



Japan Screen Topics

ISSUE No. 80-1

"STAR LODGE"

93 feet 2 min. 35 sec.

1. (MOUNTAINS) The mountains of the Northern Japan Alps in Nagano Prefecture are a favourite spot for recreation, and now the clean air and clear skies make the region an ideal spot for another hobby that has a strong following in this country - amateur astrology... The "Star Lodge" was set up last year by a 26-year old office-worker, Sadao Sei. Disillusioned with life in Yokohama, Sei bought an abandoned ski-lodge and set about redesigning it to suit his stellar interests. Today it's visited often by young people who, quite literally, share his views.

2. (WORKSHOP) Sadao Sei's interest in astronomy began in his high-school days, and his accumulated expertise enables him to give workshops such as this one on hand-polished lenses. The dining-room is transformed into a workroom, and the enthusiasts learn the fine details of making superb lenses.

3. (TELESCOPE) As evening approaches the telescopes are made ready for the night's viewing session..... Astronomy has always had a strong following in Japan, and the "Star Lodge" has met with enthusiastic response.

Almost every evening, over a meal, the visitors to the lodge share stories and exchange ideas.

4. (PREPARING TELESCOPE) As night falls, everyone takes to telescopes... this one has a 20cm lens. With it, it's possible to trace established constellations such as Orion... and there's always the hope of finding a new star, or spotting a comet.

5. (OUTSIDE TELESCOPE) The outside telescope, a 25-inch model, is equipped for photography so that such exciting events can be recorded... apart from which it's pleasant to be able to take home a permanent reminder of a night spent star-gazing.... With all the talk of Japan being so overcrowded, it's good to record that at least one group has the universe at its doorstep.

HARNESSING THE WIND

85 feet 2 min. 22 sec.

1. (WINDMILL) Harnessing the power of the wind is one possible solution to the ever-present energy problem. Lying in the plains of Gunma Prefecture, this golf course at Annaka City is an ideal site for taking advantage of the strong winds that blow in over the foothills, and it's here that an experiment in using wind-power is being undertaken. The energy generated is used, for example, to recharge the batteries that power the golf-carts.

2. (RECHARGING SHACK) The Gunma Electric Power Generating Authority is undertaking the experiment under a commission from the Science and Technology Agency. The generating equipment consists fundamentally of a windmill, the blade of which is 3.8 meters long. With a wind speed of eight meters, the equipment is capable of producing 1.2 kilowatts of power.... which means free battery charging for the golf carts.

3. (MOVING BATTERY) The patrol vehicles at a nearby dam are also beneficiaries. Powered by two batteries each, the vans can travel at a top speed of 65 kilometers an hour, and on one charge, they can cover a distance of 90 kilometers on the level, and 40 kilometers on inclines.

4. (LS OF VAN) The experiment in Gunma goes ahead under full sail, but there are still many problems to be resolved... each battery weighs 200 kilos, for example; and the charging time has to be reduced. At the moment, to charge one battery, the windmill has to turn continuously for 12 hours, and given the unpredictable nature of the weather, there's no guarantee that it will do so. Nevertheless, at a time when energy shortages confront us at every turn, it's wise to look into all the possibilities. In Gunma, at least, the answer may well be in the blowing of the wind.

"KINTARO" CANDY

91 feet 2 min. 32 sec.

1. (CANDY STICKS) These sticks of sweet candy are called Kintaro Ame. Kintaro is a familiar figure to children all over Japan, and has been for over 400 years. He's a legendary child with super-human powers, and appears regularly in the nation's folk-tales, as well as in these candy bars.

2. (FACTORY INTERIOR) The basic materials used are water, sugar and liquid gelatine. Here at the Tokyo manufacturer, the solution is boiled... it's then cooled, kneaded to the required consistency, and the pigmentation added.

3. (BUILDING THE BAR) The material is divided into portions, and the face of Kintaro, which runs all the way through the candy bar, is built-up.

(BROWN CANDY) Here are the eyes... and the eyelashes...

(PINK & BROWN CANDY) ... the mouth and nose...

(WIDE BROWN SLAB) ... and then the hair....

(KINTARO FACE) This is how the finished face will look...

(WHITE COATING) And finally, here's the outer coating. From this 40 cm diameter mass of candy will come countless 2 cm bars... how is it possible?

4. (MACHINE) This machine extrudes the candy in a long, continuous bar, and no matter how much it is twisted, the face of Kintaro will keep its distinctive shape.

5. (CUTTING) So, regardless of where you cut the candy bar, Kintaro will be there reminding you that nothing is ever quite what it seems! In small pieces or in a stick, Kintaro Ame is ideal for those with a sweet tooth and a taste for a legend.

"POCKET-BIKES"

80 feet 2 min. 13 sec.

1. (MINIATURE MOTOR-BIKE) From the land known for its miniaturization comes the miniature motor-bike, Known in Japan as "pocket-bikes", they are a popular item in hobby-centers and in the last seven years 25,000 of them have been sold.

2. (UNLOADING BIKE) The Tsukushino Circuit in Yokohama is the venue every Saturday and Sunday for a race meeting, and every weekend enthusiasts gather to test their skills. The bikes are about a meter in length and stand 40 cm from the ground. With an engine of less than 30 cc's, they're, nevertheless, capable of racing at 40 k.p.h., and in tests they've even gone as fast as 70 k.p.h! The youngest of the riders lining up for today's race is all of three years old - the minimum permitted. The maximum? Well that's not judged on age as much as on whether a competitor can actually fit on the 14 kilo bike.

3. (FLAG) They're off!... The circuit is 350 meters long and the race itself is over 10 laps... On average, there are 20 riders to a race. Some of them could well be members of the 300-strong Association of Pocket-Bike Riders, while others will be among the silent majority who ride for pleasure alone..... It's possible to buy a bike ready-made but the true enthusiast builds his own from a kit. On average he'll have to spend 125,000 yen... and he's still not permitted on the public roads, for reasons of safety. Of course, that means no driver's license is required.

4. (PRESENTING TROPHY) The winner!... Teruki Kitahara, a nine-year old third grader proudly accepts the trophy, which in the nature of these things, happens to be bigger than the bike on which he won it.

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