

Letters/Nov.

September 17, 1991

Dear KTO editor,

Recent issues of KTO have included discussions of the disturbing problem of abandoned pets in Japan. I hope you will consider printing this true story describing our experiences helping to find homes for abandoned animals. Perhaps it will give ideas and encouragement to others who are also disturbed by this problem but have felt unable to do something constructive.

Twice in 6 months, my husband and I have found, temporarily cared for, and secured homes for a number of abandoned puppies. The first incident occurred during a pleasant Sunday drive on Mt. Ikoma. We stopped to enjoy a lookout and found a filthy box containing 7 very young puppies. Many people stopped to look and remark "kawaii" but then simply walked on, showing a complete lack of concern. A man operating a nearby snack truck seemed intent on staying out of this unpleasant situation. After we persistently asked him how long the puppies had been there, he finally told us that they had been there

since he had arrived early in the morning. They had no water or food; it was 3 p.m. and the sun was blazing hot. The puppies were on the verge of death by dehydration. My husband and I gathered the litter and prepared a makeshift bed for them in our car. Over the next few days we helped them recover from their ordeal. Although like many Japanese we live in a "mansion," i.e. an apartment, that forbids pets, we kept them for a few days in a state of secrecy and nursed them back to health, all the time wondering what we should do next.

I spent the first full day with the puppies calling various animal organizations as well as friends for advice. This proved most discouraging. But the next day, my husband came up with the idea of hawking the puppies at a local university campus. Because the puppies were so cute, interest in them was easily generated. With a large sign and a box full of yapping, playful puppies, we soon became a center of attention on campus. In the first 2 days we found good homes for 4 puppies, making sure that those who took them lived in a place that permitted pets, that their parents approved in cases of students, etc. By the end of the week, all 7 puppies were in new homes. We've kept track of several of the dogs, who are now big, strong, healthy, happy adolescents, with satisfied owners.

A similar experience occurred last June, when we found ourselves at Mt. Unzen during the tremendous and destructive eruptions. Hours after the eruption