APPENDICES

Biography of Arthur Golden

Arthur Golden was born in 1956 and brought up in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is a 1978 graduate of Harvard College with a degree in art history, specializing in Japanese art. In 1980, he earned an M.A. in Japanese history from Columbia University where he also learned Mandarin Chinese. After a summer at Beijing University, he went to work at a magazine in Tokyo. In 1988, he received an M.A. in English from Boston University. He was lived and worked in Japan and since that time has been teaching, writing, and literature in Boston area. He now lives in Brookline, Massachusetts, with his wife and children.

After its release in 1997, Memoirs of a Geisha spent two years on The New York Times bestseller list. It has sold more than four million copies in English and has been translated into thirty-two languages around the world.

The novel Memoirs of a Geisha was written after interviewing a number of geisha, including Mineko Iwasaki, for background information about the world of the geisha.

In 2005, Memoirs of a Geisha was made into a feature film directed by Rob Marshall and garnering three Academy Awards.
SUMMARY OF ‘MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA’

The novel is narrated from the point of view of Sayuri Nitta, a retired geisha in her 70s, living in the Waldorf Towers in New York City. She is interviewed by Jakob Haarhuis, a professor at New York University. Professor Haarhuis is credited as the story's translator, although he is a fictional character himself. (This is apparently a reference to the fact that Golden interviewed a retired geisha as part of his research for the novel.) The story is told in flashback format with continuous references to the time between Sayuri's career and the time she is being interviewed. She also periodically explains different aspects of geisha life.

Sayuri recalls her early childhood as Chiyo Sakamoto, a young girl growing up in a poor fishing village. Along with her older sister Satsu, she is sold into a life of servitude by her elderly father and dying mother when she is nine years old. Chiyo is taken in by the unsympathetic proprietress of the Nitta geisha house, whom she addresses as "Mother". She befriends Mother's sister ("Auntie") and another young girl in the house, Pumpkin, but also earns the jealous ire of the head geisha of the house, Hatsumomo. Chiyo spends most of her remaining childhood working as a maid while her sister is sold to a brothel, although she eventually succeeds in escaping, never to be seen by Chiyo again.

One day while crying in the street, the young Chiyo is noticed by a passerby, Chairman Ken Iwamura, who gives her his handkerchief with some
money to buy an iced snow-cone. Inspired by his act of kindness, Chiyo resolves to become a geisha so that she may one day become a part of the Chairman's life. Early in her teenage years, Chiyo is taken under the wing of Mameha, one of the top geisha in Kyoto at the time. Under Mameha's tutelage, the girl Chiyo becomes Sayuri, the most famous geisha in all of Gion. Her growing success impacts on the careers and lives of Hatsumomo and Pumpkin. Hatsumomo tries to destroy Sayuri's career, but ends up destroying her own when she bites one of her clients in a jealous fit. When her virginity is sold for a record high price, Sayuri is able to pay off her debt to the okiya (her purchase price; the soiling of a kimono owned by a well-known geisha, which Chiyo was blackmailed into defacing by Hatsumomo; the price of an expensive brooch, which Hatsumomo had hidden and claimed Chiyo had stolen; and her medical bill incurred after she injured herself while trying to escape, plus the cost of geisha school lessons and other items) is selected over Pumpkin as the heir of the okiya, earning the name Nitta Sayuri and causing Pumpkin to despair.

Through her work as a geisha, Sayuri is reunited with the Chairman, whom she has secretly loved since she was a girl. But her intentions of spending time with the Chairman are curtailed several times when she inadvertently attracts other clients seeking to become her patron, including the Chairman's business partner in Iwamura Electric and close friend, Toshikazu Nobu. Her successful career is cut short by the outbreak of World War II, but Sayuri's safety is ensured by Nobu, who sends her to a different town to live with his friend's family. Nonetheless, Sayuri and those close to her must endure a life of hard labor. After
the end of the war, Nobu visits Sayuri and asks that she return to Gion to help entertain Deputy Minister Sato, who can help to restart the Chairman and Nobu's company that was all but destroyed during the war. Nobu also tells Sayuri that once Iwamura Electric's future is ensured, he will become Sayuri's danja (patron). This distresses Sayuri, but she agrees to help due to her feeling of debt toward Nobu.

Once returned to Gion, Sayuri seeks the help of Mameha and Pumpkin to entertain the Deputy Minister. The three women become geisha once more, and Sayuri reunites with the Chairman through these entertainment gatherings. Eventually, Nobu tells Sayuri that the time has come for him to become her danja and Sayuri despairs. On a weekend trip to Amami Islands with Iwamura Electric, Sayuri devises a plan to humiliate herself with the Deputy Minister in front of Nobu, thereby ending any affection Nobu has for her and freeing herself to be with the Chairman. Instead, Sayuri is humiliated in front of the Chairman by Pumpkin, who still harbors resentment toward her. Sayuri believes that her dream of being with the Chairman is lost.

Three days after her return from Amami, Sayuri receives a call to meet with Iwamura Electric. She is saddened as she anticipates meeting Nobu and discussing his patronage, but is surprised when the Chairman shows up rather than Nobu. The Chairman finally reveals to her that he knows she is Chiyo, and that he was responsible for sending Mameha to her so that she may become a geisha. The Chairman also states that he knows Sayuri humiliated herself with the intention of
hurting Nobu, and thinks that she may have a purpose for the scheme. Sayuri admits to having personal reasons for hurting Nobu. The Chairman continues to explain his feeling of debt toward and friendship with Nobu, and how he was not able to take away the woman his friend so cherished. Sayuri confesses her love for the Chairman, which she has been harboring for more than 15 years. To her surprise, the Chairman kisses Sayuri; since he had explained his loyalty to Nobu just moments ago, and the Chairman explains that Nobu has given up on Sayuri when he learned of her intentions at Amami.

The story ends with Sayuri recounting her subsequent life as the Chairman's mistress, including her time in Gion as a retired geisha, a mention of a son she had with the Chairman, her and her son's relocation to New York City so as not to disrupt possible inheritance issues of Iwamura Electric, and reflections of all the people in her life.