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Japan Screen Topics

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FIRST 'DOUBLE' ELECTION

190 feet 5 min. 17 sec.

1. (BALLOONS & BANNERS) Advertising balloons and banners announced Japan's first 'double' election of members to both the House of Representatives and House of Councilors. The respective campaigns began June 1 and May 30, with voting scheduled on June 22.
2. (CROWDS: CLOSE-UPS) Major policy speeches for the various parties were delivered by party leaders, including: Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira of the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party, Chairman Ichio Asukata of the Japan Socialist Party, Chairman Yoshikatsu Takeiri of the Komei Party, Chairman Kenji Miyamoto of the Japan Communist Party, Chairman Ryosaku Sasaki of the Democratic Socialist Party, Chairman Seichi Tagawa of the New Liberal Club, and Chairman Hideo Den of the Social Democratic Federation.
3. (POSTERS) Campaign posters for individual candidates and for the parties were pasted on election billboards throughout the nation.
4. (LOUDSPEAKER CARS) But candidates put their major efforts into personal campaigning from loudspeaker-equipped cars and vans. From seven each morning till eight in the evening, these campaign vehicles cruise election districts, with candidates making amplified appeals to the voters. In both urban and rural Japan this is considered one of the most effective means of campaigning, since it allows the candidate personal contact with the voters.

5. (NEWSPAPER: OHIRA: FUNERAL) In the midst of the election campaign Prime Minister Ohira died of heart disease. He had been hospitalized May 31, just as campaigning began, with what was described as mild heart trouble coupled with fatigue. But early on the morning of June 12 the prime minister suffered a severe heart attack and passed away. The family funeral of the prime minister was held June 14, with more than 3,000 people in attendance, including leaders of both the Liberal-Democratic and opposition parties, friends and members of the family. Prime Minister Ohira was the first Japanese premier to die in office during the post-war period.

6. (CAMPAIGN SCENES) As the June 22 voting date drew nearer campaign efforts intensified, and candidates sought means of closer personal contact with the voters --- such as riding the crowded, rush-hour commuter trains. And the areas in front of major train stations daily served as locations for energetic campaign speeches and the handing out of campaign literature. Some candidates adopted novel means of greeting constituents, such as riding motor-bikes or bicycles throughout election districts to greet shoppers, passers-by and local workers. During the campaign, candidates wasted no time, even using lunch as an opportunity to talk with small or large groups of potential supporters. And every day candidates shook thousands of hands, appearing at stations and other crowded sites to personally greet and say a few words to the voters.

7. (MASS RALLY) Huge mass rallies are held on election eve, as candidates make final appeals for voter support. The last major speeches of the campaign are delivered at these rallies, which are held in large public plazas and other areas where a maximum number of voters can attend.

8. (VOTING) Finally the long campaign came to an end as the voters went to the polls on the morning of June 22. Voting is done mainly at school auditoriums and public halls throughout the nation, with the voters marking their ballots by hand. A total of 74.5 percent of the eligible voters cast ballots in the recent election, one of the highest voting percentages of the post-war period. One of the major factors generating such strong voter interest was the fact that this was the first time voters have ever chosen members of both houses of the National Diet in a single election.

9. (VOTE COUNTING) On the following morning, the counting of votes began. Ballot boxes were taken to central counting locations, where the ballots are separated by hand according to candidate, and automatic machinery is used to determine the number of votes for each.

10. (ELECTION RETURNS) Throughout the day, live telecasts covered the returns, and political analysts commented on voting trends in various districts and the possible effects of the election results on the future course of politics in Japan.

11. (ROSES) At party headquarters the results were carefully noted, with red roses pinned below the names of winning candidates. A tradition among election winners in Japan is to paint in the second eye of a good-luck Daruma Doll to celebrate the victory.

12. (FACES) The opposition party leaders were gloomy over their failure to score the victory they had anticipated and which had been generally predicted. Banner newspaper headlines announced a sweeping upset win for the ruling Liberal-Democrats, who emerged with a secure majority in both houses of the Diet. The election returns indicated that the ruling party will continue to maintain its leadership position as Japanese politics moves into the 1980's.

HYDROGEN-POWERED AUTO

60 feet 1 min. 40 sec.

1. (AERIAL VIEW) At Musashi Automotive University in suburban Tokyo, work has been underway since 1970 on the development of automobiles powered by liquid hydrogen, a non-polluting alternative to gasoline for ground transportation.
2. (TEST CARS) And initial prototype was built in 1974, followed by two further test models. This fourth prototype hardly differs at all in appearance from ordinary gasoline-powered cars, except for alterations to the engine to allow the use of the hydrogen fuel.
3. (ENGINE TESTING) As test work on the hydrogen car progressed, the major difficulty proved to be in perfecting the extremely strong fuel tank needed to maintain the high pressures necessary to keep the hydrogen liquid at a temperature of minus 253 degrees.
4. (CAR) Finally, on June 17, the last preparations were complete and actual test driving of the hydrogen-powered car began. The test runs were carried out at a private auto circuit in Hamamatsu, with the results proving very promising. Liquid hydrogen has almost twice the energy content of gasoline, and this fourth model proved capable of taking full advantage of this hydrogen power. A top speed of 135 kilometers per hour was reached during the tests, and the findings are expected to bring significant improvements when the development team begins work shortly on a fifth prototype. A commercially practical car powered by hydrogen would have the dual benefit of reducing Japan's dependence on oil imports and greatly reducing exhaust gas pollution.

TRADITIONAL CABINETMAKER

136 feet 3 min. 48 sec.

1. (AERIAL VIEW) While Tokyo is one of the most modern cities of the world, many of its older districts still host the traditional crafts and arts developed over many centuries. Seventy-two-year-old Kuniharu Shimazaki has spent 60 years lovingly crafting beautiful furniture from wood, and is today one of the few remaining expert cabinetmakers still working at this ancient craft.

2. (PLANING WOOD) Attention to even the minutest detail is the vital factor to a traditional craftsman like Shimazaki. Every surface and every angle of each part of his work must conform to the strictest standards in order to win his approval. Working slowly, completely by hand, he molds the wood to precisely the shape he requires.

3. (TOOLS) A cabinetmaker's tools are very precious to him, particularly since a craftsman like Shimazaki makes many of his own tools himself. He orders the steel blades from a specialist, but makes the handles himself to exactly fit his own hands. It is only with such completely personalized tools that he can achieve the perfect fits for every joint that characterize his expert craftsmanship.

4. (FURNITURE) Shimazaki makes only traditional Japanese styles of furniture, among which are dressing tables, display shelves, letter boxes, hand mirrors and tiny boxes for personal seals.

5. (TEMPLE) In his leisure time, he often takes one of his many grandchildren (he has two sons, four daughters and a great many grandchildren) on visits to the famous nearby Sensoji Temple in the old-town district of Asakusa.

6. (WITH APPRENTICES) Over the years, Shimazaki has trained 15 apprentices; currently he is instructing three more. He teaches them the varied techniques of the craft and inspects and criticizes their work. "My craft is slowly disappearing in the modern world," he notes, "and by training such promising young men I can be sure my grandchildren will be able to enjoy fine, hand-crafted furniture in their lifetimes."

7. (FITTING JOINTS) Shimazaki works completely on his own, with no plans or blueprints. He designs every piece himself, completely in his head, before beginning work with the wood. Because every joint in his work fits perfectly together, no nails or screws are needed to hold them together. The joints fit so precisely that they become invisible in a finished piece. Even those parts which will never be seen, the underside of drawers or back of a dresser, are finished to a perfection not found in mass-produced furniture. "That is the true sign of a craftsman," he comments. "I always tell my apprentices that heart and devotion to the work is more important than actual skill." Another important factor is the choice of the right wood for each piece: sometimes a particularly beautiful piece of wood will inspire him to build a certain item; other times it will be the design that inspires the choice of wood.

8. (DRESSING TABLE) Shimazaki often works late at night, because he is busy with the many visitors who come to see him in the daytime. He considers each item he produces to be a part of himself, "almost like a child, to be loved and protected." His outstanding talent and devotion to his craft have made Kuniharu Shimazaki a vital link between Japan's modern society and the traditions of the past.

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