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30th August 1986

Dear Sir,

I recently read an article in your publication by Mrs Pauline M. Abbott about her visit to Japan and her observations of dogs in this country. From her article it seems she came here by invitation to judge at the Asian FCI Championship Show and at the same time she met with eminent people connected with major Canine Associations in Japan. There is no mention of how long she stayed nor if she travelled further than the outer boundaries of Tokyo but I surmise that as an honoured guest of this country her schedule was efficiently organized and that she was courteously shown what her hosts wanted her to see. This is after all a free and democratic country where anyone can travel anywhere in safety and comfort. But the majority of foreigners coming here, because of language barriers, get little chance to explore far. This is especially true of those invited by organizations.

I have lived in Japan for nearly 20 years, more than half of these in a village in the Kansai near Osaka. It takes many years to absorb and be absorbed in this culture, so different from our own and every day I learn something new and fascinating about it. Unlike most foreigners I am surrounded by a rural community, speak Japanese and have many non-English-speaking Japanese friends. If I didn't feel accepted, settled and genuinely enjoy living here, I wouldn't stay. I understand the euphoria people feel when they first visit Japan, people are so kind, going out of their way to make one welcome and everything is ^{so} well organized. When one lives here sometime, one sees the other side of the coin. Like everywhere else, Japan has its weaknesses and its frustrations.

There are many dog lovers in Japan and many who treat their dogs as we do. The two are a little bit different because Japanese attitudes towards animals is not quite the same as ours. The Buddhist attitude as Mrs Abbott points out, is to respect all forms of life; this also includes plants, trees and rocks, as well as animals and humans. The Buddhists' attitude is also one of non-interference, of passivity. Christianity is a very interfering, aggressive religion in comparison. So when Japanese see a frail old lady standing on a train, they notice her and consider the situation but they don't offer her a seat because it would embarrass her and put her under obligation to them. Whereas we Christians immediately jump up and offer our seat without thinking in such a case. So it is with animals.