

The magazine of The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan



# NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

September 2017 Volume 49 No. 9 ¥400



## Facing North

**Delicate Diplomacy:**  
North Korea in the  
era of Donald Trump

**Takashi Tachibana:**  
A giant among Japanese  
journalists

**In profile:**  
Walter Sim of the  
*Straits Times*



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> THEME.04

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> UBIQUITY

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## Quiz: How many bearings are in your car?

Watching a sleek new car glide by, we think it's sad that no one says, "Check out the bearings on *that* one!" Because precisely engineered bearings are essential to your car's safety, reliability, fuel efficiency, smooth handling and comfort. Bearings are in the wheels, of course, but also in the engine, transmission, steering, air conditioner, seats, windshield wipers... even the control knobs. In fact, when you buy a new car today it comes with about 150 bearings. Considering that 80 million-plus cars are produced worldwide each year, do the math: that's about 12 billion bearings annually. And many of the world's automakers rely on NSK for top-quality bearings for every conceivable application, along with diverse components for transmissions and power steering systems. What's more, NSK researchers are hard at work on ways to reduce friction, weight and cost in order to improve durability, fuel efficiency and environmental performance while keeping cars affordable. So please, next time you see a cool car... check out its bearings.

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**Funky Days by**  
**Yoshi Itokawa**

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From the  
President

DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST, I received more than 2,000 FCCJ president-related e-mails sent to my computer, another 500 to my mobile phone and several dozen text messages, many of which required an immediate response, sometimes after midnight.

These correspondences involved club business related to the FCCJ's food and beverage operation, architect designs, human resource concerns such as salaries, staff changes, promotions and contracts, and consultations with lawyers. I understand this is all part of the job of being the FCCJ's president, but it is also, as presidents in the past have said, virtually a full-time job.

I am sure this was not in the minds of the FCCJ's founding fathers in 1945 when they established the club. But over the years, the club expanded to the point where the president and boards of directors have to deal with running the business of a mid-sized company.

Of course, we have professional staff, member-advisors from the business community, outside auditors – even lawyers – to assist us, but at the end of the day, most of us are journalists trying to chase news and make a living from it.

We expect this overflow of messages to our computers and phones will continue and we could be overloaded with issues to tackle.

However, so far everything is proceeding smoothly and my Board of Directors intend to iron out any problems swiftly, so continue giving us your feedback so we can respond to your needs.

Another topic of interest: The club's magazine, the Number 1 Shimbun, is ready to enter a new stage. In the coming months, we will be looking at ways to revamp and modernize our in-house mouthpiece. Not only will we improve the print edition, we will also upgrade the website version. As the FCCJ is a journalists' club, look for more focus on journalist issues.

The Public Relations Committee, our newest committee, led by former President Dan Sloan, will hold its inaugural meeting in September. The main mission from my perspective is to promote the club and position us for the onslaught of media attention as Tokyo gets ready for the Olympic Games in 2020.

In the midst of these new developments, we still face an old issue: rumors. It is my belief the best way to deal with rumors is to be transparent. I am reminded of a lesson I learned from one of the top former Japan's Foreign Ministry spokesmen, Mr. Sadaaki Numata. I asked him once at a press conference about Japan's reaction to rumors related to its position on a certain issue. He replied, smiling, "You answered your own question ... they are merely rumors."

There will always be rumors in the FCCJ, but your president and board will try to minimize them by following our profession's mission: Seek and report the truth.

If you have a question, ask the board and we'll respond. Or write to the Number 1 Shimbun. It may mean more e-mails and phone calls for all of us, but that's part of the volunteer job.

– Khalid Azhari

## The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

The Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan is pleased to announce the winners of its 2017 Freedom of Press Awards and Swadesh DeRoy Scholarship Awards.

The Award Ceremony for both will be held at the FCCJ on Monday, September 11, 2017. Dinner from 6pm, Awards' Program from 6:30pm.

To attend, RSVP: [front@fccj.or.jp](mailto:front@fccj.or.jp)  
or call reception desk 03-3211-3161.

Seating is limited to first 100 registrants.

### 2017 FCCJ FREEDOM OF PRESS AWARDS

#### Japan Investigative Journalism Award

Haruhiko Yoshimura, Staff Writer, City News Department,  
Osaka Head Office, The Asahi Shimbun

&

Kenta Iijima, Staff Writer, Foreign News  
Department, Tokyo Head Office,  
The Asahi Shimbun

#### Lifetime Achievement Award

Takashi Tachibana

#### Supporter of the Free Press

Makoto Watanabe, Editor-In-Chief, Waseda Chronicle

&

Tatsuro Hanada, Director, Institute  
for Journalism, Waseda University

### 2017 SWADESH DEROY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

#### Pen Award

##### 1ST Place

Trishit Banerjee, Tohoku University  
& Jennifer Lisa Wooden, Keio University

##### 2nd Place

Marina Yoshimura, Waseda University  
and Yale University Visiting Student

#### Video Award

##### 1st Place

Nguyen Chi Long, Tohoku University

#### Photography Award

##### 1ST Place

Nonoka Aida, Chuo University &  
Fuad Ikhwanda, Tohoku University

Freedom of Press and Swadesh DeRoy  
Memorial Scholarship Committees

# Is Japan becoming an enemy of press freedom?

## Reporters Without Borders press conference failed to supply the answers

On the day that Reporters Without Borders (RSF) founder Robert Menard visited the FCCJ 14 years ago, some wag amended the organization's Wikipedia page to call it a "terrorist organization." While there are probably not too many who would go that far, the organization is not universally loved.

by FRED VARCOE

present at the FCCJ to contribute to the survey.

And that's true, to some extent, in Japan. When current RSF Secretary-General Christophe Deloire spoke at the Club on July 21, he faced some hostile questioners demanding to know just why RSF ranked Japan a lowly No. 72 on its World Press Freedom Index in 2016.

He was asked to provide a single example about his claims on why Japan was downgraded, but he didn't seem to have an answer other than generalizations.

"The Index is not about the quality of the press but about press freedom," Deloire explained. "Of course, Japan is a democracy with a huge level of journalism and I would like to say how we admire the powerful newspapers and media outlets in Japan, but there are more restrictions and pressures than in other countries."

In response to strong demands from journalists attending the event that he specify exactly what issues had caused Japan to slip down the rankings, Deloire said that there were "problems" in Japan and seemed to lay part of the blame on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe while at the same time saying that Japan's ranking on the Press Freedom Index was "not an evaluation of prime ministers." One questioner pointed out that Japan's ranking had gone down since Abe came to power, implying that the Index was politically biased.

Japan was 53rd in 2013, 61st in 2015 and is now ranked 72.

Some Japanese journalists, clearly angered by such a viewpoint, pointed out that no measures against journalists had been taken under the new anti-conspiracy law and suggested that Reporters Without Borders was basing its Index on theoretical possibilities rather than actual events.

While a number of Japanese journalists protested that Japan was one of the freest countries in the world when it came to the media, Deloire insisted that Japan needed to do more.

Deloire spent some time defending the openness and transparency of RSF's evaluation process, noting that the Index was based on questionnaires filled out by journalists in the various countries and inviting those

present at the FCCJ to contribute to the survey. On the issue of press freedom, Deloire's harshest words were directed at more "traditional" enemies of the press, his list including China, Russia, Syria, North Korea, Zimbabwe and Turkey.

And no press conference is complete without a comment on United States President Donald Trump: "President Trump sets a very bad example not only in his own country, but in the rest of the world, a world where so many leaders now imitate him, accusing journalists of fake news."

"Without independent journalism – quality and independent journalism – it's not only democracies that will suffer, but none of the key challenges for humanity will be solved," Deloire concluded.

But his words on Japan's drastic fall in the Reporters Without Board-

ers press freedom ranking were not convincing to some non-Japanese journalists. An American journalist said that the reasons given for Japan's lowered ranking were the kisha club system, nationalists harassing journalists on social media, self-censorship and the state secrets law.

"The kisha club system existed when Japan was ranked at 11, so why is that a factor in ranking Japan at 72 now?" the journalist asked. "Nationalist groups harassing journalists on social media exists in almost every country and has for years in Japan well before it was ranked at 11. Again, why is that a factor now?"

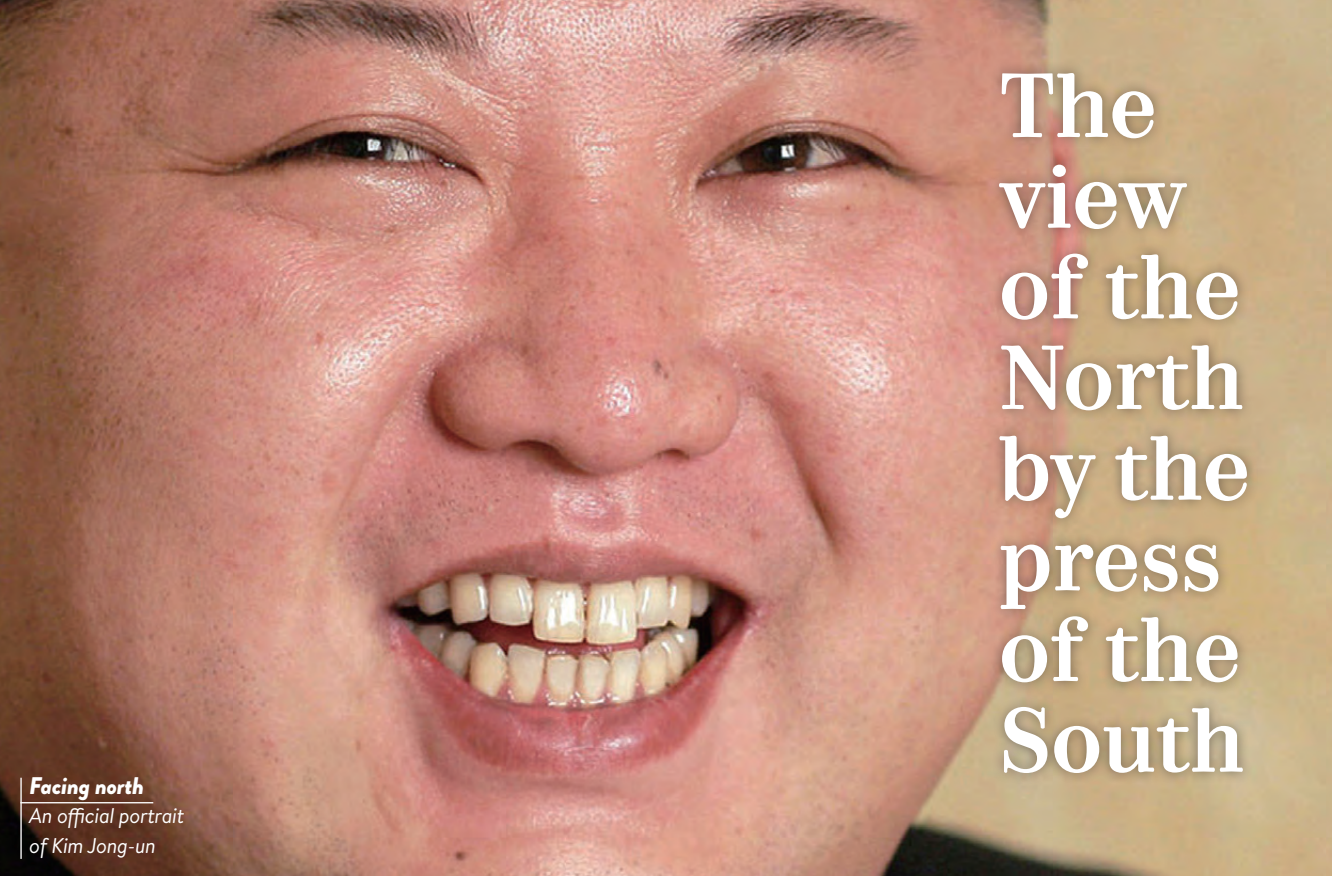


The reporter added that the new information in the RFS report concerns the "State Secrets Law," which has yet to be used against any single journalist in Japan, and suggested that the RFS based its ranking only on a possible way the law could be misused. Yet, Estonia, ranked at 12, has a law that allows for the arrest of journalists who refuse to reveal sources and has actually arrested an Italian journalist accused by a government official as being a propagandist for Russia.

"I'm unaware of any example of Japan arresting any journalist for such reasons," he noted. "Spain, ranked at 29, actually has a gag law (The Citizen Security Protection Law) that allows for and has been used to fine and silence journalists – six so far. I also am not aware of any such law or similar action in Japan."

Freedom House ranks Japan at 27, World Audit ranks Japan at 30, so it's curious why Japan's rating sank. After the event had concluded, some attendees asked for Japan's results to be re-examined.

Fred Varcoe is a Chiba-based freelance journalist and reluctant historian



# The view of the North by the press of the South

**Facing north**

An official portrait  
of Kim Jong-un

***South Korea's lively newspapers offer a wide variety of opinion on these heady days of conflict with their northern neighbor.***

by DONALD KIRK

Seoul's sometimes rambunctious newspapers offer a diversity of views that comes as a refreshing surprise to those expecting a certain uniformity befitting a media bottle-fed by bureaucrats and the chaebol, the family-owned business conglomerates, that dominate the economy. Yes, they're easy to criticize on any number of grounds. No, they're a lot better, freer, more outspoken than the media in many other countries – as seen in their often critical, disputatious, querulous coverage of South Korea's epic domestic political issues and never-ending confrontation with the North.

The differences are sharply etched in attitudes toward North Korea and the paradoxical efforts of the fledgling government of President Moon Jae-in to stand firm against the North and still bring about dialogue, even reconciliation. Approaches toward North Korea range from free-wheeling to restrained, as the media – like the public they serve – wrestle with the question of how to reach a violence-free resolution of a confrontation that if anything seems deeper, more dangerous today than when I first visited Seoul more than 45 years ago as North and South Korean delegates met for Red Cross talks that were supposed to resolve many of the same issues that still divide them. For the media, the challenge is made all the more difficult in that North Korea has developed nuclear warheads and missiles that no one imagined at the time.

It's not that publishers, editors, columnists and reporters do such great jobs, but you do get a sense from a blitz of commentaries, editorials and news reports of the arguments that are roiling Korean society in this time of transition that may

not end happily. Much to the distress of many readers, it's impossible to get away from the reality that a giant named “ChoJoongDong” dominates the media landscape. That's an acronym for the “big three” papers – *Chosun Ilbo* (circ. 1.5 million), *JoongAng Ilbo* and *Dong-a Ilbo* (both about 1 million), all solidly conservative, nationalist and not sympathetic to North Korea or the pro-Northerners who show up at demos near the American embassy, American bases and the site far south of Seoul where the Americans have implanted the counter-missile battery known as THAAD, for “terminal high altitude area defense.”

**BUT WAIT. CHOOJOONGDONG DO** not form a solid wall of pro-government propaganda. They do report, by and large, what's going on, and independent commentators often write stuff for them that's not in line with everyone's conservative thinking. Nor are ChoJoongDong the only source. Young people who are not too absorbed by what they see on their iPhones and intellectuals of all ages turn to *Hankyoreh Shinmun* (circ. 250,000) for a liberal, leftist, viewpoint. Two other papers, historically conservative, have veered leftward in recent years. *Hankook Ilbo*, which owns the English-language *Korea Times*, and *Kyunghyang Shinmun* (both with circ. more than 200,000) offer alternatives to the ChoJoongDong triumvirate though it's hard to get away from the non-political reality that, day in and day out, the Big Three serve up more basic news and information than their liberal rivals.

The differences between the biggest, most conservative paper, *Chosun Ilbo*, and the leading liberal paper, *Hankyoreh Shinmun* come out in their editorials and choices of what and how to report, though both are relatively independent. After President Moon's speech on Aug. 15, a date celebrated in both

Koreas as the anniversary of the Japanese surrender in 1945, *Chosun Ilbo* acknowledged that “Moon’s anti-war approach is a noble aim” but deemed it “equally important for him to lay out a game plan if peaceful moves do not work out.” The paper wanted to know, “Should we learn to live under the threat of a nuclear-armed North Korea or are there other options?” Implicit in the question was whether one of those “options” would be the dreaded preemptive strike against the North’s missile-launching sites – a move that sane people fear would invite artillery strikes on the South, opening shots of the second Korean War.

*Hankyoreh* had quite another take on Moon’s “Liberation Day” appearance. A euphoric feature showed the relaxed president as a man of the people, chatting, sipping tea, wearing casual clothes, then two days later establishing rapport on all levels on the occasion of the first 100 days of his presidency. “The Blue House has witnessed scenes that were unfamiliar in sheer ordinariness,” the article began. “Opening the doors to communication seems to have made the new president’s ‘honeymoon period’ last even longer,” it concluded. His “commitment to a peaceful solution,” the paper editorialized, was even “more credible since it comes right when North Korea and the U.S. appear to be each taking a step back.” Nonetheless, the paper found it “regrettable” that he “did not proactively seek a breakthrough . . .”

ALL THESE PAPERS HAVE distinctive histories, generally under the control of a single family or group. *Hankyoreh*, befitting its role as a liberal voice, is a notable exception. Founded in 1988 in the early stages of Korea’s transition from dictatorship to democracy, the paper is actually owned by thousands of small stakeholders – a true cooperative venture. An opposition voice during periods of conservative rule, the paper has been pro-government under “democratic” presidents, including President Moon, elected in May after the constitutional court upheld the impeachment of the arch-conservative Park Geun-hye, ousted and jailed with some of her close friends and aides on charges of corruption and influence-peddling, among other offenses. *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, founded by the Catholic Church in 1946 and controlled for a time by the Hanhwa empire, survives as an employee-owned paper “on guard against abuses of human rights and violations of personal freedom” – the rationale for its campaign against Park and support for Moon. Both *Hankyoreh* and *Kyunghyang*, while not uncritical of North Korea, pursue a relatively soft line in which talks with the North are a priority.

Not quite so far right as *Chosun Ilbo*, *JoongAng Ilbo* is still full of criticism of Moon’s pleas for dialogue. “We can hardly rid ourselves of skepticism about his approach to the North Korean problem if his considering the idea of sending a special envoy to North Korea was really appropriate,” the paper editorialized, “as it could give Pyongyang exactly the wrong message.” Still, *JoongAng*, founded by the Samsung empire, then granted independence, as it were, as a separate company with strong Samsung ties, seemed willing, reluctantly, to give Moon a chance. “No leader can satisfy all the people all the time,” said the editorial, though “being different does not mean being right” and “the only way to a successful presidency is the abandoning of self-righteousness and listening to opponents.”

*Dong-a Ilbo*, decades ago a liberal voice, now seems as tough as *Chosun Ilbo* in its outlook toward the North. “Going beyond repeating ‘anti-war’ rhetoric,” said one *Dong-a* editorial, “the

South Korean government should discuss the action plans proposed by the U.S. together based on strong cooperation.” The paper gives unconditional support to the U.S. alliance. “The symbolic phrase of the ROK-U.S. alliance could not be more apt now,” it said. “We should ‘go together.’” Another editorial, headlined, “S. Korea should achieve ‘robust peace’ rather than ‘insecure peace,’” was still more emphatic. “Washington’s new North Korea policy to transform into ‘maximum intervention’ through ‘maximum pressure’ is effectively showing signs to generate effect.”

OTHER PAPERS ARE FAR less strident. The *Korea Times*, owned by *Hankook Ilbo*, praised Steve Bannon, just before he was dropped as Trump’s all-purpose strategist, for having made “the most reasonable assessment among U.S. officials about North Korea’s nuclear and missile threat” – namely “that war is not a viable option and that pulling out U.S. troops through a deal with China is a remote possibility to denuclearize the North.” The paper, for which I write a column, found it “refreshing to hear a sobering voice from the U.S. administration, which has so far failed to produce a disciplined message or coordinated policy to deal with the North Korean threat.”

*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, from its left-leaning stance, berated Moon’s performance at in his 100th-day press conference for having “publicly designated North Korea loading a nuclear warhead on an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) as ‘the red line’” when “even the U.S., which has been mentioning military responses, has not clearly defined it.” His remarks, said the paper, “clash with his repeated vows of ‘no war.’” *Hankyoreh* agreed, predicting mention of a red line would “cause controversy, as it is the first time the South Korean government has officially made an announcement regarding behavior that ‘will not be tolerated.’”

Headlines and topics in *Chosun Ilbo* give quite a different picture. “S. Korea Must Restore the Balance of Power on the Peninsula,” was the title of one commentary. “When Will S. Koreans Wake up to the N. Korean Nuclear Threat,” asked another. “Moon’s Overtures to N. Korea Are Troubling Alliance with U.S.”

No doubt such observations appeal to the innate conservatism of a society driven by North Korean actions and threats for generations to view the North with suspicion if not hostility. The voices of protest, though, reveal a healthy lack of unanimity among a reading public in which a media minority command a significant following. Korean papers, for all their foibles, prejudices, biases and sometimes inaccuracies, still manage to reflect a broad spectrum of news and views in keeping with the spirit of democratic reform that took root in massive protests 30 years ago and has endured through still more upheaval this year.

North Korean bombast and rhetoric, missile and nuclear tests all contribute to the free expression of opinions that is vital to the success of an open, democratic, capitalist country whose record of success stands in stark contrast to the poverty and suffering of all but a privileged few in the North. If the two Koreas ever reunite, one crucial reason undoubtedly will be the record of the South Korean media in telling readers what they need to know.

**Donald Kirk**, journalist and author, has been covering the rise of democracy in South Korea and the standoff with North Korea since first arriving in Seoul as a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* more than 45 years ago.



AP PHOTO

# Why is no one talking to me? *North Korea's Kim*

by ANTHONY ROWLEY

Watching the flailing (and failing) attempts by U.S. President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to stamp their authority on the North Korean "crisis," veteran observers (including myself) of the East Asia scene have experienced a strong sense of *déjà vu* lately.

We have "been here before" and each time the world goes there, it gets more dangerous. Washington and its allies (notably Tokyo, but also Seoul) have been railing for months and years at Pyongyang over its missile launches while continually vilifying North Korean leader Kim Jong-un – but without ever asking him in person what he thinks he's up to.

Kim has become almost universally hated by people who never stopped to consider that he might have a case – or at least without trying seriously to find out what that case was so that they could judge for themselves. Which, of course, leads on to the conclusion that there are "none so deaf as those that do not wish to hear."

There is, to my knowledge at least, no "hot line" between Washington and Pyongyang or between Tokyo and the North Korean capital. Instead, Messrs. Trump and Abe resort instead to "megaphone" diplomacy, hurling mutual abuse instead of engaging in dialogue. Yet Moscow (along, presumably, with Beijing) does appear to have a hot line with Pyongyang.

This takes me back to the year 2000 when I attended the Group of Eight (G8) summit in Nago, Okinawa, to which Russian President Vladimir Putin had been invited for the first time. As it happened, the Russian leader arrived in Japan fresh from a visit to Pyongyang.

At a press conference given by Putin, a Japanese journalist asked the Russian leader in rather scandalized tones why he had been to North Korea, "in the enemy camp" as it were. North Korea's alleged abductions of many Japanese citizens in past decades may have coloured the journalist's views.

The calm and collected answer from an unabashed Putin was, I felt at the time and feel even more so now, both wise and instructive and one which more impetuous and less statesman-like leaders on both sides of the Pacific Ocean would be wise to heed today.

It seemed to me, said Putin (and I paraphrase) that "the Americans were talking to us (Russians) and to the Japanese, Chinese and South Koreans about North Korea. The Japanese were talking to us about North Korea and the Chinese were talking to the South Koreans about North Korea."

But no one, added the Russian leader, was actually talking to the North Koreans. So, he added with a frankness guaranteed



to disarm his critics, "I picked up the phone and called (North Korea's then 'Dear Leader') Kim Jong-il and asked, 'Can I come and talk to you?'"

The late Kim Jong-il apparently replied to the effect, "Certainly. Why don't you come next week?" That was precisely what Mr Putin did, and after his visit to the so-called "Hermit Kingdom," the supposedly reclusive North Korean leader began to loosen up somewhat.

So much so that several countries which until then had dutifully toed the shortsighted U.S. line of ostracising North Korea (or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK, as it calls itself) decided to grant it diplomatic recognition. Japan, of course, was not one of them.

Even then-U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright followed in Putin's footsteps and visited Pyongyang in 2000 to meet Kim Jong-il in order to lay the groundwork for a visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton. Sadly, this never happened while Clinton was in office.

Today, we have an almost identical situation with major powers talking "about" rather than "to" the latest head of North Korea, Kim Jong-un. Donald Trump indulges (from a distance) in hate speech promising Kim "fire and fury" and Kim, unsurprisingly, responds in like terms.

Of course, all this is for public consumption, Trump practising the "art of the deal" in the only way he knows (diplomacy not being his strong suit) by threatening to crush North Korea unless it agrees to U.S. surrender terms and Kim (who even Trump call a "smart cookie") calling his bluff.

Why doesn't Trump take a leaf out of Putin's book, pick up the phone and call Kim? He could even tweet his intention to do so. That would be a diplomatic masterstroke that could assure even Trump the legacy of being a statesman. And it could soften Kim's defensive-aggressive posture.

For that matter, why doesn't Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, take the lead and call Kim, again giving him the reputation of being a statesman? What can they be afraid of - that the "deranged dictator" will lob a miniature nuclear warhead at them? Or are they afraid of facing reality?

This reality is that the U.N. Supreme Commander had to accept less than victory in 1953 against North Korea which had launched war on U.S.-occupied South Korea in 1950. Instead, the allies had to accept an armistice with the Korean People's Army and with the Chinese People's Volunteers.

With no formal peace agreement, merely a cessation of hostilities, the two sides are technically still at war. The U.S. has no wish to admit "defeat" now by signing a peace treaty with Pyongyang - and Pyongyang certainly has no desire to concede to U.S. terms for a peace treaty.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said that Washington might be willing to talk to Pyongyang. But such offers have been

heard before and have usually been premised on a set of preconditions - North Korean unilateral disarmament - designed to be unacceptable to Pyongyang.

Yet, more than 60 years later, the world has moved on. China is a major power capable of standing up to the U.S. and one with no desire to see U.S. troops stationed in South Korea drive right up to its eastern border as they did in the 1950s under General Douglas MacArthur.

China will naturally do all it can to preserve North Korea's territorial integrity and its viability as a state until such time U.S. troops are withdrawn from the Korean Peninsula (and maybe from Japan too) as successive North Korean leaders have demanded.

Beijing will condemn North Korea's actions from time to time and indulge half-heartedly in economic sanctions against Pyongyang, but China knows, and North Korea knows, that the nuclear threat is the only way to guarantee the status quo pending a more radical solution.

That solution is for the U.S. to sign a formal peace treaty with "the North," as the state is dismissively referred to in the U.S. and Japan. Only then - and critically when the U.S. military presence in South Korea has been reduced - can meaningful talks on Korean reunification begin.

Unfortunately, no one (outside of China and Russia) seems to be the slightest bit interested in holding talks with North Korea, absent a clearly unacceptable (to Beijing as well as Pyongyang) agreement by North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, its only guarantee of safety.

So, we are condemned to continue with the absurd charade where the U.S. and its allies seek to portray Kim Jong-un as a mad dictator out to wreak havoc upon East Asia, a kind of "enfant terrible" or "rebel without a cause." The charade is a dangerous game when powers are armed to the teeth.

Maybe one way out would be for Chinese President Xi Jinping, Putin and Kim to each present "their side of the story" to the world. If Western leaders, especially the one currently occupying the White House, are unwilling to talk "to" Mr Kim, he could find a way to talk "over" them.

**“Donald Trump indulges (from a distance) in hate speech promising Kim “fire and fury” and Kim, unsurprisingly, responds in like terms.”**

In the meantime, the North Korean “crisis” serves to help deflect attention from the many problems that Mr. Trump and Mr. Abe face at home with their domestic policies and scandals. Nothing unites a nation better and faster than a perceived external threat. Veteran observers can only look on with the deepest cynicism - and alarm.

**Anthony Rowley** is a former Business Editor and International Finance Editor of the Hong Kong-based Far Eastern Economic Review and has spent some 40 years writing on Asian affairs from Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo. He currently writes for the Singapore Business Times among other publications.

# Walter Sim

by DAVID McNEILL

Like many good reporters, Walter Sim has a knack for being in the right place at the right time. In 2013, about a year after joining *The Straits Times*, Singapore's biggest selling daily newspaper, he found himself covering the city-state's first riot in four decades.

It began after a migrant worker from India was crushed under the wheels of a bus in Little India, a district heavily populated with immigrants. About 300 angry foreign laborers fought police, torching emergency vehicles, until the riot was quelled. Mass arrests and deportations followed.

Sim scooped his rivals by tracking down the identity of the bus victim. Sakthivel Kumarvelu was an Indian construction worker and, like many of Singapore's transient foreigners, his family's only breadwinner. The repercussions following the events continue: The ethnic area is now more heavily controlled, for one.

The Little India Riot was at odds with Singapore's image as staid and scandal-free, which in any case is a bit of a myth, it seems. "You'd be surprised," laughs Sim. There were a lot of crimes." During his year-and-a-half on the crime desk, he covered a string of lurid corruption cases.

One involved a law professor on the hook in a sex-for-grades scandal; another a rare double murder, committed by a debt-ridden former policeman. Because of the element of sex involved in many of the stories, says Sim, "readership was naturally high and my profile was boosted a little bit."

**SIM SAYS THE SINGAPOREAN** media are shrugging off once draconian reporting restrictions. "Politicians have told us off the record that they treat us as the enemy." Still, he adds, "there is no law covering protection of sources, so it is quite difficult to go into stories involving secret societies, drug-smuggling rings or prostitution."

That baptism of fire on the crime desk was the making of his career. His reporting in Little India caught the eye of his bosses and he was asked to cover politics. Among his highlights was reporting on the 2015 death of Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founding prime minister, and three meetings with former President S. R. Nathan.

As Asia's earliest modernized nation, Japan has long been an inspiration to the region and Sim was first drawn here on a solo trip in 2012. "I fell in love with it," he says. He began studying Japanese as a New Year resolution, which, he admits, eventually became "tedious."

"What kept me going was the sunk-en costs," he says. His fluent Mandarin

## The Singapore media is less likely to pull out the "warlike Japanese" trope when covering Japan

meant, in any case, that he already had a head start on Japan's kanji-based writing system. So, when the Tokyo desk opened up last year, he jumped.

**HIS READERS, HE SAYS**, love culture, trend and crime stories from his new beat – and the imperial family.

"The emperor is an important figure and there is a lot of interest in him as a person and his desire to abdicate." He also admits to an occasional predilection for "weird Japan" stories.

"Whether the Japanese like it or not, they have to admit there is this aspect of their culture that is beguiling – it's a treasure trove of stories for all of us." As an example, he cites the fascination with sex toys. "There are so many stories about not having an actual relationship in favor of virtual partners."

But Singapore doesn't have the same appetite for dwelling on World War II as China and South Korea, or even some of the European press, he says. "Singapore is taking a much more forward-looking perspective on the war. Even though Japan was the aggressor, South East Asia has been pretty open to inviting Japanese investment right from the 1950s, and that's the stance adopted by Singaporean politicians as well. By extension, *The Straits Times* doesn't harp on about history either."

Nevertheless, when Japan's interminable spats over the past affect regional politics, his newspaper perks up, he notes. "When Abe went to Pearl Harbor [last year] that was page one." The 2015 deal between Japan and South Korea that was hailed (perhaps prematurely) as a final and irrevocable

settlement of the comfort women issue was also a major story in Singapore.

The Singapore media is also less likely to pull out what he calls the "warlike Japanese" trope when covering Japan's more muscular strategy in the region. Again, he says, the focus for his paper is the implications for Sino-Japan relations, the rest of Asia and the U.S.-Japan Alliance.

Sim has two years left to go in Japan; frustratingly, his contract runs out before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "I'd like to stay but it really depends on whether my bosses are happy with me here." Still, he has plenty of time to clear up some of the mysteries of his new beat. He still finds it odd, for example, that Japanese companies ask to see copy before going to print. "I'm struggling to wrap my head around that."

Japan's diminished image of itself is also a puzzle, he says. "I find it fascinating – this perception Japan has that it is a small country. Perhaps it's because I come from Singapore, which is really small."



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



# Takashi Tachibana

## *A giant among Japanese journalists*

Takashi Tachibana became famous more than four decades ago thanks to a hugely publicized investigative reporting project. Then, like the Washington Post's Bob Woodward after Watergate, the frizzy-haired reporter refused to rest on his laurels. He has continued for decades to produce leading-edge journalism, scholarship and criticism.

And now, late in the eighth decade of his life, the FCCJ is honoring Tachibana with its Lifetime Achievement Award for upholding and promoting freedom of the press. The presentation is scheduled for Sept. 11.

Tachibana's leadership of a Bungei-Shunju project involving relentless investigative digging in open sources is often credited as having played a major role in bringing down Kakuei Tanaka, the more than typically corrupt prime minister who had been postwar Japan's most powerful leader.

The mainstream Japanese-language daily media initially gave Tachibana's reporting a lukewarm reception. The FCCJ intervened, arranging for Tanaka to speak at a luncheon – which became the most famous (notorious, in some people's view) press conference we've ever hosted.

Thanks to the fame that Tachibana thus acquired, he has enjoyed remarkable freedom in what he has been able to report on for the rest of his career. He's made astonishing use of that freedom and, still working at 77, continues to inspire youngsters who wonder how they can get the real story in a country where the kisha clubs rule.

"Over the years, Mr. Tachibana has conducted thorough research and reporting to get to the core of many important subjects," says Kenichi Harada, 36, Seoul correspondent for Jiji Press. "He's a role model for a journalist like myself. He's written a number of books about journalistic methods, from which I learned a lot. His body of work will serve as textbooks for many young upcoming journalists."

Born May 28, 1940, in Nagasaki, Tachibana graduated in French literature from Tokyo University. His first job (1964) was with Shukan Bunshun. After a couple of years, he quit the weekly. In 1967, he returned to Todai to study philosophy.

Finding it was hard to make ends meet as a young scholar, he freelanced, writing articles for various magazines. In 1971, he opened a tiny bar/snack called Gargantua in Shinjuku 2-chome's Golden-gai. He did the cooking, handling a large number of menu items. He sold Gargantua in 1972 and left for Europe and the Middle East to wander around.

### *The Tanaka 'sting'*

Tachibana was a 34-year-old freelancer when he became

by BRADLEY K. MARTIN

famous for speaking truth to power. Leading a team of 20 journalists, relying not at all on leaks, he meticulously waded through an ocean of publicly available information to chronicle Tanaka's dealings.

He waited until a couple of days before the monthly magazine's deadline to start confronting officials with his findings. "A hastier approach," wrote T. Tokuoaka of Mainichi Daily News, "might have touched off a counteroffensive from the Prime Minister's quarters, which could possibly have wrecked the whole venture."

When the Bungei-Shunju editor was looking for someone to lead the reporting project, "no establishment journalist would touch it," Newsweek reported. "They had all been pressured away or they had too much to lose."

Tachibana hadn't been ground down to fit a Japanese daily newspaper reporter's routine of covering briefings, following kisha club rules and showing up at politicians' houses late at night to receive the daily dose of wisdom. Another similarly intrepid reporter, the late Takaya Kodama, wrote in the magazine's same issue about Tanaka's female "shadow," Aki Sato. Tachibana and Kodama eventually would be lionized as Japan's Woodward and Bernstein.

The magazine's 61-page exposé, TIME reported, was "a devastating chronicle of Tanaka's financial dealings through dummy corporations, secret bank accounts, incomplete tax statements and the use of vast amounts of money to buy support within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Tanaka clung to office just long enough to welcome President [Gerald] Ford to Tokyo."

### **"Tachibana hadn't been ground down to fit a Japanese daily newspaper reporter's routine"**

TIME added that "Bungei-Shunju's feat would have been a coup in any country. But in Japan, where the press seldom mentions the private peccadillos of government leaders, it was an unprecedented display of hara (guts). The nation's last major political scandal, the 1966 'black mist' influence-peddling affair, went unreported in the press until the matter came before the Diet. This time, Bungei-Shunju's disclosures were ignored for nearly a fortnight."

What happened to turn the tide? "It was only when foreign reporters grilled Tanaka about the article that big Japanese dailies began to print disapproving editorials," TIME reported.

### **Government outrage**

"Why such docility?" TIME asked. "For one thing, Japanese journalists have a tradition of pleasant bonhomie with their news sources that makes hard digging difficult. Then there are the reporters' clubs ... Beyond that, many major news organizations are in debt to banks that have close ties to the Liberal Democratic Party ... Tokyo dailies have also built their offices on government land relinquished to them through important poli-



ticians.”

At that October 21, 1974, FCCJ press conference, sarcastic-sounding introductory remarks by the moderator, a Hungarian Communist correspondent, as well as tough questioning from the floor aroused government outrage. (See the account in the official club history, *Foreign Correspondents in Japan*, starting on page 207.) Tanaka grew so disturbed by persistent questions – which from the third question, by the late Sam Jameson, focused on the Bungei reporting – that he walked out before the scheduled end of the conference. <http://www.fccj.or.jp/component/k2/item/490-mythbusting-the-tanaka-confrontation.html>

Events that day caused something of a schism among the Regular membership. “The FCCJ was guilty of a fairly blatant intervention in Japan’s political debate, and it was not necessarily in favor of the good guys,” argues Gregory Clark, current Club second vice president, who at the time was bureau chief of *The Australian*.

Tanaka had made political enemies with his opening to China two years before and Clark thinks the “good guys” were those who backed the prime minister in that, while establishment forces such as the Bungei publishing house attacked him. Twenty-two members, led by the late AFP bureau chief Pierre Brisard and including Clark, apologized to the government.

Journalists besides Clark who got involved and who remain in Tokyo include FCCJ former president and current life member Gebhard Hielscher of Munich’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who sat at the head table as second vice president, and Hideko Takayama, then of the *Baltimore Sun*, who had read the Bungei-Shunju article to help her bureau chief, Matt Seiden, prepare a question for Tanaka.

In Hielscher’s view, “Only the introduction by Bela Elias was problematic, but that was in part also due to his somewhat limited command of the English language.” Otherwise, Hielscher says, correspondents spoke to the prime minister “in courteous language.”

Although reporter Tachibana was not present for the press conference, he drew a share of criticism. Clark, for example, says Tachibana’s work on Tanaka was not all that original. Long preceding Tachibana’s package, Clark says, was “a savage article” in the May 1972 edition of *Bungei-Shunju* on Tanaka’s “money politics,” written by right-winger Shintaro Ishihara – later to become Tokyo’s governor.

But the main effect on Tachibana’s career came from the fact that after the FCCJ presser the mainstream Japanese media began asking tough questions – and within days the prime minister had to resign.

### *Foreign influence*

While Tanaka never came back to the FCCJ, Tachibana became friends with a number of foreign correspondents (including the author of this article) and went on to speak several times in the club over the following decades.

Right after one of his FCCJ talks, in 1976 when he was preparing a major piece on the Lockheed scandal, *Newsweek* quoted him as saying that “the establishment press has always played journalistic kendo at a meter’s length from their opponent’s sword and has never closed in. I think some of the individual reporters on the major papers will notice what we’re doing, but I think the impact on management will be negligible.”

He always acknowledged an inspirational debt to investigative journalists abroad. For example, he wrote a book published in 1978 entitled *Journalism wo kangaeru tabi*, (*Travels to Think About Journalism*) in which he interviewed David Halberstam and other well-known journalists.

But although he continued to do political journalism, he also branched out to become a polymath. While people close to him have lost count of how many books he’s published all say the number is more than a hundred. “His strength is really his diversified interest in different subjects,” says Takayama, who moved on from the *Baltimore Sun* to report for *Newsweek* and then *Bloomberg News*. “His interest went into so many directions it’s been hard to keep up.”

Those directions, she says, “have ranged from Kakuei Tanaka to the sexual revolution in the U.S., from space to brain death, from the Japanese Communist Party to near-death experiences, from agricultural cooperatives to music, from science to the Emperor and Today, from his own illness to the Pacific War.”

Tachibana, she recalls, “once produced record albums recorded at his own place under the label ‘Chez Tachibana.’ One of his major works was *Uchu kara no kikan* (*Return from Space*), in which he interviewed American astronauts about how their space trips changed their lives, and I think it is one of his best.”

One of his most recent works, published in 2016, is *Toru Takemitsu – Ongaku sozo e no tabi* (*Journey Toward Musical Creation*), over 700 pages of text based on interviews with the late Japanese composer. Another 2016 Tachibana book title can be translated as *Tachibana talks about War*.

This year some notable Tachibana interviews have appeared in *Bungei-Shunju*. One is an interview with Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, titled “Declaration of War Against the LDP.” Another, in which he interviews a specialist, is called “Diabetes and Cancer.” Tachibana suffers from both.

**Bradley Martin** joined the club in 1977 and has worked for the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Asian Financial Intelligence*, *Asia Times* and *Bloomberg News*. His forthcoming novel, *Nuclear Blues*, is set in North Korea. Alex Martin of *The Japan Times* also contributed reporting for this article.

# The Truth about 'Tankman'

by GREGORY CLARK



What's wrong with this photo? (A print of the famous 'Tankman' photo graces the walls of the FCCJ conference room.)

Ask any news addict and he/she will tell you it shows a brave Chinese student (Tankman he has come to be called) trying to stop a column of Chinese army tanks en route to suppress protesting Chinese students on the night of the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 3/4, 1989.

Time magazine has declared it "an iconic picture of defiance in the face of aggression."

The reality is just about the complete opposite.

According to the man who took the photo, AP photographer Jeff Widener, the photo dates from June 5 the day after the Tiananmen Square incident. The tanks were headed away from, and not towards, the Square. They were blocked not by a student but by a man with a shopping bag crossing the street who had chosen to play chicken with the departing tanks. The lead tank had gone out its way to avoid causing him injury.

I would also add that there was no massacre in Tiananmen Square on the night of June 3/4. There was fighting and killing but it was almost entirely outside the Square; Widener notes how that evening he saw a soldier being dragged from his troop carrier by angry crowds and killed.

The New York Times has run the Tankman photo several times, most recently in an article praising publication of some other photos claiming a "new look at Tiananmen protests" (NYT February 25). The paper prides itself on its accuracy, to the point of regularly running a column listing even minor article corrections. Yet it refuses pointblank even to acknowledge receipt of a note from myself pointing out the inaccuracies in its description a photo which is used to fuel anti-Beijing protests around the globe, Hong Kong especially. How can a paper that prides itself as a leader in accurate reporting be so obstinate?

Admission: I like the New York Times. Few other newspapers would dare to squander so many column inches on domestic issues many would see as marginal. But as if to balance a liberal bias in domestic affairs it seems to want to go overboard in criticising foreign regimes. Its mistaken reporting on Iraq's WMD was notorious, to the point where this time it ended up having to apologize. But it shows no desire to apologize for the enormous publicity it gave to the original myth of a Tiananmen Square massacre – the report of soldiers with machine guns mowing down students in the hundreds.

And talking of photos, when do we get to see photos of the event that triggered it all: the petrol bomb attacks on troops in buses entering Beijing to clear the Square and remove the bitterly anti-Beijing crowds surrounding it. The photos exist. I know Reuters has some – blackened corpses of incinerated soldiers strung up under overpasses, badly burned soldiers seeking refuge in stairways. But we have no

shortage of reports telling us that the revenge attacks by soldiers outside the Square against the crowds and students who had attacked them so viciously were a Tiananmen Square massacre. Nor is there any mention of the fact the regime had originally tried to send in unarmed soldiers who were mocked and easily blocked by the crowds.

In the background of the Tankman photo is a burned-out bus. Who was supposed to have done that? This and other photos of burned buses are made to appear that they were burned in revenge for the soldiers' attacks. In fact, they came before, not after, and remain as a major reason for Beijing's anger over the protests, protests it originally tolerated for almost a month and with which some regime members had tried to negotiate.

True, the crowds had every reason to be anti-Beijing, having suffered 30 years of crazy government policies. But that is no excuse for the Western media negligence, recorded in excruciating detail by former Washington Post bureau chief in Beijing at the time, Jay Mathews, in a well researched 1988 Columbia Journalism Review article titled: "Reporting The Myth of Tiananmen, and the Price of a Passive Press."

Mathews tracks down what he calls "the dramatic accounts that buttressed the myth of a student massacre." He notes a widely disseminated piece by an alleged Chinese university student writing in the Hong Kong press immediately after the incident, describing machine guns mowing down students in front of the Square monument (somehow numerous Westerners, including a Spanish TVE film team, failed to notice this). Mathews adds: "The New York Times gave this version prominent display on June 12, just a week after the event, but no evidence was ever found to confirm the account or verify the existence of the alleged witness." And for good reason: The mystery report was very likely the work of the U.S. and U.K. agencies based in Hong Kong and only too willing to plant anti-Beijing material in cooperative media.

Mathews notes that the New York Times reporter, Nicholas Kristof, who had been in Beijing at the time, challenged the report the next day but his article was buried on an inside page and so "the myth lived on." Ironically, this was the same Kristof whose colorful reporting of military actions during the riot had earned him a notable press award and had done much to solidify the "massacre" story. If anything, it was his willingness after the event to challenge the phony Hongkong report in his own newspaper that deserved the award.

Another key source for the original massacre myth, Mathews says, was the student leader Wu'er Kaixi who claimed to have seen 200 students cut down by gunfire in the Square. But, he notes, "It was later proven that he left the square several hours before the events he described." Wu'er visited the FCCJ on July 21 using his alleged Tiananmen experience in a press conference promoting Press Freedom.

Before criticising others, Western media – the NYT especially – should look at their own willingness to run fake news and fake photos while ignoring real news and real photos.

**Gregory Clark is a Chinese speaking former Australian diplomat, university staffer and longtime member of the FCCJ. As a correspondent based in Tokyo in 1971 he organised an Australian team to join in the pingpong diplomacy over Canberra's opposition. He also speaks Russian and Japanese and grows kiwi fruit in the Boso peninsula.**



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## FCCJ EXHIBITION

## Funky Days

### Portraits of Everyday Life

Photographs by Yoshi Itokawa

I AIM TO PHOTOGRAPH the joy of life! If i could listen to the heartbeat of the person standing in front of the camera, synchronizing my breathing with theirs, and discover new possibilities that provide mutual stimulation, wouldn't that be great?!

**Yoshi Otokawa** has been photographing the city of Osaka and its people since 1980. He was active in new music and the theatre during the latter-half of the 1960s and he became an independent filmmaker from 1980, producing documentaries such as *Tokyo Dancing! Africa* and *Lemon Soap*. Otokawa's work has appeared in many magazines, has been published in several photo books and he has had exhibition, mainly in live music clubs for many years.





JOIN THE FILM COMMITTEE ...



... on Tuesday, Sept. 19 at 6:45 pm (note early start time) for *Ernesto*, the fact-based story of the Japanese-Bolivian physician who fought with Ernesto “Che” Guevara – and died, as Guevara did, in a CIA-assisted ambush in Bolivia – 50 years ago this October. A Japan-Cuba coproduction helmed by Junji Sakamoto (*Face*, *KT*, *The Projects*), the film is at once Cold War history, compelling relationship drama and cautionary tale. *Ernesto* stars Joe Odagiri as Freddy Maemura Hurtado, a second-generation Japanese-Bolivian who becomes radicalized while in Cuba pursuing medical studies. In a career-best performance, Odagiri disappears completely into the role, speaking Spanish throughout and bringing a slow-burn fire to his physician-turned-soldier. *Ernesto* opens with a historic 1959 scene, shot in Hiroshima. Just months after the Cuban Revolution resulted in the ousting of U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, Guevara visits Japan in his role as diplomat for the communist government. Without notifying his hosts at the Foreign Ministry, he goes to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park to pay his respects. Then he turns to a Japanese journalist (Nagayama) who had followed him there. “Why aren’t you angry at the Americans?” he demands. “They did horrific things to you.” It is a question that hangs heavily over the entire film. Junji Sakamoto and Joe Odagiri will be on hand for the Q&A session. (Japan, 2017; 149 minutes; Japanese with English subtitles)

– Karen Severns

SENIOR CHAMPS

KAZUO ABIKO AND HIS doubles partner Toshio Chomabayashi won the senior men’s doubles championship for age 70 and over at the annual Karuizawa International Tennis Tournament in its 101st year. The finals of the week-long tournament were played on Sunday, Aug. 6. Kaz, former AP newsman and general manager for Northeast Asia, served as FCCJ president in 2001-02. The tournament was held at the historic Karuizawa Association Tennis Court, where Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko met over the nets about 60 years ago. The love story of the then Crown Prince and Michiko Shoda, a commoner, was dubbed the “tennis court romance.”

Kazuo Abiko (left) and Toshio Chomabayashi



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**JESSE JOHNSON** is the News Desk Manager at the *Japan Times*. Johnson studied journalism at university and worked for several local daily and weekly papers in Nevada before working five years in Japan as a teacher, translator and theme-park guide in Fukushima Prefecture. He joined the *Japan Times* in 2007 as copy editor.

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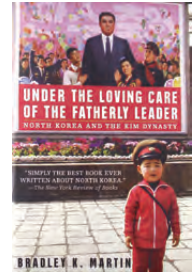
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# Potholes pinpointed: Ricoh innovation cuts road maintenance costs



Keeping road surfaces smooth has always been tricky. Transport authorities try to plan ahead on average repaving cycles, but trucks, ice, storm runoff and earthquakes all mean some roads crumble faster than others. Which ones, though? For decades, the only way to find out was via visual inspections, a laborious task that yielded subjective, inconsistent data. Today, specialized sensing trucks are used on major routes, but high cost and bulkiness limit their effectiveness on back streets.

So Ricoh engineers set out to find a simpler, lower-cost solution.

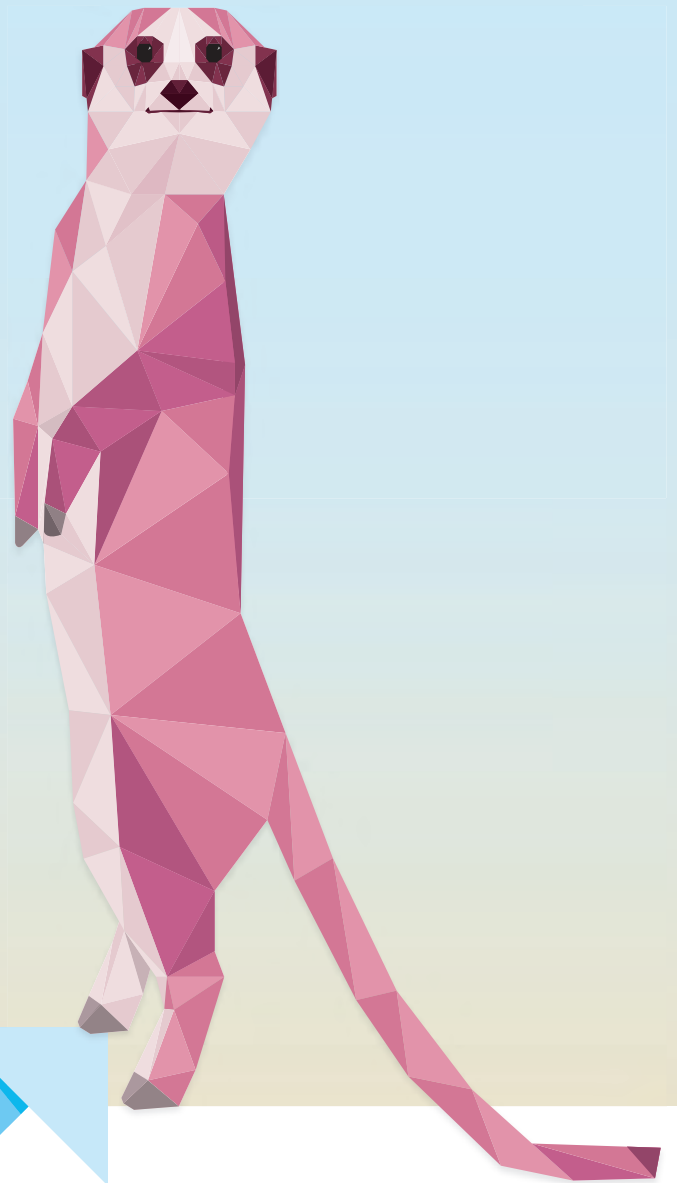
The first element is an array of multiple stereo cameras that record and rate the prevalence of cracks, the depth of ruts and any distortion of the road surface profile. Mounted on a rack that attaches to an ordinary vehicle, as needed, the system can compile a uniform, comprehensive data set reaching even into small alleys.

The second element is an artificial intelligence tool that uses machine-learning to analyze the data and identify priorities for repair. Bottom line: with potholes pinpointed citizens get smoother roads with less tax spending.

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