

The association has already sent delegations to several countries to explain the nature and purpose of Tsukuba Expo '85, and more will be dispatched during this year.

As part of the preparations, a series of five international symposiums are being held within this year to explore various aspects of the exposition theme and consolidate their findings into the exposition itself. The first symposium was held in Tokyo in March.

The chairman of the association, Mr. Toshiwo Doko, a respected elder statesman of the Japanese business world, says: "We think it is extremely significant that an international exposition should be held at this time to focus on the science and technology for creating an affluent life for 21st century mankind.

"Man today faces many problems deriving from the fact that the earth has limitations. Exhaustion of known resources of energy and natural materials, pollution, food shortages and the population explosion all threaten to put a brake on man's progress, affecting his economic, social and cultural activities.



"The forthcoming exposition will search for a new image for man's dwellings and surroundings, which are common foundations for all existence on earth. Each country has its own science and technology conditioned by historical and cultural diversity. By bringing these together, we are hoping to discover new values and find a new road to development."

The exposition is to be divided into three main areas covering health and safety systems, housing and information and communications systems.

Participants in the first sector are being asked to contribute their ideas on medical care, overcoming mental and physical handicaps, food production and diet, population control, sports and leisure activities, disaster prevention and environmental conservation and control.

Housing exhibits will cover such aspects as architecture and construction techniques, lifestyles and family patterns in the future, human engineering, climate and clothing, new materials for more comfortable living, waste disposal and recycling, water, energy and other resources as related to lifestyles, urban development and land utilization, and lifestyles for extreme environments.

In the information and communications section, exhibits will examine changes in education, communicating better in a multilingual world, computers and future communications systems, accumulation and use of information in society, communication through games and toys etc.

As part of its publicity activities, the association last November produced its first official poster for domestic and international use, symbolizing the exposition's theme. The poster displays the Expo symbol against a background of outer space with countless galaxies and a glow-

ing orange "black hole" as an accent, which it is hoped will convey some of the excitement of the Tsukuba event and the wonderful possibilities science can offer to future generations.

The Expo symbol is a triangle containing two overlapping parallel rings. The three sides of the triangle signify the exposition themes of man, dwellings and surroundings, while the parallel rings imply the harmonious orbit of man and science.

Association officials say it is extremely significant that such a scientific exposition should be staged in Japan, a country which is taking the road to become an advanced industrial state while seeking to retain a traditional culture of daily life closely attuned to changes in nature.

Tsukuba Expo '85, the association says, will explore the possibilities of science and technology within a framework of preserving the natural environment and beauty of the country. The exposition site will offer easy access by motor expressways or high-speed trains from the center of Tokyo. It will also provide visitors with a glimpse of some of the most beautiful scenery in Japan, as well as a look at one of the country's most exciting scientific projects—the development of a new "capital of brains."

The Japanese Government decided to set up Tsukuba Science City in 1963. Today, some 7,000 workers from state laboratories, public and private research bodies and universities have been relocated there. The Tsukuba population now exceeds 100,000 and is expected to double within a few years.

The nucleus of education and academic research is Tsukuba University, opened in 1973 to promote high-level academic studies and produce young people capable of dealing with the complex problems expected to arise in the decades ahead. Among the 45 institutions now established in Tsukuba are the National Space Development Agency and the National Institute of Fermentation Research and Environmental Studies.

Among the unique features of Tsukuba are the frequent inter-disciplinary meetings which are held to allow a free exchange of ideas among many scholars. This is to be extended in future through construction of facilities to make Tsukuba the site of international research cooperation. This, of course, is also one of the prime purposes of Tsukuba Expo '85.