

The magazine of The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan



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DIGITAL DELIVERY

The closure of the printed
Independent and its effect
on foreign correspondence

Watching the vloggers:
Where the
views are made

The other abdication:
When a young Prince Akihito
was fêted for the throne

Profiled:
Robin Harding of
the *Financial Times*

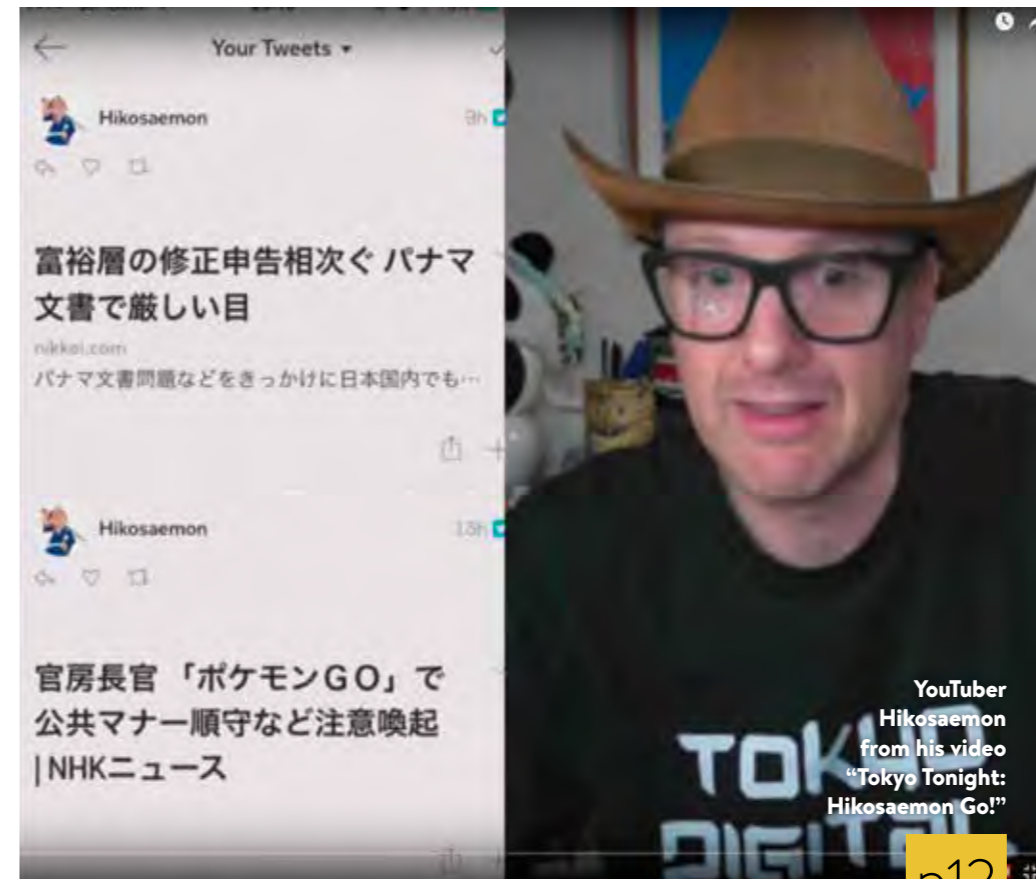


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Youtuber Hikosaemon from his video "Tokyo Tonight: Hikosaemon Go!"

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Cover illustration: Andrew Pothecarry, from the *Independent* logo



I WAS OUT OF JAPAN for much of September, but I didn't dodge all of the typhoons, arriving back in Japan in the early hours of Sept. 19 to a good drenching over several days.

Such weather does have an upside: Nothing beats a good read when it's pouring down outside.

I'm reading *The Power of Habit*, by *New York Times* reporter Charles Duhigg. I usually stay well away from books in the so-called self-help genre, but this is interesting stuff on the latest research and case studies on how habits form and can be changed.

My other reading included the minutes of FCCJ Board meetings and a General Membership Meeting written in September and October of 1975. I realize that sounds very sad, but as the Club is now in the process of moving, the minutes of 41 years ago make for a good read as they deal with the FCCJ's move from its previous location to the current premises in the Yurakucho Denki building.

The minutes support the adage, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." That is, the concerns of members in 1975 mirror those in the Club today regarding moving premises.

I'll paraphrase, but among the questions in the minutes is this one: "Will we be able to afford the rent in the bigger space in the Denki Building?" Countered by: "We won't get a better offer than the one by Mitsubishi." And they go on: "The Denki Building is inconvenient," said some. "We have to get our finances in order before we move," and "The Club should get smaller not bigger," were some others.

One discussion involved moving from a walk-in club to one on the 20th floor. Some members said having to use elevators was inconvenient and would damage the Club's prestige.

As those voices of 41 years ago echo through FCCJ Board, committee and bar meetings today, I unfortunately will no longer be involved, as I'm leaving Japan for a job in Hong Kong. You are left in the most capable hands of Khaldon Azhari as FCCJ President.

There are many people I'd like to thank for the work they do for the FCCJ, but that would fill several pages. Instead I'll limit it to two "volunteers" I've worked most closely with in the past year or more: Bob Whiting and Kurt Sieber. They are both unsung heroes, dedicating enormous amounts of time and energy to the Club to try and make it the best it can be. I salute you, gentlemen. It's been an honor.

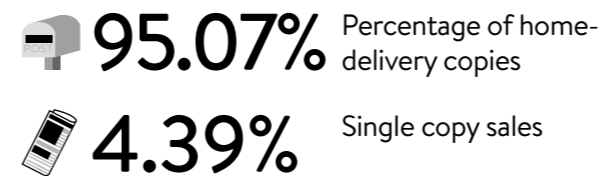
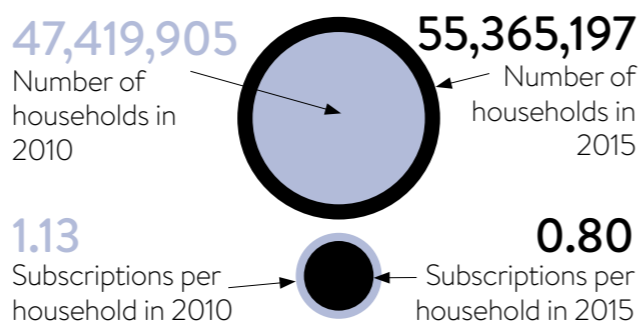
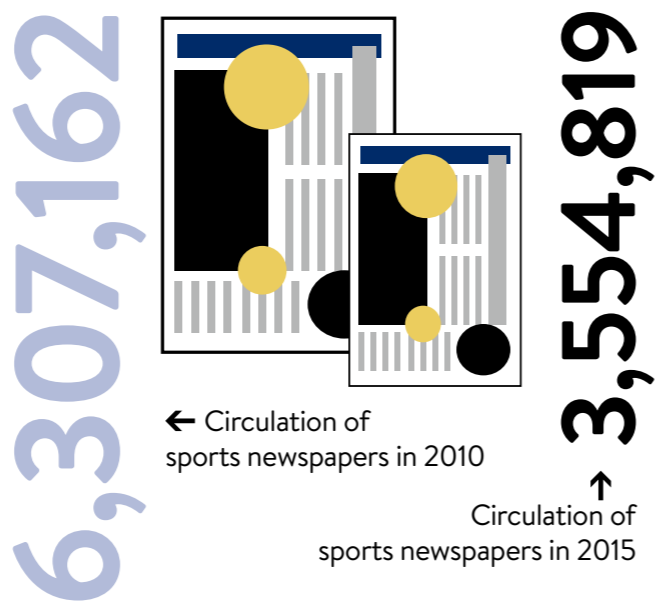
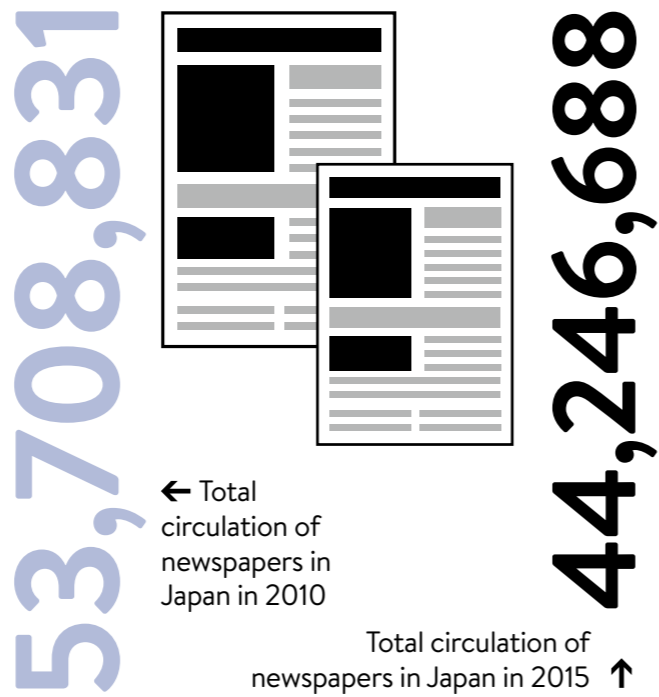
- Peter Langan



KHALDON AZHARI has been selected to replace Peter Langan upon his resignation.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

"DOOMSDAY" COLD WARRIOR AND FUTURIST HERMAN KAHN



Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute, a frequent speaker at the FCCJ, untangled world affairs for our members on Nov. 28, 1977. Club Secretary Sam Jameson (Freelance), who moderated the event. To the right of Kahn is Johnny Fujii of Fairchild Publications, who is seated next to the shoulder of Tom Pepper, former Tokyo Bureau Chief of the Baltimore Sun who had been hired by the Hudson Institute several years earlier.

In the political scene of the 1960s and 1970s, Herman Kahn's name ranked with that of Henry Kissinger and other Cold-Warriors. He had parlayed his university physics major into a position as a military strategist and systems theorist at the Rand Corporation and become a sensation with publication of his 1960 book, *On Thermonuclear War*. In the book, he speculated on a "doomsday" device, which caught the popular imagination in a morbid way, and was reflected in Kubrick's 1964 satiric masterpiece, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. He followed up with several more publications on the potential effects of nuclear war and strategic options that influenced U.S. nuclear and military strategies.

With two colleagues, Kahn founded the Hudson Institute in 1961 as a policy research organization. As its head, he expanded his areas of interest to include economics, public policy issues and future studies. He was especially noted for his meshing of theoretical and practical matters, applying systems analysis, game theory and scientific forecasting tools as well as the scenario method. The scope of his activities included theories and publications that made him a controversial figure. His frequent appearances at the FCCJ attested to the attraction he held for journalists.

Of particular interest to Club Members were his futuristic takes on Japan. His 1970 tome, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response*, outlined much of the success later achieved by Japan. In 1979, another book on the Japan theme also made a splash. *The Japanese Challenge: The Success and Failure of Economic Success*, was co-authored with Thomas Pepper, who had been the Bureau Chief of the *Baltimore Sun* until he was recruited by Kahn and joined the Hudson Institute.

Herman Kahn headed the Hudson Institute until 1983, when a stroke ended his life at age 61.

- Charles Pomeroy



INDEPENDENT, RIP

A former Tokyo stringer laments the demise of a great British newspaper and its Tokyo coverage.

by DAVID MCNEILL



In British parlance, the 9 p.m. watershed refers to the point where adult content can safely be screened on television. In our house it meant something different: the mercifully reduced risk of a call from an editor at the *Independent*, my sometime employer, asking for a late-night file.

After years of these calls, the buzzing on my cell phone triggered a Pavlovian response: sweaty palms, raised heart-beat, angry spouse. Occasionally, the voice on the other end wanted a story that Could Not Wait, but more often than not it was a request for a 600-word color piece, rewritten from the local wires.

And so it was that *Independent* readers came to know about chopstick bras, herbivorous men, yakuza wars, blowfish, Marxism manga books and countless other items on the London desk's Far-East shopping list. Then there was the dreaded double-page spread, an off-the-cuff daily feature.

If all was working well, the spread was planned well in advance, but the Indy always flew by the seat of its pants. That meant being cajoled into pulling together 2000 words on some exotic topic (Japan's pet boom; Clint Eastwood's Iwo Jima movie) by midnight London time – four or five hours away.

During a rare Tokyo visit the foreign editor told me of his ideal correspondent: the paper's star reporter in America who could be yanked out of bed at 3 a.m. and induced to write 800 immaculate words on anything. "A total pro," he said. Other writers were sent into war zones for weeks. Tokyo was a doddle, he laughed.

It was that kind of newspaper. The Indy paid buttons, often asked the impossible and rarely acknowledged either. Stringers were expendable. But its unique rough-around-the-edges ethic only became clear when you visited its headquarters in London.

THE FOREIGN DESK WAS a single cluttered table. The people who made me want to metaphorically pull a blanket over my head in the evenings were harassed, overworked editors trying to run a world-class newspaper on a shoestring budget – staffed by a handful of full-time correspondents (and, eventually, not a single one in East Asia).

The paper had relocated from the London Docklands to Northcliffe House off the Kensington High Street in 2008 – its fourth and final move in 22 years. The aim, of course, was to save money. It shared the building with the arch-conservative *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, *London Evening Standard*, the *Metro* and *London Lite* – hardly an easy fit for a freewheeling, center-left title.

Launched in 1986 in the space opened up by the union busting of Rupert Murdoch (his assault on print workers had helped lower production costs, and prodded journalists from other quality titles, including his own, to jump ship), the Indy sold over 400,000 copies by the end of the decade (prompting Murdoch to slash the price of the *Times*.) Thereafter, it slid and lurched from crisis to crisis, punctuated by remarkable highs.

Just after I took over as a stringer from Richard Lloyd Parry in 2002, it became the first broadsheet to switch to tabloid format, dubbed "compact" to distinguish it from the populist red tops. The front page was retooled, making it impossible to ignore: In 2004 it famously condemned the Hutton Report on the death of UK government scientist David Kelly with a one-word headline "Whitewash?" It clawed back circulation and won British newspaper of the year in 2004.

That was typical of the Indy's maverick, never-say-die spirit. In a crowded market segment dominated by the *Times*, *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times*, it was forced to consistently challenge the rules of what a newspaper could do. In design, it celebrated photography, anchoring its pages and foreign news to some of the most striking images in print history.

FROM THE START, INTELLIGENT writing was the paper's hallmark and its pages became a platform for some of the greatest first-person journalism of the last three decades. Robert Fisk, arguably the most celebrated correspondent of the era, helped put the foreign pages up in lights but the Indy was full of other famous reporting names, including Patrick Cockburn, Rupert Cornwell and (until he left) Lloyd Parry.

Though it resisted political pigeonholing, the paper was often on the right side of history, strongly arguing against the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, for example, and lamenting Britain's unqualified support for America's "war on terror." In 2007 it was rewarded by a bitter swipe from Prime Minister Tony Blair, who dismissed the Indy as a "viewspaper" not a "newspaper."

It took a stand on the parliamentary lobby system, a sort of press club for British journalists widely criticized for spoon-feeding them. "The *Independent* was not going to deceive its readers," declared the paper's then editor Chris Blackhurst. For years, he added, the paper banned its journalists from going on press trips. "Nothing was to be gained from going in a pack and being subjected to PR 'spin'."

But all these principled achievements and a string of innovative content refits ("let's get Bono to edit!") couldn't halt the slide. In one of several final humiliations, the paper was traded between billionaires for a quid in 2010, sold by Irish mogul Tony O'Reilly to Alexander Lebedev, a Russian oligarch and ex-KGB spy. It was Lebedev's son Evgeny who eventually broke the news to long-suffering staff in February this year that with circulation at 40,000 and still sliding, the paper would print its last print edition the following month.

"It still amazes me . . . how the paper allowed me to wander. It was the greatest education of my life."



The Indy's helter-skelter, 30-year ride triggered many affectionate eulogies. My former editor, Archie Bland, recalled "a lovely sort of chaos," but said lack of resources "sometimes made getting the paper out each night seem like a Sisyphean miracle." Journalists at the *Independent* were, he said, "quite apart from being fiercely talented, prepared to run through brick walls for each other."

Because it was perpetually broke and forced to take risks, the Indy gave its staff "responsibilities, opportunities and scope which we'd never have had elsewhere," wrote Lloyd Parry on Facebook. "It still amazes me . . . how the paper allowed me to wander," he said, recalling weeks in Indonesia reporting its "horrors and wonders" during the late-90's uprising. "It was the greatest education of my life."

BY THE TIME I came along, such indulgences were rare. With notable exceptions, editors in the financially strapped 2000s were less willing to fund expensive reporting, though I loved how eccentric pitches ("I'd like to interview Imelda Marcos") were rewarded with enthusiastic one-line mails ("Go, man, go!"). And when the story was important, such as Japan's 3/11 triple disaster, the paper was exceptionally generous with time, money and space.

Even in its demise, the Indy may – like so many times – be ahead of the curve, sadly so. It survives as a digital publication, employing a handful of editors to churn out copy, rewritten from articles it would once have commissioned. A recent piece from the *Japan Times*, reporting on blanket surveillance of Muslims living in Japan, was a case in point – pilfered lock, stock and barrel.

That approach appears to be working – at least for now. Online readership is up (helped by heavy promotion on Facebook and other social media). Around two-thirds of the *Independent*'s UK readers access it only from mobile devices, according to Journalism.co.uk. But for better or worse, the Indy's fate encapsulates the decline of old media and the rise of algorithm-led churnalism.

Some digital optimists will be happy to see the citadels of mainstream journalism tottering, and it is possible that something better will arise from the rubble. But for now it's hard to see what that is. As Cockburn, one of the *Independent*'s greatest talents recently wrote in another context: "We have entered 'an age of disintegration.'"

As for me, I won't miss those late-night calls. But I do sometimes long for the Indy's beautiful bedlam. ●

David McNeill writes for the *Irish Times*, the *Economist*, and other publications.



The future of the media is you(*tube*)

by RICHARD SMART

Despite recent films extolling the heyday of investigative journalists, like the *Boston Globe* team that took on the Catholic church in the film *Spotlight*, traditional media jobs are no longer thought of as desirable by young people entering the workforce. In fact, in a CareerCast.com ranking of the worst professions to enter, a career in newspaper journalism topped the chart. In No. 3 was broadcaster, only barely beaten by the logger profession in second. There is one job in media, though, that is among the most desired career choices for 21st century youth: the YouTube star.

A look into the inner workings of the platform in Japan suggest that these starry-eyed job hunters, who likely see the platform offering a path to easy money and a lavish lifestyle, may want to rethink their ambitions. Earnings are opaque, trolls are common, a *jimusho* system that is as impenetrable as that in J-pop controls the trajectory of its stars, and just as the biggest newspapers of the world find themselves at the whim of the Facebook algorithm, so do “vloggers” – video bloggers – face online processes that can make or break their ad revenue in any given month.

So why are 400 hours of video worldwide getting uploaded to the platform every minute? Those involved on the ground speak of a sense of community and an opportunity to create, while those in what is derogatorily referred to as

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

“legacy media” view video – whether on YouTube or other platforms – as a way of reaching millennials.

ESCAPING THE TROLLS

“Endless September” is a phrase rarely heard outside geek circles. It refers to a phenomenon from the early days of the internet, when sophisticated, high-context conversations on chatrooms would be disrupted once a year, then more often, then always, by the inane, the mis-

informed and trolls. Why September? That is when students arrived online, getting free online access at their universities. As more joined the internet, so did the tendency for dull conversation and trolling increase, making the September problem a year-round one.

Japan had its own endless September. Hikosaemon, a YouTuber with 35,000 subscribers who has been active on the YouTube site since around the time of its launch, joined to avoid the trolling and banality of comments sections in other areas of the internet. “It was a time when news forums turned into rage spaces for the expat community to vent,” he said. “I originally used YouTube to try and reach out to other people who shared my interest in Japanese news without the rage. Since the 1990s I was reading Japanese news online, and watching people using YouTube to talk about American news. I was more interested in discussion than foreigner fights, where trolls dominate the forums.”

YouTube gave him a chance to be a “guide” to news stories from Japan, with an overseas-to-Japanese audience ratio of around 70:30. “I found it was a way of engaging with people on my own terms,” he said. “What I do complements old media. There has been an observable decline at times in the quality of coverage in some parts of the media, and people online are looking for verification; they are asking if they can trust what they are reading.”

Through the ads that appear alongside his videos, Hikosaemon makes just enough to pay for broadcast equipment,

but little more. He declined to go on the record with his profession and real name as a precaution against potential trolling and harassment. This was true of the many who spoke with the *Number 1 Shimbun* who declined to release personal details, and all said that it simply wasn’t worth the hassle. The threat of trolls seeking out your identity to harass you can turn a hobby, or possible career, into the sort of irritant or worse that is all too familiar to many journalists at the FCCJ.

MONETIZING THE STREAMS

But there are those who have become professional YouTubers over the years, taking advantage of the platform’s AdSense program that allows contributors to share a slice of the advertising pie, while download speeds have taken streaming mainstream. With increased viewer figures have come sponsorship deals, paid contracts with talent agencies and a chance to crowdfund channels through Patreon, a platform that allows fans to contribute money to those online that they support.

Up in Tohoku, Chris Broad’s *Abroad in Japan* channel has amassed more than a quarter of a million subscribers, attracts hundreds of thousands of views and allows him to live off of his earnings. “You still need to make something that is informative and entertaining – or ideally both – with a clear demographic in mind,” he says of his success. “But I’d say if you were consistent in uploading and delivering quality content,

Yoshida Masaki says that it believes YouTube is heading down a sustainable path. Many of the accounts may at base be seeking out just clicks, according to the company, and are unlikely to stand the test of time. Other accounts though, operated by people with a creative drive that is about more than money and an understanding of the platform they are working on, are the future for the platform.

LEARNING FROM SCRATCH

Can major international publications learn from the YouTubers? The *Guardian* thinks so. Christian Bennett, global head of video and audio for the *Guardian*, says the videos the site produces attract more women and a viewership about 15 years younger than the average reader. “We have to find a way to engage with that audience if we want a future audience for the *Guardian*,” he said. “They are commercially more valuable in terms of pre-roll ads, and if you’re really serious about digital news gathering you have to be in video. It’s like color photography once was for newspapers.”

With their markedly higher quality, the *Guardian*’s videos have won numerous awards. Most recently, the Grierson Trust nominated the company’s *We Walk Together*, a 17-minute piece on the journey of a Syrian refugee family’s journey across Europe, for a Best Documentary on Current Affairs award. Other nominated films came from the BBC and ITV, Britain’s main terrestrial networks.



250,000 subscribers is achievable in 18 to 24 months.”

Broad says many in the industry are signing up with companies and agencies to make a living, while he has followed a more independent path. “Most YouTubers make an income from three sources: YouTube ad revenue, merchandise and sponsors,” he says. “I’ve dabbled with all three, but they’re all fairly unreliable. YouTube ad revenue can be fairly unpredictable and goes up and down throughout the year according to advertising spending, which is typically higher around the end of the year.”

Three of the big English-language YouTube channels in Japan belong to Canadians Micaela Braithwaite (270,000 subscribers) and Sharla (467,000), and the American wife/Japanese husband team Rachel and Jun (679,000). All three are represented by Yoshida Masaki, a talent agency that refused to give access to its stars, citing their inability to answer questions such as “How has YouTube changed your life” within a definite time period because of commitments. The agency did, however, answer questions about those it represents.

“There is not much difference between the way we treat YouTube creators and our other staff,” an official at the company said. “We praise them when they deserve praise and scold them when they deserve scolding. But whichever we do, it is with love.”

Those on YouTube, though, are more focused on community than mass appeal. “It is not that we are going to become big media,” Hikosaemon said. “But all these interest communities that have videos of broadcast quality will get places on platforms [now being developed by Silicon Valley companies] for their specialist channels.”

YouTube itself sees opportunities both with major companies and the upstarts. “YouTube wants to be the preferred destination where fans and video creators engage,” Ayako Kono, a spokeswoman for the company said. Those video creators need not have a DIY spirit. “Recently, respected animation houses Nippon Animation and Kadokawa have worked with YouTube to bring their content onto our platform, allowing more fans around the world to view their productions than ever before.”

The company aims to be in virtual reality on cellphones and anywhere else that people view video, Kono said. So is this the future? Broad believes it may well be, but says that the main risk is that the company changes in ways that will alienate those contributing and cause them to jump ship.

“Given that YouTube is a Silicon valley company, it’s very proactive when it comes to innovation,” he says. “I’m all for innovation, but it can make you a bit anxious when they make dramatic changes suddenly that affect creators.”

Newsflash or false news: the abdication of Emperor Hirohito



Succession?

The Emperor (center left) and his son, Crown Prince Akihito (center right).

The issue of imperial succession was used in political maneuvers with the press in Occupation Japan.

by EIICHIRO TOKUMOTO

By indicating his desire to hand over the imperial throne to the crown prince, Japan's 82-year-old emperor set off intense debate about the state of the imperial family and the institution of the monarchy itself. What started as rumor has become a real issue for the government, as it scrambles to find a legal way to handle any succession. Press coverage has been extensive, not only in Japan but worldwide.

This is not, however, the first time in the postwar era for the subject to arise, and not the first time it has caused great consternation for the interested parties. According to declassified documents of the British government, a group of Japanese and Americans engaged in behind-the-scenes political maneuvering to bring about the abdication of Emperor Hirohito soon after the end of WWII. And, whether willingly or through deception, there were a number of foreign correspondents involved in a disinformation campaign to achieve the plotters' aim – to change Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Occupation policies and the state of postwar Japan.

It started with an article in the *New York Times* of May 25, 1948, under the headline "Hirohito's reign seen nearing end." Lindsey Parrott, the *NYT*'s Tokyo correspondent and a member of the Tokyo Correspondents' Club (precursor of the FCCJ), citing "usually well-informed Japanese" as his source, wrote: "The possibility that Emperor Hirohito may abdicate within the next few months again is becoming a subject of

general discussion among Japanese. . . . What has again raised the question whether Hirohito is ready to step down from his throne is the approaching verdict of the eleven-nation tribunal that for the last two years has been trying former Premier Hideki Tojo and his former colleagues as war criminals." Parrott also wrote that if the Emperor should abdicate, his brother Prince Takamatsu, a former officer of the Imperial Japanese Navy, would assume the regency of the Crown Prince.

Two days later, on May 27, Reuters' Tokyo correspondent followed up with a similar article, in which he wrote, "The city today buzzed with rumours that Emperor Hirohito is planning to abdicate on August 15. . . . His abdication, it is said, would be timed to coincide with the execution of General Tojo and other war leaders."

THE SAME DAY, HOWARD Handleman, the FCCJ's first president and Tokyo correspondent for International News Service, joined the bandwagon, writing, "Japanese sources reported that Hirohito has been persuaded to step down from the throne in favor of his son, Crown Prince Akihito, who would reign through a regency until he becomes of age."

The timing was important. One month earlier, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo Trials, had completed its proceedings. It was expected that former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other Class-A war criminals would receive the death sentence, and rumors spread among correspondents that the tribunal's ruling would be timed to the Emperor's abdication. Their reports were circulated worldwide, resulting in a considerable reaction in Japan as well.

Sir Alvary Gascoigne was worried. Acting for the sole constitutional monarchy among the Allies, the British Political Representative in Japan harbored major concerns over the Emperor's abdication, and met with Gen. MacArthur at his

office in the Dai-ichi Building on June 12.

A record of their conversation, which Gascoigne sent to the British Foreign Office, can be found in the National Archives in London. In it, he wrote: "I said that I hoped that there was no truth in these rumours and that in my opinion the resulting formation of a Regency Council, in which Prince Takamatsu would presumably play a leading part, would not be desirable from the point of view of the aims of occupation. I said that as far as my information went Prince Takamatsu was inclined to be reactionary and that he had certain affiliations with undesirable purgees."

Gascoigne's worries stemmed from the imperial family's make-up at the time. Crown Prince Akihito was only 14 years old at the time, so if he were to immediately succeed the Emperor, it would be necessary to name a regent. That task would have normally fallen upon Prince Chichibu, the younger brother of the Emperor, but as he was suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, that was out of the question. There left the strong possibility that Prince Takamatsu would be next in line.

MACARTHUR SCOFFED AT THE reports, but seemed to agree with Gascoigne about the choice of regent. "General MacArthur replied that there was 'not one scintilla of truth' in the rumours regarding the Emperor's abdication. Should there ever be in future any question of the Emperor wishing to abdicate, he would insist upon his remaining in his present position."

The report continued. "The Supreme Commander said that he was in agreement with my estimation of Prince Takamatsu, whom he gravely distrusted. Rumours of the abdication stemmed from purgee circles in Japan, and these had been advertised by certain Wall Street elements through the medium of the American Magazine 'News Week[sic]'"

So why did MacArthur single out *Newsweek* for criticism? And furthermore, why would Wall Street have any involvement with the abdication of the Emperor of Japan? It started with an article that appeared six months earlier, in the Dec. 1, 1947 issue of *Newsweek*, written by American attorney James Lee Kauffman. A graduate of Harvard University who worked as a lawyer in Japan before the war, Kauffman taught at Tokyo Imperial University's Law faculty, and had many friends in Japan's financial circles.

In his article, Kauffman was critical of GHQ economic policies. GHQ had just recently arranged for the complete dissolution of the Zaibatsu as a step toward democracy, and had purged out not only militarists but those in financial or business circles who it considered to have cooperated in instigating the war. Their numbers were said to reach 200,000.

Kauffman believed the purges, particularly from the private enterprises, would interfere with Japan's recovery. He wrote, "Because of this purge both the Japanese Government and businesses have been stripped of older men of ability and experience. Japanese banks are being run by former cashiers and assistant vice presidents while business concerns are being directed by former plant managers and clerks. Young men hold the key positions in government. They are hard working, sincere and intelligent but lack the experience so desperately needed at this time."

According to Kauffman, GHQ's economic policies were "far to the left of anything tolerated in this country." He was not alone in his beliefs. The so-called "Japan Lobby," a loosely-knit group of U.S. government officials, financiers and journalists who were favorably inclined toward Japan, had begun supporting a "Reverse Course" policy, warning that efforts to dissolve the Zaibatsu and purge businessmen would weaken

the Japanese economy and bolster communist influences. Among the group's influential members were *Newsweek*'s foreign editor Harry Kern, Tokyo bureau chief Compton Pakenheim and Kauffman himself.

MacArthur saw them as attempting to change the policies of the Occupation, by encouraging the Emperor's abdication in accordance with the timing of the verdict of Tojo and the other defendants. He told Gascoigne, "Elements both in Japan and in America now saw an unlimited period of occupation ahead and Japanese purgees no doubt hoped to have more chance of getting back into their old positions under a Regency (in which Takamatsu took a prominent part) than under the present regime of Emperor Hirohito – they blamed the Emperor for his docile 'yes-man' attitude towards the severe punishment which had been meted out to them. (The General thus insinuated that big business in the States was behind

"MacArthur confirmed that the question of abdication was no longer an actual one. It had been 'artificially stimulated by foreign correspondents.'"

the abdication rumours by virtue of its desire to see restoration of pre-war economic regime in Japan which would suit its own purposes best.)"

IN ANY EVENT, THE tribunal handed down its death sentences on the seven Class-A war criminals in November 1948, later than initially expected; their executions were carried out at Sugamo Prison on Dec. 23. Concurrent to this, rumors of the abdication dissipated.

MacArthur, it seems, had managed to squelch any moves by the abdication crowd by dealing directly with the Emperor. On Jan. 13, 1949, Gascoigne sent another report to the Foreign Office, in which he conveyed what MacArthur had said to a Canadian diplomat. "MacArthur confirmed that the question of abdication was no longer an actual one. This suggestion, he said, had been 'artificially stimulated by foreign correspondents.' Emperor Hirohito had asked him (MacArthur) what course he should adopt and had intimated that he would be willing to abdicate if the Allies wished him so to do. If they were not, however, anxious to see him go, he would 'stick it out.' Thereupon MacArthur had assured His Majesty that the whole issue was an artificial one, and that there was no necessity for him to abdicate."

After a separate meeting with MacArthur, Gascoigne reported the General's assessment of Emperor Hirohito as being "more democratically progressive than any of his subjects, and certainly much more so than any of the members of the present government."

In the backdrop of the rumors over abdication soon after the war's end were behind-the-scenes political moves by people wishing to remake the emperor to their own advantage, and it's very likely that the Press Club correspondents were used in a plot to circulate disinformation. Since then, the young Crown Prince has grown, been crowned Emperor and now, at a venerable age, has expressed his desire to abdicate. Will the abdication issue again become ensnared in furtive politics and press manipulation? And if so, who will the key players be? ●

Eiichiro Tokumoto, a former Reuters correspondent, is an author and investigative journalist.

Robin Harding

by GAVIN BLAIR

While many have made the leap from journalism into more lucrative professions – a trend that has only accelerated in recent years as the media struggles to adapt to a digital world – Robin Harding left the world of high finance for the life of a hack.

The native of Durham in England's northeast graduated from Cambridge with an economics degree in 2000, at the height of the tech bubble, when everyone wanted to be in finance. Harding says he found himself ill-suited to the business side of the field, despite trying a number of different roles. "I loved the subject matter, but not the practice."

When the opportunity to take a Master's in economics at Hitotsubashi University on a Japanese government scholarship arose in 2001, Harding made his first trip to Japan. Upon graduation, he returned to London. "I tried a couple more jobs, still hadn't learned my lesson: went back into finance," he says.

He joined the *Financial Times* in the summer of 2006 on a fellowship for leader writers. Tasked with writing a leader column on his first day, he didn't know it was supposed to be daunting. "I wrote about all sorts of things in those first two years," he says, "most of which I was deeply lacking in expertise about, but then that's journalism."

When an opening for an *FT* tech reporter in Japan came up in 2008, Harding jumped at the chance to return to Tokyo. "The TV industry was still Japanese-driven, the game industry was still Japanese-driven and the phone industry had not yet been wiped out by Apple."

TWO YEARS IN TOKYO were followed by a five-year stint as the *FT*'s economics editor in Washington, before returning again to Japan at the beginning of 2015 as bureau chief. "In the U.S., my job was to break stories on what the Fed was going to do next," he says. "In Japan, my job is to explain what is happening in this far off place that we don't understand very well. Breaking stories in Tokyo is possible, but you often have to specialize so far to break something that it isn't of interest to a global audience anyway."

How to make Japan stories interesting to an international readership was the theme of a Meet the Press talk Harding gave at the Club in October last year. "The challenge I discovered – and it remains the challenge for all foreign correspondents – is finding ways to project Japanese stories so that you're still capturing the truth about Japan, but making it interesting for foreign readers. There are traps on both sides. You can just tell the standard story of the day, about politics in Japan, and your readers will sigh with boredom – if you find you have any readers. Or you can go the other way and do weird, freaky stories, which will draw readers in, but then you're not telling the truth. So we



Gavin Blair covers Japanese business, society and culture for publications in America, Asia and Europe.

have to work hard to find the stories in the middle."

Harding cites two stories he produced this year which hit the "sweet spot" that "tells people something really interesting about Japan: something different and relevant to the concerns you have." The first was an interactive piece on earthquake preparedness and risk that featured a lot of graphics. "It got well-read because it looked good and because *FT* readers around the world care about the impact of a major earthquake in Japan," he says.

The other was about house prices and how the looser planning laws make housing cheaper in Japan, a theme that resonates with readers in major cities around the world. "Nobody in Japan would think of writing that story," he says. "You don't have those rules, so you don't think about. Similarly, it wouldn't occur to people abroad to think about how Japan does this."

SIX MONTHS AFTER HARDING returned to Tokyo, the *FT* was bought from Pearson by the Nikkei in a \$1.3 billion deal which raised inevitable questions about editorial independence at the "pink 'un."

Though the *FT*'s Tokyo bureau has moved back into the Nikkei building – it was previously housed there before relocating – Harding insists there has been no attempt at editorial influence, "I'm the person most exposed to that, so

if there was any, I'm pretty confident I would know about it," he says. "We're physically segregated from the Nikkei. Literally the only place we encounter them is in the canteen."

"The Nikkei is not a company controlled by a proprietor, like a lot of the UK media is," he says. "It's essentially an employee-owned perpetual trust and doesn't really have any ideological interest in influencing us."

Harding contrasts the situation with the former ownership by publicly listed Pearson, which had extremely ambitious requirements about how much money the *FT* was supposed to make, leading to a lot of instability. "I've been at the *FT* for 10 years and there have been three rounds of redundancies. In terms of an owner who's going to be there as it makes the transition to online, they [Nikkei] are great."

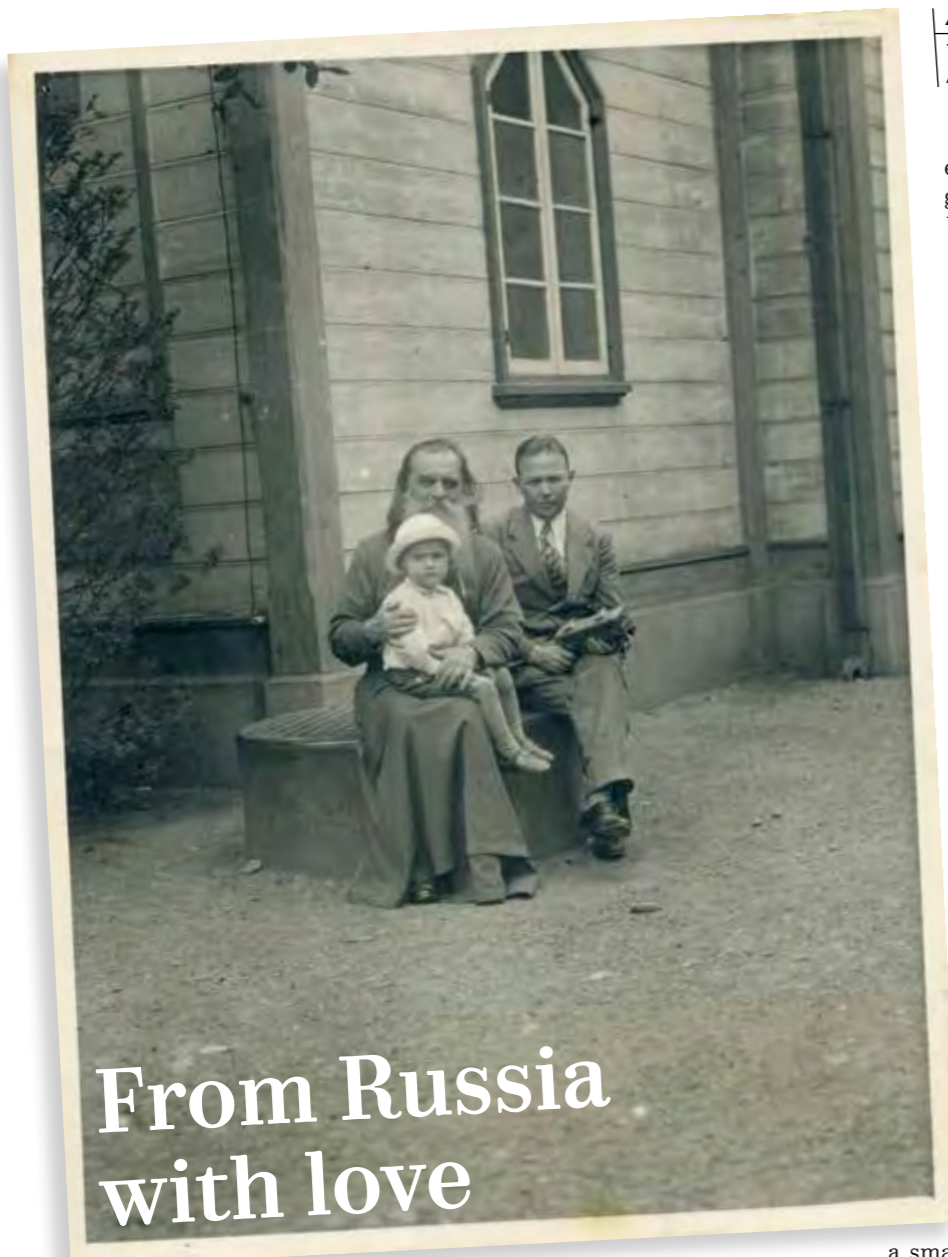
Maintaining editorial independence, he says, "has actually been a twin challenge. One is to make sure we're not censoring ourselves by avoiding writing controversial stuff about Japanese companies. But we also don't want to go out of our way to write aggressive stuff to show how independent we are. Both of these would be equally stupid things to do."

The *FT*, along with other global media outlets, has previously run stories criticizing the frequent leaking of financial data ahead of official results by Japanese companies to the

Nikkei. Asked if he would still write the story today, Harding replies, "Definitely, though I might avoid the canteen that day." ●

ANDREW POTHECARY





A history Pokrovsky as a young boy, with his father (right) and an Orthodox priest in Tokyo. And as a young man on the slopes at Bandai, Japan.

Although his degree was in chemical engineering, Victor had a solid background in church music, encouraged by his father who had been head of the major Orthodox church. He had a fine tenor voice and played the violin with distinction – his violin teacher had also tutored the maestro Jascha Heifitz – and the Russian church in Harbin needed someone like him to improve its musical standards.

He wasn't there long before word of his reputation reached Tokyo, where the Nikolai-do, the Russian Orthodox cathedral in Ochanomizu, was also seeking to boost the quality of its music and raise funds for reconstruction after the 1923 Great Tokyo Earthquake. Victor accepted the church's invitation and moved to Japan in 1924.

Not long after, Victor met Yevgenia, a young Russian woman from Khabarovsk, and in 1930 they were married at Nikolai-do. On Nov. 27, 1931, Yevgenia gave birth to their son, George. Tragedy struck on the following day when she suddenly passed away due to post-birth complications. It was a devastating blow, but Victor hired a Russian nanny to tend the child and got on with life, remarrying in 1935.

BY THIS TIME, LITTLE George was growing up and taking note of his surroundings. "I remember those as good days," he says. "As a small boy I attended the Russian school at Nikolai-do and we lived in a house in the cathedral precincts. I had many friends among the local kids and we would play together." George vividly remembers a 1937 visit with his father to the New Tokyo Beer Hall, which had just opened in Sukiwabashi. (The beer hall still exists, on the B1 level of the FCCJ's premises.)

The Pokrovsky family expanded with the arrival of two daughters, Lydia and Larisa. Then, in 1940, the Russian leaders of the Orthodox church community were forced to "retire" and were evicted from their homes. The Pokrovskys were forced to move to Yokohama.

It was Victor's intention to emigrate to the U.S. where a job was waiting at a church in San Francisco. But the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor happened before the family could leave, stranding them in Japan.

During the war, Victor, who had little capital, was able to augment his income by teaching music and playing the violin. George had enrolled in St. Joseph's College, a catholic international school in Yokohama, where they lived until 1943.

That year, faced with the threat of Allied bombing, the family moved to Karuizawa where they were eventually able to

buy their own house, thanks to Victor's connections.

By 1944 the wartime economy had worsened so much that local shops had closed their shutters; the family had to deal directly with the local farmers for basic supplies such as rice and potatoes. "At first cash was accepted but later we had to barter clothes and shoes for food," Pokrovsky says. "We were always hungry."

There were constant reminders of war despite their distance. By 1945 flights of B-29 bombers could be frequently seen flying high overhead on their way to hit their targets – such as Niigata on the Japan Sea coast.

And then the war was over, and life slowly returned to "normal." Victor got his old job back at Nikolai-do. George went back to St. Joseph's, having missed nearly three years of schooling. He finished his studies there in 1952.

"From being a stateless person suddenly I was a Japanese national."



IN OCCUPATION-RULED JAPAN, the Pokrovsky clan took stock of the situation. Most of them made plans to leave, though it took time for them to bear fruit. Lydia met and married a young American navy officer, William Kosar, and left for the U.S. in 1958. Victor, wife Irene and daughter Larisa joined them in 1962.

But George had decided to stay put. "Originally my hope had been to train as an engineer, as my father had done," he says. "But I had become disenchanted with education. I had missed years of school. I had gone without good food and had also experienced hard times. I was, you might say, an angry young man. I felt attracted to becoming a businessman."

There weren't a lot of opportunities at the time. "Jobs were difficult to come by in Occupation days," he says. "You either worked for G.H.Q. or some other branch of the military. I eventually ended up as an advertising salesman for a publication aimed at the foreign community called *Preview*."

The job was short-lived. When he noticed that the owner-publisher had too many irons in the fire and the magazine was suffering, he asked to take over. But *Preview* went bust in 1954 and the owner-publisher disappeared.

Pokrovsky turned elsewhere. "Around this time I was a ski fanatic and I had another scheme in mind. Two Japanese friends joined me in a ski resort venture on a site in Fukushima prefecture," he recalls. "But we hit several barriers.

Geoff Tudor writes for *Orient Aviation*, Hong Kong.

First, we didn't have enough capital. Second, the site was in a National Park where, according to the rules, foreigners could not own property."

They solved the first problem easily enough. "The father of one of my partners was the president of a major Japanese bank," he says. "He couldn't lend the money to three young ski fanatics directly, but one of his clients was a university classmate and vice president of a major corporation. He was appointed to the board of directors of the ski resort company and so with this impeccable figure onboard, our company could borrow."

Then the nationality issue had to be dealt with. One of his ski friends spoke to his father who happened to be a close friend of a top man at the Ministry of Justice. "He's a very curious foreigner," George's friend's father told the ministry official. "He has his own *hanko* seal." That was good enough for the official, who ordered his staff to arrange the paperwork without delay. "From being a stateless person suddenly I was a Japanese national."

GEORGE HAD A JAPANESE passport, and the ski resort project was on. "I didn't take a Japanese name, though, so I've had some fun when I turn up at airline check-in counters," says Pokrovsky. "And one of the first ski instructors we hired was an ambitious young man called Yuichiro Miura, who later gained fame for skiing down Mt. Everest."

He began to develop his publishing business in earnest. "I felt that the travel business had great capabilities, with opportunities in the market for publications featuring Japan and Asia," he says. He launched the *Far East Traveler* magazine, and its success made him feel secure enough to get married in 1966.

A big break came in 1975 when Richard Handl, the legendary General Manager of the Tokyo Hilton, asked George to provide the magazine for distribution in his hotel rooms. "This concept caught on – and to make a long story short, that's still what I do today," says Pokrovsky. "My company, Far East Reporters Inc., produces customized magazines for distribution in hotel rooms. Today our single title is *International Travel Plan*, which replaced the *Far East Traveler* in 1998."

His son Michael runs the business on a daily basis as managing editor. Pokrovsky deals with clients and advertisers as CEO – which in his case, he says, stands for "chief entertainment officer." He makes use of the FCCJ almost daily.

Life was extraordinarily good during the "Bubble Economy," when the publication business soared like a rocket. "For a brief period," says Pokrovsky, "we joined the rest of Japan in extravagance – first class air travel, Concorde flights, a big house in Yokohama."

The flow of income was partly from publishing but also from his involvement in the property business. "I realized something was happening in the real estate world when in 1990 I sold a small tract of land for a truly amazing sum," he says. "I was hooked, and started to invest heavily, borrowing from banks only too willing to lend."

He also played the gracious host at lavish parties. "I invited 25 of my top clients once a year to the fabled Kawana Hotel near Ito for two days of golf. My accountant thought I was mad, but I felt justified in holding the event."

Then the "Bubble" burst, and with it went his property investments. "I lost a packet, and in retrospect I had made a tremendous mistake," he says. "But I was not alone."

Happily, the publications business continues to perform well, which may be the source of his approach to life. "I have a wonderful family and have been extremely lucky," he says. "I have no regrets about how life has turned out." ●

A long-time member of the Club looks back at a fascinating life – from wartime to the Bubble era; from ski resort owner to magazine publisher.

by GEOFF TUDOR

When Georges Pokrovsky celebrates his 85th birthday on Nov. 27, he can look back on a life encompassing an eventful childhood, Japan's dark days of conflict and postwar recovery, the miraculous growth of the sixties and seventies and the heady days of the "Bubble Economy." An associate FCCJ member since 1964, magazine publisher Pokrovsky has been an eyewitness to Japan's modern history.

His story begins back in 1917 in Kazan, a city in southwest Russia that lies at the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka rivers, where his father, Victor Alexandrovich Pokrovsky, had just graduated from university. Young Victor joined the White Army and battled the Communist Red Army forces across Russia before finally escaping to Manchuria where he found sanctuary in the city of Harbin.

FCCJ EXHIBITION



Tsukiji Fish Market:
photographs by
Shun Kato

INEVITABLY, EVEN THINGS WITH character are helpless against the passage of time. Despite the various problems involved in Tsukiji fish market's relocation, its existence at its present site is finally drawing to an end after 80 years. The people who work there are renowned for their high spirits and energy, but will the market be able to retain the same atmosphere after moving to its new site in Toyosu? I believe the ambience of the place is something to be treasured. Tokyo's new governor has postponed relocation until after February 2017. In order to cherish the valuable time that remains, I intend to use my camera to capture every small drama in Tsukiji market as it occurs. ●

Shun Kato, born in Gifu in 1992, became fascinated with photography while studying at Nagoya University of Arts and Sciences, and after graduation he joined Jiji Press. The bulk of his work is in black-and-white and concentrates on people. His most famous series is 'The Fishermen of Okushiri Island' which led him to Tsukiji Fish Market.



HEARD AT THE CLUB

“Patrick Moynihan, who was a famous senator from New York, famously said, ‘You have a right to your own opinions, but not to your own facts.’ He was wrong. What this campaign has shown is that the candidates think they very much have a right to their own facts.”

*Norman Pearlstine,
Vice Chairman of
Time Inc.,
speaking about the
U.S. presidential
election at the
FCCJ on Sept. 11.*



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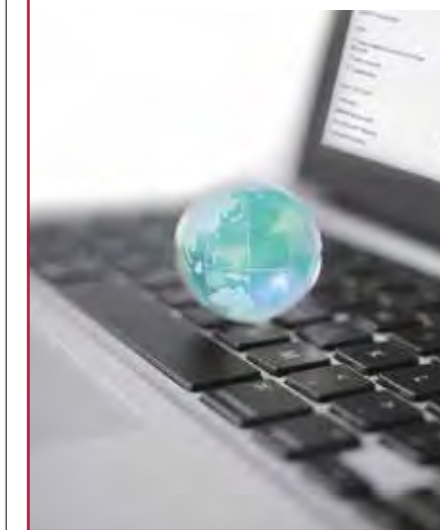
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For those already in on the secret, the application form is available on the FCCJ website or from the 19F Club office.





REGULAR MEMBERS

YOICHI TAKITA is a senior staff writer at *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, covering macro economy and financial markets. He joined the company upon graduating from Keio University in 1981 with a Master's degree in law. From 1987 until 1990 he was the Zurich Bureau Chief and from 2008-2009 he was the senior staff writer for *Nikkei America*. He returned to Japan in 2009 to the position of deputy chief editorial writer for *Nikkei*, a post he held until 2011. In 2011 he took on his present post. In 2008, Takita received the Vaughan-Ueda International Journalist Award for reports on the Lehman crisis. He has written several books, including *The Global Financial Crisis is Opening Pandora's Box* (2008), *How to Read the Currency Market, 4th edition* (2013), *How to Read Interest Rates* (2014).



BOBBIE VAN DER LIST is a freelance journalist who writes for several Dutch newspapers: *Financieel Dagblad*, *Trouw* and *Algemeen Dagblad*. A native of Amsterdam, he earned his Master of Science degree in Asian Studies from Lund University (Sweden). With a bachelor in Journalism in his pocket he made his way to Tokyo in September 2015. In addition to covering general news for Dutch newspapers, he regularly writes for special-interest magazines, covering a wide range of topics and industries: from Japanese management to culinary stories, and from technology to healthcare.

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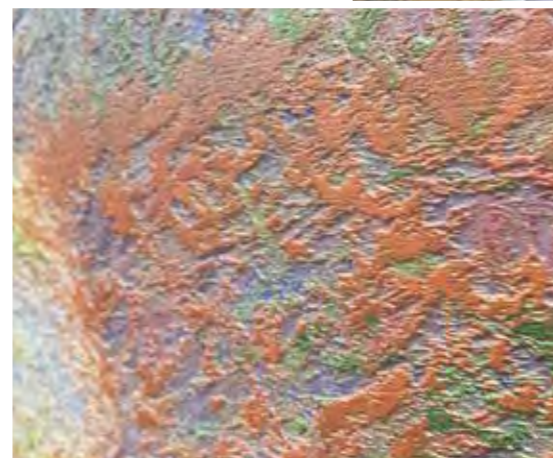
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