

tell me now what to do. If Maria or Helen cry or not." In broken English, Edith read the loneliness, and she knew what loneliness was. She knew that she must bring the girls' mother here, as well.

She had made the decision, but Aiko was still a Japanese citizen, and the immigration quota had a waiting list many years long. It was then that Edith Taylor wrote me, asking if I could help.

I described the situation in my newspaper column. Others did more. Petitions were started, and, in August, 1957, Aiko Taylor was permitted to enter the country. As the plane came in at New York's international airport, Edith had a moment of fear. What if she should hate this woman who had taken Karl away from her?

The last person off the plane was a girl so thin and small that Edith thought at first it was a child. She stood there clutching the railing, and Edith knew that, if she herself had been afraid, Aiko was near panic.

She called Aiko's name, and the girl rushed down the steps and into Edith's arms. As they held each other, Edith had an extraordinary thought. "I prayed for Karl to come back. Now he has, in his two little daughters and in this gentle girl he loved. Help me, God, to love her, too."

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Maria and Helen

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THEY KNEW WHAT IT WAS TO BE LONELY



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THEY KNEW WHAT IT WAS TO BE LONELY

BY BOB CONSIDINE

The story begins early in 1950 in the Taylors' small apartment in Waltham, Massachusetts. Edith Taylor was sure that she was "the luckiest woman on the block." She and Karl had been married twenty-three years, and her heart still skipped a beat when he walked into the room.

As for Karl, he gave every appearance of a man in love with his wife. If his job as a government warehouse worker took him out of town, he would write Edith each night and send small gifts from every place he visited.

In February 1950, Karl was sent to Okinawa for a few months to work in a new government warehouse. It was a long time to be away... and so far away. This time no little gifts came. Edith understood. He was saving his money for the house they had longed dreamed of owning someday.

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WEEKS OF SILENCE

He had been gone a year now, and his letters were coming less and less often. No gifts; she understood. But a few pennies for a postage stamp?

Then, after weeks of silence, came a letter: "Dear Edith, I wish there were a kinder way to tell you that we are no longer married... Edith walked to the sofa and sat down. He had written to Mexico for a mail-order divorce. He had married Aiko, a Japanese maid-of-all-work assigned to his quarters. She was nineteen. Edith was forty-eight.

Now, if I were making up this story, the rejected wife would fight that quick paper-divorce. She would hate her husband and the woman. She would want vengeance for her own shattered life.

But I am describing here simply what did happen. Edith Taylor did not hate Karl. Perhaps she had loved him so long that she was unable to stop.

HAD HE STOPPED LOVING HER?

She could picture the situation. A lonely man. Constant closeness. But even so, Karl had not done the easy, shameful thing. He had chosen divorce, rather than taking advantage of a young servant girl. The only thing Edith could not believe was that he had stopped loving her. Someday, somehow, Karl would come home.

Edith now built her life around this thought. She wrote Karl, asking him to keep her in touch with his life.

In time, he wrote that he and Aiko were expecting a baby. Maria was born in 1951; then, in 1953, Helen was born. Edith sent gifts to the little girls. She still wrote to Karl and he wrote back: Helen had a tooth, Aiko's English was improving; Karl had lost weight.

And then the terrible letter. Karl was dying of lung cancer. His last letters were filled with fear. Not for himself, but for Aiko and his two little girls. He had been saving to send them to school in America, but his hospital bills were taking everything. What would become of them?

Then Edith knew that her last gift to Karl could be peace of mind. She wrote that, if Aiko was willing, she would take Maria and Helen and bring them up in Waltham. For many months after Karl's death Aiko would not let the children go. They were all she had ever known. Yet what could she offer them except a life of poverty, servitude, and despair? In November, 1956, she sent them to her dear "Aunt" Edith.

Edith had known it would be hard at fifty-four to be mother to a three-year-old and a five-year-old. She had not realized that, in the time since Karl's death, they would forget the little English they knew.

But Maria and Helen learned fast. The fear left their eyes; their faces grew plump. And Edith, for the first time in six years, was hurrying home from work. Even getting meals was fun again!

Sadder were the times when letters came from Aiko. "Aunt,