



ON her honeymoon in 1965, Yoshi snapped the photo above. It shows her slim husband, Jack Sellers, at Miyajima, a scenic island in Japan's Inland Sea near Hiroshima. That's Yoshi at bottom right, as she looked 44 years ago. To this day she still weighs 106 pounds. In March 2009, the California couple revisited Miyajima, and Jack, now a bloated Jackson, stood at the same

spot and photographed Miyajima's famous offshore Shinto *torii*. He saw no reason to insert his 77-year-old self into the photo at top right. The *torii* hasn't changed much since it was first built in the 12th century, but Jack has changed a lot in just 44 years. Oh, enough of this third-person affectation. Yoshi and I were back, and we were staying at the Sekitei *ryokan*, a cluster of

coastal cottages a ferry ride away. The inn's bathing facilities were superb, and our deck view of the central garden and *koi* pond, as seen at bottom left, was pleasant in a just-after-winter sort of way. The inn provided transportation to a landing where we could catch the ferry to Miyajima, or "Shrine Island" if we must translate the name. Japanese, anal-retentive in drawing up lists







of the best this or the best that, see Miyajima as belonging to what they call *Nihon Sankei*, or Japan's three best coastal views. The other two are Amanohashidate, with its two-mile-long "Bridge to Heaven" sandbar stretching across the mouth of a Sea of Japan bay, and Matsushima up north, where a couple of hundred pine-topped islets decorate a huge Pacific Ocean bay. Yoshi and I have explored all three. Miyajima has been a sacred Shinto place throughout Japanese recorded history, for at least 1,500 years. A sprawling shrine structure, rebuilt again and again over the centuries, lies within a cozy inlet near the *torii*. The building is not pictured here, but the *torii* is the real star. The entire island, every hill and tree, constitutes the Shinto shrine, with the "floating" *torii* serving as its symbolic gateway. I have never seen the Miyajima *torii* at low tide, but I grabbed the inset photo at left from the Internet. When the tide is that low, you can walk out to it, but your shoes will get muddy. Shintoism is Japan's native religion and for the longest time it was misogynist. Women were unclean, spiritually polluted, banned from holy Mt. Fuji until 1868 and also from sacred Miyajima until Imperial Japan got democracy as well as a whipping from America in the middle of the 20th century. Miyajima is overrun with begging deer. They wander everywhere on the island, and Yoshi couldn't keep her petting hands off of them. She bought an ice cream cone at one of the shops. I wanted it, or at least a bite, but the deer gobbled it up. Oh well, I got a mug of beer and a half dozen fried oysters a little later.

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