The magazine of The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

FCCJ

NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

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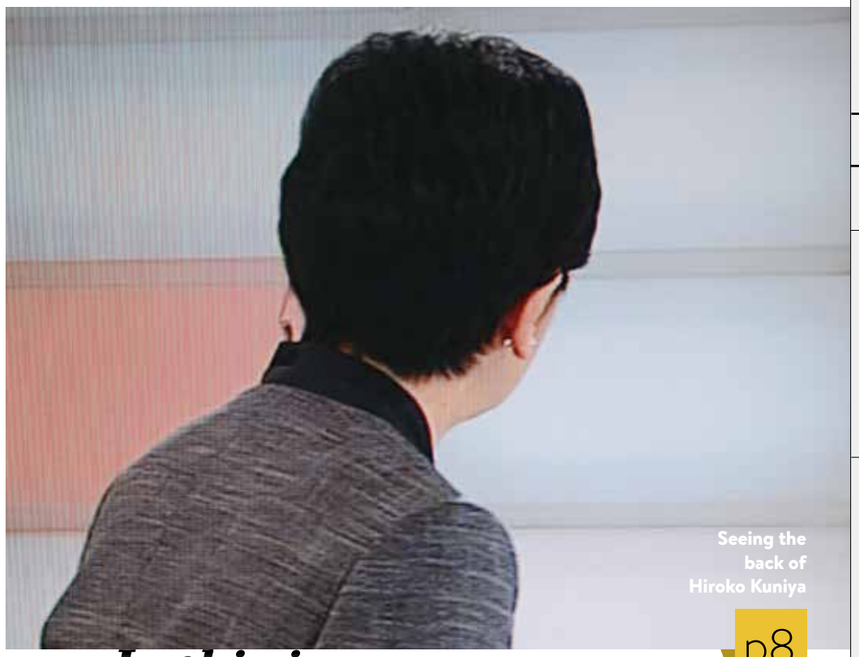
Journalism and TWITTER . . .

. . . For better or worse

Middle East to Far East: the *Washington Post*'s Anna Fifield profiled

Are journalists losing their jobs for not being pro-government?

The Essential Cinema Club: and you're already a member



Seeing the back of Hiroko Kuniya

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Cover design by **Andrew Pothecary**

From the President

THE MONTH OF APRIL heralds spring and a new fiscal year in Japan. The positive sentiment of this season represents the mood in the FCCJ following the March General Membership Meeting, when Members overwhelmingly voted to approve the Board's settlement ending the four-year-long lawsuit by union staff members. In addition to this good news, the Board also received GMM approval for the fiscal 2016 budget, the continued services from Meihio, a company that will direct our scheduled Club move to new premises in 2018, and a new set of regulations on accepting donations under our *koeki* status that has paved the way for financial contributions under tax-free conditions for the donor.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention, with some pride, the unprecedented response of the almost 200 votes and proxies from Members collected at this GMM. Perhaps this was the result of my last column that whined about the lack of interest about Club affairs among Regular Members or maybe it was the hard work of our staff and Board Members who resorted to calling to alert voting Members about their participation. Regardless, the outcome was indeed very impressive and, obviously, journalist Members do care about the FCCJ.

I strongly believe this season also marks a decisive turn towards a positive future. As this Board's term winds down over the next few months, I can say this year has been a roller coaster ride that we have faced with gusto. During the last few months in office, as president, I would like to target a few other important goals, with my priority being to find realistic solutions. Key committees led by the Board Members will continue to devote much of their time in these directions: tackling the organization's shaky financial health by embarking on finding solutions; participating in an ongoing membership debate to protect our traditional journalist character based on accountability and transparency; and – high on our agenda – looking more closely at the conditions of the scheduled Club move.

I have made a special promise to meet more of the Associate Members who play an important role in this organization. As their numbers increase, I would like to ask these Members to make their voices heard. Requests for change, especially on issues such as increasing the amount of information in Japanese, for example, would be most welcome for consideration by the FCCJ management.

In closing, I would like to invite all our Members to attend some of the many international events at the Club – plans for the calendar now include library book breaks featuring foreign authors writing in Japanese. In addition, in keeping with the spirit of bringing a more Asian atmosphere to the FCCJ, please keep May 27 open for an upcoming South Asia entertainment event. Later this fall we will also hold a much-awaited Taiwan Night.

Enjoy the heady days of spring!

– Suvendrini Kakuchi

COLLECTIONS

TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS

The number of international visitors to Japan in 2015

19.73m ↑47.3%

Estimated number of international visitors to Japan in January 2016

1.85m ↑52%

Estimated number of Chinese visitors to Japan in January 2016

475,000 ↑110%

66.37 / 505.45

Figures for 2015 in millions

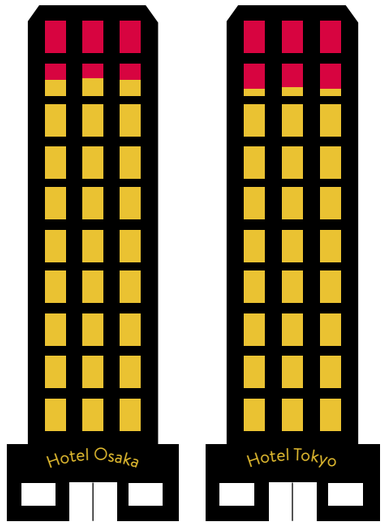
The number of nights spent in Japan by *foreign* tourists
as a fraction of
the number of nights spent in hotels and inns by *all* tourists

17.7

Figure for 2015 in millions

The number of nights spent in *Tokyo* by foreign tourists

Comparison of hotel occupancy rates in Osaka Prefecture and Tokyo



85.2% 82.3%

Figures for 2015

¥3,480,000,000,000

Spending by foreign visitors to Japan in 2015 ↑71%

¥32,100,000,000,000

2014 duty-free revenue of the 27 airports run by the central government

Sources: *Nikkei Asian Review*, *Asahi Shimbun*, Japan Tourism Marketing Co., the *Japan Times*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

"That's one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind," were the unforgettable words uttered by Neil Armstrong as he stepped onto the moon's surface on July 21, 1969. He recounted that moment at our Club on Aug. 9, 1971, and no doubt faced questions about the inaudible article "a" before "man," which NASA's transcript continues to show in brackets. Then president of the FCCJ, Pierre Brisard (AFP) is seated to his left; to his right is Bill Shinn (Sisa News Agency), who was a key negotiator in our move to the Yurakucho Denki Building in 1976 and Club president in 1976-77.

Neil Armstrong was born in Ohio on Aug. 5, 1930. As a U.S. Navy pilot, he flew 78 missions during the Korean War, and went on to become a test pilot, aerospace engineer and astronaut.

It was on Armstrong's second and last space flight, as commander of Apollo 11, the first manned mission to the moon in July 1969, that he and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. They spent two-and-a-half hours outside the spacecraft while colleague Michael Collins remained in lunar orbit. All three were highly honored with numerous awards after their safe return to Earth.

Armstrong retired from NASA in 1971, after which he became an educator and business spokesman. His visit to Japan and to the FCCJ came a bit more than two years after his walk on the moon and soon after his retirement.

Unlike several other former astronauts who went into politics, with John Glenn being the best known, Armstrong spurned overtures from the major political parties. However, he reportedly favored states' rights and frowned upon the U.S. becoming the "world's policeman."

He died on Aug. 25, 2012 at the age of 82, as a result of complications following coronary artery bypass surgery. A quote from his family sums up the man: "For those who may ask what they can do to honor Neil, we have a simple request. Honor his example of service, accomplishment and modesty, and the next time you walk outside on a clear night and see the moon smiling down at you, think of Neil Armstrong and give him a wink."

[On a personal note, an overseas trip prevented me from attending the professional luncheon for Armstrong, something I truly regret. I felt a certain kinship, since I had flown with pilots like him during my years as an aircrew member in the U.S. Navy (1947-1956). My Korean War experiences, although not comparable with Armstrong's as a fighter pilot, had us flying over much the same terrain during my 79 missions as a radioman, radar operator, and aerial gunner.]

— Charles Pomeroy

@tokyorich
Tokyo
tokyorich.wordpress.com
Joined April 2009

TWEETS	FOLLOWING	FOLLOWERS	LIKES	LISTS
79.3K	1,237	4,665	2,993	6

Is Twitter for the Birds?

by RICHARD SMART

As a tool for journalists, tweeting has as many good points as bad. But it's definitely not for the faint of heart.

Love it or loathe it, using Twitter is a reality for many in modern journalism. Stay off the social media for a few days and you are likely missing out on great conversations with readers – at the very least. Ignore it completely and you may be missing the juicy morsel that was going to lead to that Pulitzer.

At least, that is how it seemed back in the late years of the last decade, when social media was really taking off and idealism about the future of online journalism was at its peak. Today, Twitter has lost a great deal of its luster. Trolls – those using it for the sole purpose of attacking other users – have become an irritant; early ambitions to see a more active role for citizen journalists, noble figures sharing information to help democracy along, have been tempered. And the platform's other roles, including its use as a distraction from work, have led to a more realistic idea of what Twitter can do and what it is for.

Still, Twitter remains essential for journalists. "It's useful during breaking news stories because it is faster than other news sources," says David McNeill, a writer with the *Economist* and *Irish Times*. "The most obvious example was following the earthquake. But I also used it during the Japanese hostage drama last year, and it does put you at the heart of a story."

The *Washington Post*'s Anna Fifield, one of the more prolific tweeters, says that she uses it for following what other journalists are writing. "I focus on Japan and the Koreas, but my territory extends to Southeast Asia and Australasia," she says. "Twitter means I can make good use of all the eyeballs that are watching the news in these various countries."

FIFIELD IS ONE OF the many who also use the media as an output platform – both to distribute links to their own stories, and draw attention to stories, topics and events that they believe their followers are interested in. That's where things can get complicated, as there's the potential for things to end up unexpectedly and dramatically amplified. One story that you've worked on for five weeks might disappear into Twitter oblivion without even a puff of smoke. Something else that you've just tossed out there . . . well, let me tell you about it.

It all started with 10 words – "Japan has a creepy new ad out. I don't even..." – that I tweeted last October along with a link to a 10-minute YouTube clip of a commercial.

The video I linked to starts with the scene of a high school auditorium, where a teacher is delivering a speech congratulating the students on their hard work. It could be in any local high school except that all the students are wearing large nose rings. One-by-one, the youngsters walk to the stage to be given jobs.

They are sent to zoos, farms and slaughterhouses – and it soon dawns on us that these school kids are, in fact, meant to be cattle. One girl, the heroine, recalls the months leading up to graduation as she waits her turn. Refusing to tame her lofty ambitions, she has worked hard, both in studies and physical exercises. As the flashback reaches its crescendo, we see her running through the countryside, a determined look on her face and – apparently more important to the short film's message – her prominent breasts bouncing as she pushes forward.

ANDREW POTHECARY

Back in the hall, we learn the girl's fate as she stands before the teacher: Her dreams have been answered, he proudly announces, and from now on those breasts will be producing milk for Blendy, a coffee produced by Ajinomoto General Foods. Our heroine is over the moon. And somewhere, in front of their computers and TV screens, people are expected to suddenly feel an urge to "Drink Blendy."

FOR A FEW DAYS, simply by tweeting that fairly innocuous phrase along with the link, I became the driver of what the British website Guido Fawkes calls the Twitter Anger Bus. Tens of thousands of Japanese Twitter users expressed their reaction – generally outrage – after retweeting me or citing my Twitter stream as the source for the video.

By the time the storm was over, more than 25,000 people had clicked through to the video. It was retweeted 3,500 times; others linked to it with their own commentary: "Disgusting!" "I'll never drink their coffee again," "It's a commentary on modern Japan." And, "I think it's great." The tweets kept coming and coming and coming. "Blendy CM," according to Twitter data, was for a few hours among the top five phrases tweeted in Japan.

An article about the viral activity was published in the weekly *Spa!*, and also appeared on the Yahoo News website. The headline screamed: "'Why has this exploded now?' A Blendy commercial from a year ago is currently a huge conversation topic." It pointed to me as ground zero for the online storm, and its conclusion was: Beware of foreigners.

It pointed to me as ground zero for the online storm, and its conclusion was: Beware of foreigners

But my contribution was nothing more than that tweet. The commercial itself was produced and released by Dentsu in the autumn of 2014, and then entered in a creative festival in Singapore a year later. Around the same time, it was uploaded without authorization to YouTube. (Dentsu later removed the video, claiming a copyright violation.)

The credit (or blame) for the commercial going viral has to be shared with Shihoko Fujiwara, who first told me about it and whose anti-trafficking organization Lighthouse helped push the Twitter debate. "The reason it bothered me and all my staff at Lighthouse is that it clearly sexualizes underage girls," Fujiwara said. "Only Japan makes these kind of ads."

THAT THIS BIT OF online anger stemmed from an advert for coffee goes to the heart of the nature of Twitter. Says Tim Hornyak, a freelance journalist: "My tweets with the most legs tend to be about some bizarre, funny or controversial event such as the demolition of the Hotel Okura or a funeral for Aibo robot dogs or the Fukushima nuclear disaster. These are usually original or from news sources that haven't been seen much in the English-speaking world."

Andy Sharp, who has covered such mainstream topics as Abenomics and the second term of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for Bloomberg, also sees weird tweets getting more traction. "One tweet that went viral was a shot from TV that showed Abe trying to explain the security legislation using a chart that looked like the entrails of a pig," he says.

With the amplification of the random being among the idiosyncrasies of Twitter today, many are asking why bother with the platform, and they are not just journalists. In February, stock in the company fell sharply after user growth for the October-December quarter stalled at 320 million users. The skeptical view this as evidence that the platform is suffering myriad problems. Trolls are discouraging some from joining; navigating the platform is tricky for beginners; and attempts to improve the user experience have not always worked.

NEWS ORGANIZATIONS CAN BE as ambivalent about Twitter as the rest of the world. Jake Adelstein, who writes for the *Daily Beast*, *LA Times* and others, says editors today at many places assume their writers will nurture a Twitter presence. "They watch it to some degree," he says. "Sometimes I will tweet a few things that my editor notices" – and a story is born.

Other editors, however, are not as attentive. McNeill feels no pressure to microblog from work. "I'm not a staffer at any of the papers I write for," he says. "[So] it's important for freelance journalists looking to build a name and presence. I resisted it for a long time because I just saw it as adding to my burdens but I've started tweeting in the last year or so for that reason."

Fifield at the *Washington Post* also uses the account to help build her brand. She gives "people a flavor of my reporting adventures, especially through pictures. Recently I sent out a bunch of photos and videos from the anti-base protest at Henoko to complement my traditional reporting, but I also tweeted a photo of the view from my hotel room on a recent trip to Fukushima. It was a concrete wall. I like to have fun with Twitter."

But despite journalists' wishes, controlling what goes viral and what doesn't may be impossible. The Blendy tweet, for example, exploded for a reason, though not one that I was expecting. Some people on Twitter can amplify messages simply because of their large number of followers. And certain issues will capture attention at certain times. The Blendy ad was picked up by the account of the Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy, SEALDs, just weeks after they helped organize one of the biggest protests in Japanese history, against legislative reform on security. At the time, fretting about Japan was all the rage among those supporting the protests.

This, says Hornyak, is helped in part because Twitter has "a cocktail party atmosphere of interactions with like-minded people." SEALDs, a group of youths looking out for the future of their country and with the best of intentions, are also hosting their own "party." Get caught up in it and you could end up in the weeklies.

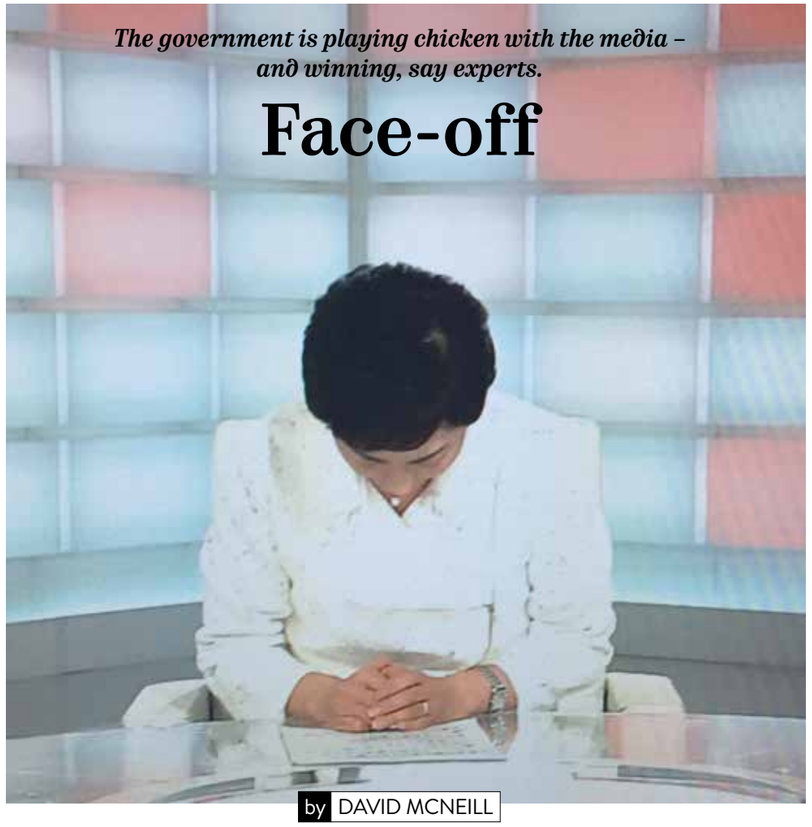
Leaving the platform, however, does not feel like an option. It remains one of the best online platforms for meeting insightful, interesting and entertaining people. Sharp sees it as a way "to engage and make contacts."

Hornyak also sees it as essential. "I don't see how any journalist can not be using it. I don't tweet about political issues much so I don't get many negative comments. But if you don't like what's in your Twitter stream, you can easily change that. And you can follow, mute or block irrelevant, boring or rude people – including trolls." ❶

Richard Smart covers Japanese business, science and the economy for publications across the world.

The government is playing chicken with the media – and winning, say experts.

Face-off



Bowing out
Hiroko Kuniya, no longer fronting NHK's investigative "Close-up Gendai"

by DAVID MCNEILL

On Jan. 21 this year, Tsuneo Watanabe, editor-in-chief of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, hosted an evening dinner for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and some of Japan's top media executives at the company's headquarters in central Tokyo. According to reports by people who attended, the companies represented included the *Mainichi*, *Sankei*, *Asahi* and *Nikkei* newspapers, along with the nation's biggest broadcaster, NHK.

Writing in the *Asahi Shimbun* a few days later, journalist Akira Ikegami asked the obvious questions: Who pays when the country's leader eats with the head of its most-read newspaper? "Does the *Yomiuri* owe Abe something? Enough to invite him for a meal? Did Abe meet with Watanabe because he wanted the *Yomiuri* to understand his viewpoints? Or did Watanabe give advice to Abe?"

Nobody is telling, though we have been here before: Six years ago, when Abe resigned from his first, unlamented term as prime minister, Watanabe brokered the appointment of his successor, Yasuo Fukuda. The *Yomiuri* kingpin then attempted to forge a coalition between ruling party and opposition. His paper, of course, neglected to tell its millions of readers about any of this.

Closed-door chats between media proprietors and politicians are nothing new. During the prime ministerial reign of Tony Blair, aging media tycoon Rupert Murdoch entered and exited Downing Street through the back door. Among the issues discussed was Murdoch's support for the unpopular war in Iraq (all 175 of Murdoch's newspaper editors backed the U.S./UK decision to invade in 2003) and Blair's promise to soften his party's commitment to media ownership laws that threatened Murdoch's empire.

So perhaps we should not be too hard on the *Yomiuri*, or for that matter the *Nikkei*. Japan's top business newspaper failed to report that its chief editorial writer was also at the Watanabe nosh-up, points out Ikegami. "Is that because the *Nikkei* didn't want its readers to know," he wonders. "Or, did the newspaper simply run out of space?"

ABE HAS BEEN AN unusually enthusiastic host. Last year, he dined with Watanabe several times, along with Yoshio Okubo, the president of broadcaster NTV, and the bosses of the *Mainichi* and Fuji TV. One meeting reportedly took place at the vacation home of Japan Foundation chair Yohei Sasagawa. All told, the prime minister has met on dozens of occasions with the country's top media executives.

These gatherings violate any sense of distance between politics and journalism, says Michael Cucek, a political scientist at Temple University in Tokyo. "You cannot pretend that there is a media watchdog," he says. "There is no concept of conflict of interest at all." It seems only sensible to speculate, then, if they are related to the disappearance from the airwaves this month (March) of Japan's most outspoken liberal anchors: Ichiro Furutachi, the salty presenter of evening news show "Hodo Station", Shigetada Kishii, who had a regular slot on rival TBS, and Hiroko Kuniya, who helmed NHK's flagship investigative program "Close-up Gendai" for two decades.

The weekly press blamed Kuniya's downfall on an interview last summer with Yoshihide Suga, the government's top spokesman and a close aide of Abe. Kuniya had the temerity to ask an unscripted question on the possibility that the new security legislation might lead to Japan becoming embroiled in other countries' wars. By the standards of the sometimes spittle-flecked political clashes on British or American television the encounter was tame. But Suga's handlers were reportedly furious.

KUNIYA HAS DECLINED TO discuss her removal – though she did release an opaque comment on her resignation lamenting that "expressing things has gradually become difficult." The show had been due a refit for years, say insiders; the audience was aging and the format stale. One of Abe's first moves after he returned to power in 2012, however, was to appoint conservative allies to NHK's board. Katsuto Momii, the broadcaster's new president, subsequently raised eyebrows by questioning its independence. This new environment has encouraged self-censorship at the broadcaster and left little space for the kind of critical journalism Kuniya represented, says Yasuo Onuki, a former senior reporter at NHK. "Of course, it is difficult to prove that she has been fired. The government is very good at constant, behind-the-scenes pressure."

Furutachi has also kept mum about his decision to quit. Producers connected to the show and who have spoken anonymously, however, relate months of pressure against Furutachi's on-air criticism of the Abe government. A climax of sorts came after Shigeaki Koga, a former industry minister bureaucrat, famously held up a sign saying "I am not Abe" to show his disagreement with the government's handling of a hostage crisis involving Japanese citizens.

A few months later, Koga provided one of the year's television highlights when he claimed live on-air that his contract was being terminated because of pressure from the prime minister's office. His aim, he insists today, was to rally the media against government interference. Instead, the show's producer, TV Asahi, apologized and promised tighter controls over guests. "It shows that if you repeat a lie often enough people will believe it," he says.

"To me, the most serious problem is self-restraint by higher-ups at broadcast stations."

Kishii used his nightly spot on News 23 to question legislation last year expanding the nation's military role overseas. His on-air fulminations prompted a group of conservatives to take out newspaper advertisements accusing him of violating impartiality rules for broadcasters. In January, he announced he was stepping down when his contact ended in March.

"Nobody said directly I was going because of my comments – that's not how it works," says Kishii. He blames a whispering campaign by Suga. "He gives off-the-record briefings to journalists containing some criticisms of me," he says. "These comments are relayed back to the management and it goes from there. Nothing is left on the record."

BACKROOM POLITICAL PRESSURE ON the media is as old as printing presses. What is unprecedented, says Koga, is the government's increasingly public intimidation of journalists. The latest salvo was the threat on Feb. 9 by Sanae Takaichi, the communications minister, to shut down TV companies that flout rules on political impartiality. Takaichi was responding to a question about the departure of the three anchors.

Those comments were merely "common sense," said Suga. But they were enough to trigger an angry public response from Kishii, who came out fighting with some of the top liberal names in Japanese journalism. Soichiro Tahara, Osamu Aoki, Akihiro Otani, Soichiro Tahara and Shuntaro Torigoe all subsequently gave a press conference where they accused the government of trying to destroy the free media.

At the FCCJ on March 24, however, some were equally as critical of broadcasters and newspapers for failing to stand up to the government. "There has always been political pressure," said Tahara, a veteran reporter with TV Asahi, responding to Torigoe's criticism of government intimidation. "It's not so much about political pressure, it's about deterioration in the media. To me, the most serious problem is self-restraint by higher-ups at broadcast stations."

Producers at TV Asahi and NHK say the impact of the meetings between Abe and their bosses has been to weaken their organizations' taste for a political fight with the government. The *Asahi*'s critical coverage of the Abe government arguably climaxed, for example, on May 20, 2014, when it published a story based on the leaked testimony of Masao Yoshida, the manager of the Fukushima Daiichi plant during the 2011 meltdown. The scoop claimed that 650 panicked on-site workers had disobeyed orders and fled during the crisis.

The *Asahi*'s claim, challenging the popular view of the workers as heroes who risked their lives to save the plant, was strongly contested by the industry, the government and *Asahi* rivals, particularly the right-leaning *Sankei Shimbun*, which blamed the confusion at the plant on March 15-16, 2011 on miscommunication. Finally, on Sept. 11, 2014, Tadakazu Kimura, the *Asahi*'s president announced the retraction of the article, the dismissal of the paper's executive editor Nobuyuki Sugiura and punishments of several other editors. The highly damaging announcement pleased *Asahi* critics and stunned journalists at the newspaper who say they were kept in the dark beforehand.

LAWYERS, JOURNALISTS AND ACADEMICS expressed puzzlement at Kimura's retraction. While the factual details of the Yoshida testimony were open to interpretation, there was little doubt that despairing on-site plant workers had abandoned their duties during the worst of the crisis. "The content of the article and the headline were correct," insisted Yuichi Kaido, a lawyer who blames the retraction on political pressure. An independent press monitor might have settled the controversy but the *Asahi* relied on its in-house Press and Human Rights Committee to probe the story and discipline those behind it.

The *Asahi*'s mea culpa followed another even more damaging retraction a month earlier, over a series of articles in the 1990s on "comfort women." Seiji Yoshida, the source for some of these stories, had long been discredited and the *Asahi*'s retraction was years overdue. Yet, the reaction on the political right was not only to question the newspaper's entire reporting but to blame it for damaging Japan's reputation abroad and poisoning ties with its neighbors.

It was notable that throughout the *Asahi*'s difficulties, Abe sided with its critics and declined to defend the principle of a broad, pluralist media – including those that don't always agree with the government line. That's because the government has little tolerance for criticism, says Makoto Sataka, a political commentator and colleague of Kishii's. "They view it as a nuisance," he says. "They have a goal and they're going to get there, and the media is in the way."

Koga puts it more bluntly. The government is playing chicken with the media, he says, and winning. ❶

David McNeill writes for the *Independent*, the *Economist* and other publications. He has been based in Tokyo since 2000.

SERIES
PROFILE

Anna Fifield

by LUCY ALEXANDER

Anna Fifield, the *Washington Post*'s woman in Japan, specializes in reporting from fringe societies, sequestered communities that are cut off from the mainstream. In her distinguished career as a foreign correspondent, Fifield has tried to reveal the inner workings of the two Koreas, Iran, Washington, D.C. and, now, Japan. The focus is a natural fit for the New Zealander, born and brought up in an isolated town "at the bottom of the world."

Fifield, the first in her family to go to university, covered her bedroom walls with posters from travel agencies instead of pop stars. "I always had an interest in the outside world and wanted to get out," she said.

After a period working for wire agencies and her local paper, the *Rotorua Daily Post*, Fifield headed to London in 2001, aged 24. She got work experience at the *Financial Times* and then a job uploading articles onto the website. "I worked hard and volunteered for all the unpopular jobs on bank holiday weekends."

A theme that stands out in Fifield's early career is her formidable work ethic. After a year, she applied for the position of Belgrade correspondent, knowing she "didn't stand a chance," but with her eye on an interview with the foreign editor. "I read the Economist Intelligence Unit's reports on Kosovo and I studied really hard and got an interview." When the job of Australasia correspondent came up shortly afterwards, she got the nod. Typically, she "worked really hard and wrote as much as I could," and was rewarded with a staff position in Seoul.

"This was August 2004 and I couldn't even say hello in Korean, I had never eaten kimchi, I had never been to Asia. It was scary and exciting, and very hard, but I really loved it." Fifield spent three years covering everything from Samsung to K-pop to human rights, and made several investigative trips to North Korea.

HER NEXT POSTING WAS Tehran. She found it impossible to get a resident's visa under the Ahmadinejad regime, which was notoriously hostile to foreign journalists, so found herself commuting between Seoul and Tehran. "It was their way to keep me on a short leash, to make me censor myself so that I would always be conscious of the need to get the next visa."

After a year of the punishing schedule, Fifield moved to Beirut as Middle East correspondent, responsible for Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Iraq. If that beat sounds a little punchy today, back in 2008 it was an easy posting. As soon as she arrived, Lehman Bros collapsed, "so it was very hard to get anything non-financial crisis-related into the *FT*."

"I guess I failed the self-censorship test"

Blacklisted by Tehran ("I guess I failed the self-censorship test"), Fifield found herself "living on the Med, visiting wineries and writing the occasional story about Hezbollah," thanks to an unusual period of stability in the Middle East. Lebanon had a stable government, "which it almost never does, Syria was coming in from the cold, everyone had Iraq fatigue, and I couldn't get into Iran." After a year, the *FT* took notice, and dispatched her to Washington to cover the White House.

Fifield missed the Arab Spring by a few months. "I would have felt pretty sore about that," she said, "except that I had this little person who was exponentially more fun." That was her son, born in 2010, and soon a veteran of political campaigns.

U.S. POLITICAL REPORTING, HOWEVER, did not appeal. "I enjoy getting out and talking to real people – dust on boots reporting," she said. "There are no real people and no dust in Washington." After four years, fed up with a regime of several daily deadlines to cover all the *FT*'s global editions, Fifield won a year-long Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, studying how change happens in closed societies, a topic inspired by her experiences in North Korea and Tehran.

ANDREW POTHECARY

"But over the course of that year I realized that I really did love being a foreign correspondent and I needed to get back out in the world," she said. In 2014, she was back in Asia, this time as Tokyo bureau chief for the *Washington Post*.

She is supported by translators in Tokyo and Seoul, and her mother, who moved from New Zealand to help Fifield take care of her son. "She enables me to travel at the drop of a hat – I feel very lucky."

Being a mother has helped Fifield explore a part of Japanese society that would otherwise have been inaccessible. "I am part of a working mum's group at the school," she said. "I get to talk to women working in Japanese companies, and hear how difficult it is for them. The kind of changes PM Abe is trying to make doesn't really address the problem – which is how Japanese men work. How can a mother do a full-time job if her husband is out 17 hours a day? You can open all the day care centers you like but you need to deal with the structural changes, and that is really hard."

The challenge of change is a perennial theme in Japan, which, while no longer a closed society in the sense of North Korea or Iran, still has strong tendencies towards insularity and isolationism. This is exacerbated, says Fifield, by the shift in focus towards China, which has left Japan "undercovered." She intends to fill that gap, with "stories about Japanese people, culture and life – not just politics." ❶

Lucy Alexander is a freelance journalist and correspondent for the *Times*.

Rewind:

Looking back with our favorite local cinema

2015 was a stellar year for the FCCJ Film Committee, with an impressive lineup, provocative Q&A sessions and appreciative audiences.

by KAREN SEVERNS

The Film Committee (FC) hosted 18 sneak preview screenings last year — 12 narrative films and six documentaries, each followed by a Q&A session with the filmmaking team — attracting an audience of over 1,500. The extensive coverage of our Q&As helped raised the profile of several independent features, and many of the titles became box office draws in Japan. Many also went on to receive international attention, appear on Top Ten lists and reap awards. Some even prompted valuable public dialogue.

The big story in 2015 was the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, and the FC lineup included five directly related works. We also highlighted films about such torn-from-the-headlines issues as nuclear energy (Masako Sakata's *Journey Without End*) and globalization's impact on rural populations (Pio d'Emilia's *Nu Guo: In the Name of the Mother*).

But sometimes external forces, and not necessarily the film itself, drew the press to an FC event. Such was the case with our first screening of the year, Ryuichi Hiroki's ***Kabukicho Love Hotel*** (*Sayonara Kabukicho*), when dozens of Japanese journalists crammed into the packed screening room for the Q&A. Surprisingly, they weren't there for former AKB48 queen Atsuko Maeda; this was about the film's *other* star, Shota Sometani, making his first public appearance since marrying Oscar-nominated actress Rinko Kikuchi. "We don't have any children yet," the actor said, "but we hope to in the future, and I'll work hard at being the patriarch."

In April, we screened ***Walking with My Mother*** (*Houyou*), a corrosive portrait of aging, loss and unexpected recovery, echoing many of the healthcare challenges facing Japan. Katsumi Sakaguchi filmed his own ailing mother for four years to create the film. "I saw [her] reflection in my camera lens, and she looked so fragile, sitting by the window," he recalled. "I had mixed feelings, because I loved her, but [having to take care of her] was stripping away my freedom... The distance of having to focus saved me." The documentary went on to open Germany's Nippon Connection festival, to play in theaters across Japan for half a year, and to win the prestigious Bunka-Cho Award for Best Documentary.

Oscar-nominated documentarian John Junkerman headlined our June screening of ***Okinawa: The Afterburn*** (*Okinawa: Urizun no Ame*), his groundbreaking illumination of the island's continued occupation, violations of human and civil rights, and resistance efforts. The director lived on Okinawa in the mid-1970s, and was struck by "the pervasive and abiding rejection of war among the Okinawa people, and by how incongruous and violent the American military presence on the island was... I felt a responsibility to make a film that would penetrate, if only in a small way, [America's] shroud of apathy." The documentary provides essential historical context for the ongoing U.S.-Japan flashpoint, and later earned Junkerman the two most important recognitions in Japan for a nonfiction work: Best Documentary awards from *Kinema Junpo* and the Mainichi Film Awards.

On screen
Joshua Oppenheimer joins us via Skype for a discussion after the screening of the Oscar-nominated *The Look of Silence.*

PHOTOS: KOICHI MORI

Another Oscar nominee, Joshua Oppenheimer, Skyped into our Q&A session after ***The Look of Silence*** screening in July. This follow-up to his 2013 juggernaut *The Act of Killing* views the Indonesian genocide of the 1960s from the victims', rather than the perpetrators', standpoint. "The first film made it impossible for people to continue *not* talking about the regime of corruption, fear and thuggery that the perpetrators had built," Oppenheimer said. "The second film makes it impossible to continue to ignore the abyss [that] divides people... You can't solve a problem that you can't even talk about." Oppenheimer also stressed the importance of viewing the two films not as doors to some distant culture, but as mirrors for our own. *The Look of Silence* followed in the path of its companion work, winning close to 50 major Best Documentary awards and an Academy Award nomination.

Love-in
Kabukicho Love Hotel (above) attracted a big audience for the screening, and a big media interest for the first appearance of its star post-marriage to Oscar-nominated actress Rinko Kikuchi.

Faces of film
Atsuko Ochiai, producer/editor of *Walking with My Mother*; John Junkerman, director of *Okinawa: The Afterburn*; Shinya Tsukamoto, director of *Fires on the Plain*; actor Koji Yakusho, star of The *Emperor in August.*

The FC screened two very different perspectives of Japan in late summer. ***Fires on the Plain***, Shinya Tsukamoto's gripping adaptation of the 1951 anti-war masterpiece *Nobi*, is more savagely brutal than the earlier version, but a fitting reinterpretation for our time. It is an intensely visceral reminder of the utter obscenity of war: kill or be killed, eat or be eaten. "In the original book, the author deals with cannibalism as a central issue," said the director during the Q&A in July, "but the choice, the moral dilemma of whether or not to eat human flesh, is not a focus of this film... I realized [the soldiers in the Philippines] didn't have any capacity to think about their actions. They were so pressed, so desperate, that they were unable to address this moral dilemma.... We have to do whatever we can to stop Japan's slide toward militarization." Tsukamoto's film lit up the foreign and Japanese box offices, and he eventually received Mainichi Film Awards both for Best Director and Best Actor.

Masato Harada's ***The Emperor in August*** (*Nihon no Ichiban Nagai Hi*) dramatizes the same source novel as the 1967 film *Japan's Longest Day*, enhanced by new research and a laxer attitude toward depicting Emperor Hirohito. During the Q&A in early August, Harada noted, "At the time of the war, the emperor was considered the head of the house, the head of the family, and I feel this type of thinking was able to save Japan and end the war." The film's star, Koji Yakusho, added, "This is a film about how Japan ended the war. But it has a simple message that we can all understand: It is easy to *start* a war, but it is very, very difficult to end one." *Emperor* was later nominated for more awards than any other Japanese film of 2015, including 11 Japan Academy Prizes. It won the Blue Ribbon Award for Best Film, and Masahiro Motoki, playing Emperor Hirohito, took home the Academy's Best Supporting Actor trophy.

The FCCJ hosted the de facto Japan premiere of Masao Adachi's new film, ***Artist of Fasting*** (*Danjiki Geinin*), in September. Only his second work since being deported from Lebanon in 2000 following imprisonment for his Japanese Red Army activities, it proves that Adachi's youthful instincts for provocation and transgression — honed with cohorts Nagisa Oshima and Koji Wakamatsu — have not dimmed. The director sets his story around a faster's "performance" on a street corner, and punctuates it with avant-garde interludes of torture as well as archival footage of victims of aggression. Asked how he sees the position of the artist-activist today, Adachi answered, "People say that history always repeats, but my feeling is that it will never be as bad as in the past. I believe that revolution and cinema are one and the same ... and we still have a lot to do."

Japan-born Cellin Gluck returned to the FCCJ in December with the first-ever biopic of the "Japanese Schindler," ***Persona Non Grata*** (*Sugihara Chiune*). Sugihara was a diplomat who defied foreign ministry orders during the Holocaust and saved some 6,000 Jewish lives. The Q&A focused primarily on the timing of the film's release vis-à-vis the refugee crisis in Europe. Asked how it might help pressure Japan into accepting more refugees, Gluck said, "I'm not in any position to lecture the Japanese government. But it's not only the government... If this film will inspire [Japanese] to accept the opportunities [to embrace diversity], then I've accomplished what I would like to accomplish." Gluck's film was a year-end hit and is just beginning its international rollout.

With our 2016 film series well under way, the FC will continue curating a selection of titles that are timely, compelling, entertaining, eye-opening and even, on occasion, transformative. ❶

Karen Severns is a writer, educator and filmmaker who chairs the FC. See her blog for more on the FC screenings: www.fccj.or.jp/events-calendar/film-screenings/movie-committee-blog.html

Four veteran reporters who returned to their old stomping ground in Tokyo agreed on one thing: these are both the best and worst of times for foreign correspondents.

Journalism in flux: the global view

by JUSTIN MCCURRY

DIGITAL MEDIA HAVE GIVEN reporters the technological wherewithal to report the news faster than ever; it has also spawned a new community of citizen journalists, whose reporting from war zones and trouble spots has, in some cases, rivaled that of the "traditional" media. From the Snowden revelations to accounts of the misery being visited on the people of Syria, journalists of all backgrounds continue to demonstrate why ours is a profession worth defending.

Yet journalism is also under attack. The number of reporters killed in the field rises by the year; intimidation and acts of violence directed at members of the media are spreading. Journalists in democracies such as South Korea and, yes, Japan, find themselves up against increasingly illiberal governments.

Last month, the FCCJ was fortunate to host former Tokyo correspondents with years of experience from both ends of the digital age and in postings all over the world. They can recall a time when they had to file to a daily deadline, but would probably never see their work in print until the arrival, weeks later, of an envelope of cuttings kindly collated by a newsroom colleague; and when disgruntled readers had to put pen to paper in a letter to the editor.

But they are familiar, too, with the ever-changing work environment that has forced "print journalists" to become multitaskers – reporters, bloggers, videographers and photographers – all the time under pressure from a growing number of new players and shrinking editorial budgets.

BILL EMMOT, THE *ECONOMIST*'S Tokyo correspondent from 1983-6, said the globalization of information had, perhaps counter-intuitively, made the role of the foreign correspondent more important than ever. "The world is more transparent, we face more competition in the provision of information, it is harder for politicians and other power holders to say different things to different audiences at home and abroad – as was common in the 1980s – but some things have stayed the same or gone backwards," said Emmott, who in his book, *The Sun Also Sets*, predicted the bursting of the Japanese stock-market bubble.

Emmott cited the Eurozone economic crisis, migration and refugees, Russia and Ukraine as stories that demand cross-border coverage, only for much of the media to have been found wanting. "In Europe in that time, our media has, if anything, become more nationalistic, more nation-centered. Far too little cross-border and cross-cultural reporting and analysis has happened," said Emmott, who as editor-in-chief of the *Economist* oversaw its emergence as the world's most widely read international news magazine.

Emmott blamed the 2008 financial crisis for placing the media under much more pressure than could have been expected from the dawn of the digital media alone. The very existence of the open society was under threat, he added, from rising xenophobia and nationalism, evident in prevailing attitudes towards migration, trade and security, and embodied by the growing clout of politicians such as Marine Le Pen in France, Nigel Farage in Britain and Donald Trump in the U.S.

"The open society is something that we foreign correspondents epitomize, and this threat to openness is what makes foreign correspondents more important than ever," Emmott said. "The point of foreign correspondents has always been that to better understand foreign countries is to better understand our own. This craft is under attack and we must defend it."

Defending press freedom can come at a cost, however. William Horsley, the BBC's bureau chief in Tokyo from 1983-90, said defensiveness and secrecy were common to all governments, but added that more journalists were working in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

"The new normal in journalism is to be watched and to be under attack from you-know-not-where," said Horsley, who since retiring from the BBC in 2007 has become an advocate for journalists working in dangerous places.

HORSLEY, THE AUTHOR OF the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's 2014 *Safety of Journalists Guidebook*, said about 150 journalists were killed around the world last year. "But more sinister than that is *why* journalists are being killed and attacked," he said. "It's not only journalists in war zones, but also those who report on crime, corruption and major human rights abuses."

Despite the myriad challenges, reports of the death of journalism are premature, according to Fernando Mezzetti, Tokyo correspondent for Italian newspaper *La Stampa* from 1987-90. "In my view the foreign correspondent is more important than ever. He knows his country, he knows the situation," said Mezzetti, who left Japan to cover the collapse of the Soviet Union as the paper's Moscow correspondent.

He agreed that in highly dangerous trouble spots, notably Syria, citizen journalists were often the only available source of information, even though at times the accuracy of their work should be treated with skepticism. "My view is that no citizen journalist can replace the professional journalist, who has done the job of verifying the reality on the ground," Mezzetti said. And while he acknowledged the current trend towards downsizing, he said, "I don't agree that journalism is doomed to disappear."

Commenting on the financial pressures facing media organizations, Philippe Ries, Agence France-Presse Tokyo senior correspondent (1985-89) and bureau chief (1998-2003), attempted to lift the gloom by drawing on his involvement in *MediaPart*, a successful French online investigative and opinion journal.

THE SUBSCRIPTION-ONLY SITE, launched in 2008, has almost 120,000 subscribers and racked up sales worth 10 million Euros last year, said Ries, who co-authored *Shift: Inside Nissan's Historic Revival* with Renault-Nissan chief executive Carlos Ghosn. *MediaPart* now employs 39 full-time journalists and a number of freelancers all over the world. "The idea was that we should be able to spend money on long-term costly investigations," Ries said.

While newspaper editors wrestle with the question of how to monetize content, Emmott agreed with Ries that survival lies behind a paywall. "It's absolutely clear that the future of journalism is the subscription model. This is very good news for journalists, because the only thing that will persuade people to subscribe to something is the journalism," Emmott said. "This should be the future for journalism, but of course it's a hard transition. Old journalism was advertising, and subscription was cream on the cake; now it's the other way around. And we have to persuade readers that they should subscribe."

Discussion inevitably turned to Japan, and concern that the media are being targeted by an increasingly intolerant prime minister and his supporters. Only last month, the internal affairs minister, Sanae Takaichi, warned that broadcasters that repeatedly failed to show "fairness" in their political coverage, despite official warnings, could be taken off the air. That came weeks after news that three respected broadcasters with a reputation for asking tough questions would leave their jobs from April.

FROM COVERAGE OF EVERYTHING from elections to Japan's diplomatic spats with China and South Korea and the question of Japan's wartime conduct, official pressure on the domestic media is stronger than many reporters here can recall. "One of the key problems is self-censorship mixed with complacency," said Emmott, although his criticism was not directed at Japan alone. "Sometimes it is overt conformism and self-censorship, which certainly happens in this country, but in other countries as well.

"I'm shocked," he said, "by how little fuss there is in the British media about the kidnapping of the booksellers in Hong Kong and what's been done with them by the Chinese authorities. It's almost as if Hong Kong had never been a British colony. I'd say it's been played down and almost completely overlooked by parts of the British media. It's important that other media with the capability and resilience to speak out, do speak out."

Fears that Japan's government is resisting international scrutiny arose last December when it abruptly cancelled a visit by David Kaye, the UN special rapporteur for freedom of expression, saying it had been unable to arrange meetings with officials. Kaye is now scheduled to visit Japan in April.

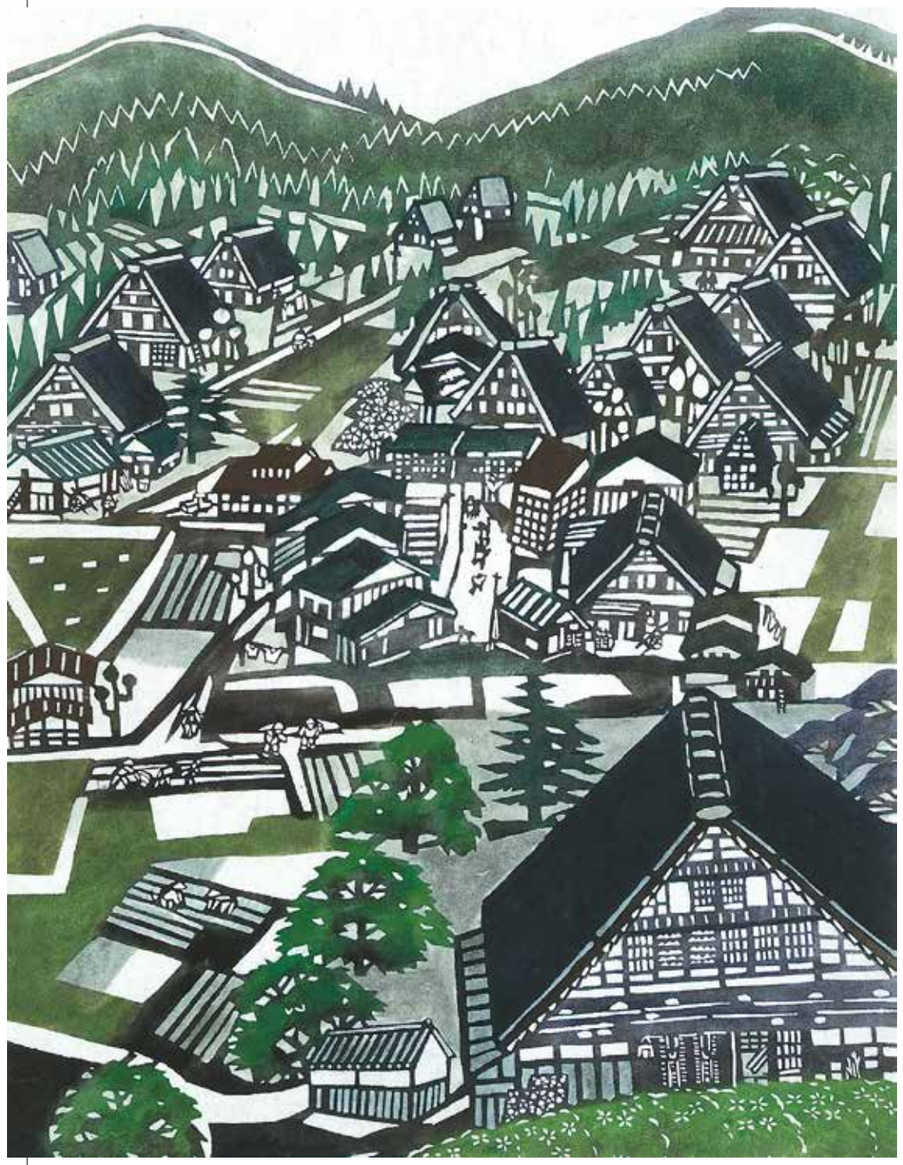
"It's very distressing to see that there was an obstacle to David Kaye's visit last December," said Horsley. "Watching Japanese TV, it's hard to imagine anything more like baby powder than their coverage of news. If you don't see politicians squirming, if they refuse to answer questions – such as is happening in Turkey and is apparently happening in Japan – you know that press freedom is not happening."

Without proper funding, journalists struggle to resist the tide of official pressure, with their role as public watchdog suffering as a result, Ries said. "When resources are scarce, there are fewer journalists in the newsrooms and you cannot investigate properly. That's where the freedom of the press is under threat," he said.

Journalism's future landscape will be an unforgiving place unless it continues to attract talented young reporters and editors. Fittingly, the session ended with a question about how best to carve out a career in a profession under siege. Horsley noted that the modern reporter must now "do absolutely everything yourself," but pointed to the rise of BuzzFeed and Vice News as examples of organizations that have broken the mold created by the traditional Big Media. Ultimately, though, the same personal qualities that guided him and his colleagues throughout their careers are just as relevant today. "You have to be immensely agile, capable and ambitious," he said, "and go out there and create your own specialty." ❶

Left to right: Bill Emmott, William Horsley, Fernando Mezzetti, Philippe Ries

Justin McCurry is Japan and Korea correspondent for the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. He contributes to the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Lancet* medical journal, and reports on Japan and Korea for France 24 TV.



Fusa Sakamoto is an artist, illustrator and editor. Born in Tokyo, she was an editor at Frobel-kan Publishing before leaving to become freelance. Her work has been inspired by the more than 30 countries she has visited since 1982. Every year she has held solo exhibitions on these subjects. She has exhibited in the Ukraine, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Her publications include *The Four Seasons of Switzerland* in collaboration with Tokyo Shoseki, and *Kataezome Art* and *Kataezome Book*, as well as many book cover designs.

Color Harmony
Kataezome Art by Fusa Sakamoto

KATAEZOME ART IS A traditional kimono-dying technique used on special Japanese paper, which has the feature of allowing the colors to grow deeper and warmer over time: as the years pass, the strong Japanese paper absorbs sunlight and the colors grow clearer and softer, adding to the charm of the works. It's an effect unique to this Japanese craft.

My work is based an adding color to black-line drawings, creating feelings of depth. The tones and dynamic forms are a characteristic of these modern images.

The subjects of my work are old cities, drawn freely from imagination, in simplified aerial views. And using traditional techniques, modern images featuring motifs such as plants, animals and festivals are also constructed. ❶

JOIN THE FILM COMMITTEE . . .

. . . on April 11 at 6:45pm for *I Am a Hero*, Japan's first major movie about an outbreak of the undead. Based on the blockbuster manga series of the same name, the film version is that rare big-budget commodity that manages to be gruesomely frightening, darkly funny and hair-raisingly realistic. It's anchored by an astoundingly committed star turn from Yo Oizumi, whose everyman character winds up saving the day . . . maybe. Oizumi will join director Shinsuke Sato and manga originator Kengo Hanazawa for the Q&A session. The film has swept awards at major fantastic film festivals around the world, proving that zombie-film fatigue doesn't apply when the work is as clever and entertaining as this. Also starring Kasumi Arimura, Masami Nagasawa and an unforgettable high-jumper, the film recasts Mt. Fuji as the last refuge for the living.

(Japan, 2016; 127 minutes; Japanese with English subtitles.)

CLUB TOUR TO THE SETOUCHI TRIENNALE

By commuter ferry and high-speed launches, a group of FCCJ journalists went island hopping in March to observe the exhibits of the 2016 Setouchi Triennale in a tour organized by Kagawa Prefecture.

Launched in 2010, the Setouchi Triennale – also known as the Setouchi International Art Festival – is a contemporary art festival held every three years on a dozen islands in the Seto Inland Sea.

The exhibition is held over three sessions during the year. The spring session runs from Mar. 20 to Apr. 17; the summer session from July 18 until Sept. 4 and the autumn session from Oct. 8 through Nov. 6.

Clockwise from left: ***"Oiwa Island 2" a 360 degree panoramic picture inside an air-dome; "Dream of Olive" – 5,000 locally gathered bamboo sticks by artist Wang Wen Chih; FCCJ members in front of "Red Pumpkins," by Yayoi Kusama 2006.***

CLUB NEWS

New Members

REINSTATEMENT (REGULAR)

LEO LEWIS joined the *Financial Times* as Tokyo Correspondent in May 2015 after more than a decade reporting in the region for the *Times* (of London). Most recently, he was the Bureau Chief in Beijing, covering China in the rancorous, scandal-riven years that saw the downfall of Bo Xilai, the rise of Xi Jinping and the spectacle of 20,000 dead pigs floating down the Huang Pu river. Born in the UK, the digital twinkle of video games drew Lewis to Japan from an early age. He later channeled that passion into a degree in Oriental Studies, and first came to Japan as a student in 1994. He has tried his hand at potato, avocado and ginger farming, but has yet to grow anything edible.

REINSTATEMENT (LIFE)

Mikiko Eguchi

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Patricia Ockwell, *Embassy of Canada*
Yoko Miyazawa, *Okasan Securities Firm*
Ryu Maeda, *Occidental Undrewriters International*
Kohei Edamura, *Inaba Denki Sangyo Co., Ltd.*
Sumio Miyane, *Inaba Denki Sangyo Co., Ltd.*
Fumio Muramatsu, *Muramatsu Saisakusho Co., Ltd.*
Kazuo Tanaka
Tetsuya Utsunomiya, *Jeunesse Global LLC*
Katsuhiko Masumoto, *Benesse Holdings, Inc.*
Kaori Sakamoto, *Benesse Holdings, Inc.*

REINSTATEMENT (ASSOCIATE)

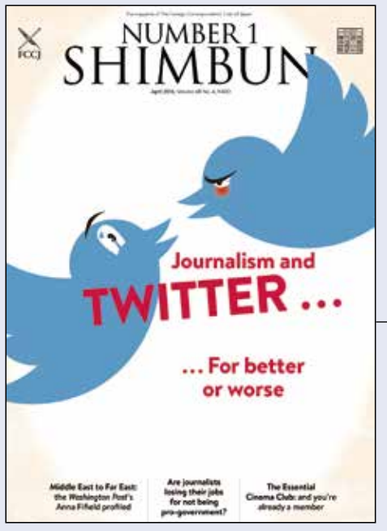
Kuniaki Mizushima, *Ben Line Agencies (Japan) Ltd.*

New in the Library

Nichibei senso o okoshita nowa dareka: Ruzuberuto no zaijo, Fuba daitoryo kaikoroku o ronzu
Genki Fujii; Kobo Inamura; Hiromichi Moteki
Bensei Shuppan
Gift from Kobo Inamura

Ano hi
Haruko Obokata
Kodansha
Gift from Kodansha

Sekai nenkan (World Yearbook) 2016
Kyodo Tsushinsha (ed.)
Kyodo Tsushinsha
Gift from Kyodo News



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