



NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN



October 2014, Volume 46 No. 10, ¥400

AGENT ORANGE



**Has the chemical weapon left a
rotting history in Okinawa?**

Face off
The *Sankei* and the
Korean president

Tracking the "bullies"
More elusive than
the Yeti?

WAWing the women
The selling of the
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From the President

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS more important than ever as political tensions, armed conflicts, government restrictions and secrecy increase worldwide. Whistleblowers and journalists are particularly vulnerable now, due to fewer media outlets and reporting resources. The FCCJ continues to play an active role in defending freedom of expression in Japan, and across international borders.

Our recent "statement of concern" over actions by South Korean prosecutors against the *Sankei Shimbun* Seoul bureau chief follows our long tradition of speaking out for journalists under threat due to their reporting or commentary.

Last November we broke with tradition and made a political statement of concern on the "Designated Secrets Bill" being debated in the Diet. The bill was subsequently passed on Dec. 6 despite wide opposition. This month will see the approval by the Cabinet of guidelines on how to designate and safeguard "specially designated secrets," and the law will go into effect in December. Among the many concerns that remain is the lack of an independent oversight mechanism. Who will monitor the legitimacy of classifying certain information as secrets? Journalists who investigate leaks of those designated state secrets risk arrest, with a maximum prison term of five years. We are living in interesting times, indeed.

Recently I received an email from the PEN American Center (www.pen.org) asking for our participation in a survey it's conducting "that will help [them] understand what writers and journalists outside the United States think about surveillance by the U.S. and other governments, and how it affects free expression." I'd like to ask everyone to please take a few minutes to do this important survey. It's available online and will close in early October:

Japanese : https://jp.surveymonkey.com/s/PENAmerica_International_vJapanese

English : https://www.research.net/s/PENAmerica_International_vEnglish

Honoring freedom of expression and best practices in journalism and international reporting will be on our calendar of events next year, on or around May 3, World Press Freedom Day. With the GMM's approval, the Freedom of the Press Committee will be organizing FCCJ awards based on this theme. The long-time, annual awards of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. and the Overseas Press Club in New York City are serving as inspiration and guide. We are seeking members to join the Freedom of the Press Committee and help us launch this vitally important initiative. Please join us!

As president I've received letters over the past year from individuals sharing their frustration over injustices. Some are simply rants, but others are genuine and worthy. One is from a woman incarcerated in a prison in Kansai who was convicted of killing her husband. Another is from Chimori Naito, 91, a former Kansai Electric Power Co. vice president who recently disclosed 18 years of secret payments to Japanese prime ministers beginning in the 1970s. We're hoping he will come to the Club to share his story after he recovers from surgery.

It's clear that all the letter writers felt the FCCJ offers a fair platform where concerned voices, often blocked elsewhere, can be heard. It's a tradition we can be proud of, and one that must be preserved. **— Lucy Birmingham**

From now until our 70th anniversary in November 2015, we will turn these pages over to the history of the Club, both of the many esteemed and important guests who faced us – and the world – from the FCCJ dais and of the many Members who have made the Club such a fascinating place to be.



TALES FROM THE ROUND TABLES

"IT WAS JUNE OF 1955, and novelist James Michener was at the FCCJ to meet up with an old friend for lunch. Michener already had a Pulitzer Prize under his belt for his novel, *Tales of the South Pacific*, one of a string of bestsellers that were adapted into smash Broadway and Hollywood hits. Hot off the more recent success of *Bridges at Toko-ri* and *Sayonara*, he could be forgiven for strutting even in the days when the Club boasted quite a roster of news and literary giants. He had also just married his Japanese-American paramour, Mari Yoriko Sabusawa, a noted translator and activist, so his life was on a bit of a roll.

"Yet his lunch date that day certainly could hold the floor with him, or anyone else in this august watering hole. Sitting across the table from him was Haru Matsukata, who wrote for the *Saturday Morning Post*. She was the first full Japanese member of the Club and held the position of secretary on the board of directors. As the granddaughter of Meiji prime minister Prince Masayoshi Matsukata, she came from great wealth and an aristocratic background. Her mother, Miyo, was born in the U.S. to a wealthy silk merchant, and had returned reluctantly to Japan after

meeting her husband while he was studying at Yale. Rebellious against the rigidities of an aristocratic life in Tokyo, Miyo had insisted that her children be tutored in English under the teachings of Christian Science. So Haru and her five siblings had all attended the American School In Japan.

"The planets must have been aligned that day. As Michener glanced around, who should he see across the dining room, but another old friend who had just recently returned to Japan. What the novelist did next precipitated the most famous romance in the annals of Club history: he introduced his lunch guest to his recently widowed friend, Harvard scholar Edwin Reischauer. Or should we say, reintroduced, as Edwin, who was born in Tokyo, had overlapped with Haru at ASIJ, though their six-year age difference meant Haru could only have admired the handsome athlete from afar.

"Many Club members had heard Haru frequently declare that the two types of men she avoided were diplomats – "because of their stuffiness" – and professors – "because of their dullness." But perhaps a good meal and good conversation had weakened her defenses, for something

clicked, and within months Edwin and Haru were married, with Haru flying off to Harvard with her new husband to play the eminent professor's good wife and mother to his teenage children.

"She was not to return to Tokyo until 1961, this time as the ultimate diplomat's wife after JFK appointed Edwin to the coveted post of ambassador to Japan. Like the marriage, the appointment was a complementary match, as he brought Japanese language and cultural fluency unprecedented in the history of U.S.-Japan diplomacy while her astute instincts and prominent family connections facilitated his entrée into the most influential tiers of society. The two of them were to help steer the two nations through the most difficult turbulence in the post-Occupation years.

"Given the formidable influence that the Haru-Edwin team was to wield in academia and U.S.-Japan relations over the next four decades, one has every right to believe that Michener's magic touch as a matchmaker equaled his talent for writing best-selling books."

— The Shimbun Alley Whisperers

FROM THE ARCHIVES



THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE PRIME MINISTER

OUR GUEST OF HONOR was no stranger to the Club. Eisaku Sato's first official appearance at the FCCJ had been much earlier, on July 6, 1958, as finance minister, when he established good relations with the foreign press. His next appearance came as prime minister on Feb. 11, 1965, some six months after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics had symbolized Japan's recovery from the war and emergence as an economic power.

It was at the Club's 20th anniversary party in October that year that he endeared himself to the foreign correspondents by saying he would make the prime minister's office more accessible to them. Alas, Japan's bureaucracy proved to be less cooperative, and his next visit was to be the black-tie dinner in 1967, as shown in the photo, right, and then in June of 1969 when he addressed a Professional Dinner.

Sato and his wife also helped the Club celebrate its 25th anniversary at two parties – a small one on the Club's premises in November of 1970 and a gala event at the Hotel New Otani on Jan. 15, 1971.

Although Prime Minister Sato maintained good relations with the foreign press, the same was not true of their domestic counterparts, and declining popularity led to his resignation in July of 1972. In 1974 he became a joint-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for having signed the nuclear arms Non-

Prime Minister of Japan Eisaku Sato being honored by a black-tie dinner at the FCCJ on Dec. 4, 1967. A frequent speaker at the Club, he was PM from November of 1964 to July of 1972. Smiling with him in this photo is Al Kaff of UPI. Kaff was then FCCJ President and Club stalwart, long active both as a board member and as a skit writer for our anniversary parties from 1952 until 1975. Note the old "Press Club Tokyo" speaker's stand still in use.

(Photo from FCCJ Archives)



Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970. On a historical note, Eisaku Sato was the younger brother of former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi,

the grandfather of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Al Kaff (also pictured) died in October of 2011.

— Charles Pomeroy



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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.





Digging deeper. U.S. Marines unearth barrels of suspected Agent Orange at MCAS Futenma in the early 1980s.

Behind the wire

by JON MITCHELL

The challenges of reporting military contamination on Okinawa are being overcome with collaboration, new technology and determined investigators.

Military installations are dirty places.

In the U.S. alone, there are almost 40,000 sites polluted by the Pentagon – more than 140 of which are so contaminated they have been placed on the Environmental Protection Agency’s Superfund list of areas in need of federal remediation. Military pollutants include depleted uranium, chemical weapon waste, trichloroethylene, PCBs and pesticides. At USMC Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for example, between 1953 and 1987 water contamination exposed hundreds of thousands of troops and their families to industrial solvents and other chemicals – forcing the government to enact special legislation in 2012 to aid survivors.

Given the extent of military contamination and its damage to human health, there is a compelling public duty for journalists to report the problem. However a number of challenges stand in our way. The Pentagon, citing national security concerns, can block the release of environmental surveys, and barbed wire and armed guards impede access to contaminated sites. Moreover, many service members with inside knowledge of pollution are afraid of speaking to the press for fear of reprisals.

of lead found on former USFJ property.

For the past four years, I’ve been investigating U.S. military contamination on Okinawa and its risks to local residents, service members and their dependants. In 2012, *Defoliated Island*, a TV documentary based upon my work won an award for excellence from Japan’s Association of Commercial Broadcasters and this month will see the publication of my Japanese-language book – *Chasing Agent Orange on Okinawa*.

Although Washington denies it stored Agent Orange on Okinawa during the Vietnam War, more than 250 U.S. veterans are suffering from illnesses they believe are caused by their exposure to it. They claim to have transported, stored, sprayed and, in some cases, buried Agent Orange on Okinawa. They have photos of barrels of defoliants on the island and even the U.S. military cites a stockpile of 25,000 barrels on Okinawa prior to 1972.

As an environmental contaminant, what makes Agent Orange particularly worrisome is its persistence. In South Vietnam, there are still around 30 dioxin hot-spots on land formerly used by the U.S. military during the war; the Viet-

Such obstacles to reporting are exacerbated in Japan. The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) absolves the U.S. military from all responsibility to clean up its bases, so Japan’s tax payers fund 100 percent of remediation costs following the return of base land to civilian usage. Furthermore, the U.S. military is not required to grant local officials access to installations even when the safety of civilian neighbors is at risk. In August 2013, for example, after a USAF helicopter crashed near a dam providing water to the local Okinawan community, USFJ denied prefectural government officials entry to the site.

As the host of more than 30 U.S. military bases, Okinawa bears the burden of the Pentagon’s presence in Japan. It also suffers from the pollution. When the whole island was under U.S. jurisdiction between 1945 and 1972, it was the storage site of approximately 1200 nuclear warheads and 13,000 tons of chemical weapons. Yet, to date, the Pentagon has never conducted comprehensive environmental surveys of its bases on Okinawa; often the true extent of military contamination only becomes apparent after the return of land. Examples include Onna village, where high levels of mercury and PCBs hindered plans to redevelop military land returned in 1995, and Chatan town, which had to postpone a road-widening project last year because of dangerous levels

name Red Cross estimates the number of people sick from exposure exceeds 3 million.

As well as unearthing the secret history of Agent Orange on Okinawa, the book explores ways new technology can be harnessed for collaborative investigative journalism at a time when newsrooms have slashed their budgets for such reporting. During the past four years, a diverse group of people – military whistleblowers, former C.I.A. staff, veterans and environmental scientists – have pooled their skills to surmount the barriers to access on Okinawa erected by the Pentagon. Okinawan journalists have played especially decisive roles in this collaborative process. The island has a strong history of investigative journalism and reporters have often won national prizes for their work; in particular, Natsuko Shimabukuro, the Ryukyu Asahi Broadcasting director of *Defoliated Island*, contributed vital knowledge, energy and connections to the hunt.

One illustration of how this collaborative approach bore fruit was the investigation into a leak of nerve agent that occurred at Chibana Ammunition Depot in 1969. By bringing together U.S. veterans, Okinawan journalists and archive reports, it was possible to triangulate a previously unreported dump of tons of sarin gas in Okinawa’s seas. At the time, such disposal was standard operating procedure for the U.S. military – but it had never admitted to the practice on Okinawa. According to chemical weapons experts, the nerve gas dumped almost half a century ago poses a very real risk to coastal communities on the island today.

With a majority of Okinawans opposed to the large number of bases on their island, the Pentagon seems determined not to give residents more reason to resent its presence – and it has mobilized its PR machine to rebut my research. In February 2013, it released a nine-month-in-the-making counter-report on my coverage that concluded there was no proof Agent Orange was ever stored on the island. The report failed to note that the author hadn’t bothered to visit Okinawa or interview any of the veterans alleging exposure – nor did the report mention that his previous research had received funding from the manufacturers of Agent Orange.

The report’s conclusion was predictable. The U.S. military has had more than half a century of practice in obfuscating about Agent Orange; in the 1970s when U.S. Vietnam War veterans first started developing symptoms of defoliant-related illnesses, the government accused them of suffering from drug addiction or sexually-transmitted diseases. It still refuses to help the millions of dioxin-poisoned Vietnamese survivors. However what surprised me more than the Pentagon’s response was the reaction of some elected officials on Okinawa who declined to support health surveys of former base workers and displayed reluctance to act on veterans’ accounts of a large cache of defoliants buried beneath Chatan Town.

With officials unwilling to take action, the task has been taken up by civic groups – in particular, the Citizens’ Network for Biodiversity in Okinawa.

“Okinawa Prefecture has not been addressing contamination issues seriously,” says Dr. Masami Kawamura, director of the network. “It always looks to the Japanese government – not to Okinawan people – which means they are unwilling to play a role in overseeing Tokyo’s policy.”

“A system to review and oversee the process of the government’s investigation and remediation needs to be established,” says Kawamura. “And through studying their actions, we

should raise Okinawan people’s consciousness of contamination issues with the goal of building the capacity for clean-up.”

In the U.S., too, there appears to be growing awareness of the poisonous legacy on Okinawa. In August, the Congressional Research Service cited an article I’d originally written for the *Japan Times* featuring whistleblown military documents that suggested officials had hidden massive PCB contamination at Kadena Air Base in the 1980s. Also, despite the Pentagon’s counter-report, one seriously ill U.S. veteran was able to win his claim in October 2013 for exposure to Agent Orange on Okinawa by citing military documents discovered by myself and fellow researchers – and that case looks likely to open the floodgates for further wins.

‘Okinawan people absolutely have a right to know where Agent Orange and similar pollutants were buried on their land’

Meanwhile, last year Washington and Tokyo announced that they would consider amending SOFA to allow more access for civilian authorities to survey U.S. bases prior to their return; the latest in the ongoing series of talks was held in September.

With concerns about military contamination so high, on Nov. 1 and 2 an international symposium titled “Agent Orange and the Politics of Poisons” will be held at Okinawa Christian University.

Gathering experts from Canada, Vietnam, the U.S. and Japan – as well as survivors of military contamination – the symposium is the first of its kind to be held on Okinawa.

“Okinawan people absolutely have a right to know where Agent Orange and similar pollutants were buried on their land,” says Dr. Daniel Broudy, chair of the symposium’s organizing committee. “The symposium will draw attention to the reasons why, under the present SOFA, the people of the prefecture are dealing with the ongoing defilement of their land and water. We would ultimately like to create an ongoing public dialogue about military contamination . . . so the U.S. government will no longer be able to ignore the just demands of people living here.”

In the coming years, a number of U.S. bases on Okinawa are slated for closure, including parts of Machinato Service Area, one of the Vietnam War-era stockyards most often cited by veterans as an Agent Orange storage site, and ultimately MCAS Futenma. Many in the prefecture have pinned their hopes on the economic benefits brought by re-development of this land. Okinawa is Japan’s poorest prefecture; the U.S. military takes up 10 percent of the land (18 percent of Okinawa’s main island) but contributes less than 5 percent to the economy.

To what extent military contamination hobbles these ambitions looks likely to be one of the most urgent issues facing the island in the years to come. Journalists have a responsibility to force transparency from both the Japanese and U.S. authorities in order to ensure a safe environment for all residents – regardless of which side of the wire they live on. ●

On Oct. 30, Jon Mitchell, Drs. Daniel Broudy and Masami Kawamura will speak at a FCCJ press conference titled “Collateral damage: Agent Orange, military contamination and Okinawa.”

The international symposium, Agent Orange and the Politics of Poisons, will be held at Okinawa Christian University Nov. 1 & 2. Details at their website.

Jon Mitchell is an Asia-Pacific Journal associate who writes regularly for the *Japan Times*. He is the author of *Chasing Agent Orange on Okinawa*, published this month.



Tim Hornyak

by DAN SLATER

Anybody who has an interest in Japanese robots should recognize the name Tim Hornyak.

The Canadian is the author of a well researched and beautifully illustrated book, *Loving the Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots*, which you can consult in the FCCJ library. Written in 2006, the book analyzes Japan's fascination with humanoid devices starting with the mechanical toys of several centuries ago to the cutting edge "partner robots" of today.

The 41-year-old is also Tokyo correspondent for technology newswire IDG News Service, a position formerly held by Martyn Williams, FCCJ president in 2008/9.

Hornyak's interest in Japan was stoked by a childhood fascination with its popular culture and technology. William Gibson's science fiction novel *Neuromancer* was also an influence, as were countless Japanese films and cartoons.

But his first encounter with Asia was South Korea, where he journeyed in the mid-90s soon after graduating in English Literature from McGill University in his native Montreal, Canada. In 1999 he made the inevitable jump to Japan. He first worked as an editor at Kyodo News and NHK for a few years while contributing to the Lonely Planet guidebook series on countries such as South Korea, Canada and Japan.

He was able to establish himself in tech journalism with the successful reception of his book. It was partly inspired by an uncanny experience he had at a major robotics exhibition in 2005, when he briefly mistook a perfectly groomed female android for a real person. The shock impressed him so deeply that he decided to write about it, describing in the process many of the cultural and psychological issues surrounding man's acceptance (or not) of android partner robots. This is one of the hottest issues in the commercial applications of robotics today, and it affects everything from healthcare to warfare.

Despite the recognition that Japan has made some significant contributions to many tech sectors, including robotics, Hornyak is not confident that the country will continue to play a large global role.

Time and again, he points out, Japan has invented a great technology like i-mode and failed to globalize it. The sheer size of the economy means companies believe they can avoid the challenges of international growth by focusing on the large domestic market, he argues, unlike tiny South Korea which, historically often crushed between its giant neighbours China and Japan, has been forced to compete on the larger stage. Samsung has consequently easily taken the crown of best Asian tech company from Sony and is now vying with Apple for the world title.

The same is true in robotics. While Japanese firms were producing tantalizingly cute but commercially useless figures like Asimo and Aibo the dog, a U.S. company produced a visually uninspiring but best-selling robotic vacuum cleaner. Drones make up another area where Hornyak finds it difficult to explain the Japanese absence.

This ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory does not mean the country is denuded of possibilities. But it does mean that Japan is being forced away from directly servicing the consumer, usually the most profitable part of the pie, as Apple and Samsung have proven. He cites Toshiba's recent decision to downsize manufacturing of its popular PCs and to focus manufacturing further upstream as another example.

Having said that, Japan still garners steady interest in the tech sector as a futuristic, quirky and interesting country for technology, says Hornyak. Fujitsu, for example, has retooled some old electronics factories to grow vegetables with very low levels of potassium, for the use of patients suffering kidney ailments. And the country has its share of eccentric inventors, such as Kenji Kawakami, whose *Chindogu*, or "strange tools," include a toilet plunger-style suction tool for commuters to attach to the carriage roof and hang on during rush hour.

His experience of journalism has clearly been positive; it has granted him the chance to do what many young people dream of: to meet interesting people, to go to exotic countries and, best of all, to get paid for doing it.

But he says the media industry is getting much tougher, with journalists being mercilessly squeezed to generate higher productivity. "All the different print, TV and radio media are coming to form one

medium, namely Internet journalism," he says. "Today, journalists need to master video and photography skills - and even be able to write simple computer code."

The technology is moving so fast, he says, that all the knowledge he picked up in journalism school is laughably out of date, such as using razor blades to cut magnetic tape while editing radio documentaries.

Hornyak believes that the only way journalists can survive today is not only to master those skills but also to think more broadly about their craft. He sees an inevitable blurring between public relations, other forms of writing and journalism, simply because the latter these days pays so poorly and infrequently. Indeed, he estimates that 50 percent of his classmates from journalism school now work in PR. "I understand the old distinction between 'Church and State,' as it were," he says, "but I think journalists have to be realistic."

He is also concerned about the torrents of unverified information that the Internet generates and praises the ethics of his employer IDG. "Primary sourcing is just not used by many bloggers and online commentators, leading to wrong information being endlessly repeated," he says. "At IDG, we're taught not to rely on press releases or website comments alone, but to verify the underlying story whenever possible by confirming with primary sources."

In 2009, Hornyak took his freelance career home to Canada where he wrote for CNET News among others, before returning again to Tokyo 2013 with IDG. Now living on the edge of one of Tokyo's most natural habitats where he's settled after his recent marriage, it looks as if his roots in the country are only meant to grow. ●

Today, journalists need to master video and photography skills - and even be able to write simple computer code

Dan Slater is a Tokyo-based writer and consultant. You can see his blog at www.thedelphinetwork.com



Sitting comfortably? Left, the “comfort women” statue in Glendale, California; opposite, the *Tokyo Shimbun*

Toyota, president of the “Mothers’ Association Protecting Japanese Children,” had even sent an open letter to Kono. “Why the heck innocent Japanese children are bashed [sic] because of disinformation?!” the somewhat clumsy English translation of her letter demanded.

The following month, perhaps in reaction to the reportage by *Yukan Fuji*, Glendale’s sister city of Higashiosaka announced the suspension of its home-stay visits planned for the following March by students from a local public high school, a program that began in 1996. The city gave its reason as, “the possibility the students will be drawn into a political problem. We are uncertain of the local circumstances and it is difficult to ascertain their safety.”

The name of Ikuyo Toyota was to surface once again in a column by Miki Otaka that touched on the bullying in the February issue of *Seiron*, the *Sankei*’s monthly opinion magazine. But the woman herself was elusive to the point of invisibility. No interviews or photographs of her have ever appeared in the media, and attempts to locate the association that she claimed to represent were unsuccessful. It’s as if she had fired off a volley at Yohei Kono and then

vanished, guerrilla-like, into thin air.

The next media reference to bullying appeared in the *Sankei Shimbun* of Feb. 15, under the headline “‘Spit in ramen’ ‘Rice served cold’ . . . The harassment of Japanese in the U.S. over the comfort women.”

At a Feb. 25 press event at the FCCJ, two female politicians, Tomoko Tsujimura of Komae City and Yoshiko Matsuura of Tokyo’s Sugunami Ward, members of the “Japan Coalition of Legislators Against Fabricated History” who had recently returned from a trip to Glendale to register their protest against the statue, made similar assertions.

“Japanese schoolchildren are suffering from bullying by Koreans,” said Matsuura via an interpreter. “Some of them told us they feel anxiety because they must hide being Japanese. Korean people are presenting this as a human-rights issue, but this can only lead to a new conflict of racial discrimination.” The women’s claims were repeated verbatim in stories filed by AP, *Time*, the *Japan Times* and the *South China Morning Post*.

In its May issue, *Seiron* magazine ran a 5-page article by lower house Diet member Mio Sugita of the Japan Restoration Party titled “*Zaibei hojin ga Kankokujin ni kurushimerare-ru genkyo*” (The main source of what’s causing Japanese in America to be harassed by Koreans).

“Before departing Japan I had obtained information that local Japanese children had been subjected to vicious bullying, so I expected during my visit to meet with the victims’ parents,” wrote Sugita. “However, this is a very delicate matter, and for a variety of circumstances the parents were not able to come to the meeting place; I suppose they were hesitant out of fears that it would make the situation worse

by turning it into an uproar. Instead I was informed of the details by Mr. Takao Naito, an instructor at a local Japanese school, that the bullying was a fact – that Japanese children had been spat upon or struck for the sole reason that they were Japanese.”

My interest was further piqued by an article written by Tato Takahama in the May issue of *Sapio*, a monthly published by Shogakukan. When it comes to attacking the two Koreas and China, *Sapio* is known to pull no punches. But the article on the lawsuit filed over the comfort woman statue in Glendale made no mention of the bullying.

I fired off a mail to Takahama, who is based in Southern California, to ask him why. In a nutshell he told me that he had investigated but failed to come up with a primary source.

I subsequently learned via the grapevine that at least two Japanese journalists in California had also been unsuccessful in tracking down any conclusive details. And efforts by a local American reporter for Glendale’s *News-Press* had also proved fruitless.

I was intrigued by this discrepancy between politicians’ claims of bullying and the apparent inability of locally based writers to substantiate them. Equally curious, with two exceptions, media coverage of the bullying allegations was confined to two newspapers and two magazines belonging to the Fuji-Sankei group.

My inquiries to individuals in Glendale who should have some information or insight continued to come up blank. “This is not true,” Sebastian Puccio, coordinator for the Glendale Unified School District, wrote me. “We are not aware of any incidents of students of Korean ethnicity confronting students of Japanese ancestry in this district, nor would this be tolerated.”

David Monkawa, a Glendale resident and member of the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress organization, wrote that he had also made inquiries, but with no success. “Sgt. Thomas R. Lorenz, Public Information Officer of the Glendale Police Dept., stated these statements are ‘100 percent fabricated,’” said Monkawa, who ended up believing that Glendale “should have the Human Rights Commission issue a stern statement exposing these lies.”

A Japanese residing in Los Angeles made a number of telephone calls on my behalf. A teacher at a school for Japanese children told him that the school had heard about the bullying story and had sent out a note asking for parents to report any incidents, but no one did. Inquiries to the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), which serves as a sounding board for the Japanese community in Southern California, said they had no information on “Ikuyo Toyota” or her organization.

I also met with legislators Tsujimura and Matsuura on April 28, to request more information. Both assured me that their claims were authentic. “We actually met the mothers of the victims, who met with us since we are government representatives,” Matsuura asserted. “They don’t want to be identified as victims. We met with four mothers, but did not photograph them. We conducted a survey and have revised it so as to conceal their personal identities. The drafts have been locked away in a safety-deposit box.”

What’s preventing these victims from coming forward? Japanese, explained Tsujimura, have a strong propensity to exercise *gaman* (forbearance), making them averse to airing their misfortunes in public. Fear of possible retribution also made them unwilling to disclose their names or other details.

Then the wind changed direction. On June 13, *Shukan Kin-yobi* magazine ran an article by Emi Koyama, a resident of Seattle who had also apparently been struck by the seriousness of the claims. “My inquiries to the Glendale police and Glendale school board failed to find even a single complaint,” Koyama wrote. “Moreover, there has not been a single [locally published] article reporting bullying of Japanese children. Naturally, the lack of complaints isn’t proof that no bullying occurred, but I suppose it can at least be taken to mean that it did not occur extensively.”

And in its Aug. 29 edition, *Tokyo Shimbun* devoted most of a two-page spread to the bullying story, under a headline that read, “Right-wing forces provoke concerns.” It reported that upon hearing rumors of harassment, the websites operated by the Japanese embassy and consulates in Los Angeles and other cities requested Japanese nationals in the U.S. to come forward with information. They received no responses.

A day later, the *Tokyo Shimbun* article was the target of a half-hour salvo by the Sakura Action group on YouTube, under the title, “*Tokyo Shimbun* – is it really true Japanese in the U.S. aren’t being victimized?”

The story of bullying of Japanese in the U.S. reached as far as Australia where it was also raised as an argument against a comfort women memorial that was being proposed in the Sydney suburb of Strathfield. A letter dated April 10, in response to an earlier article on the *OurStrathfield* website, carried a message from Yukari Suzuki, a self-described Japanese mother living in California, “where a ‘Comfort Woman Statue’ was installed in 2013. Please read it and send it forward to your friends and families,” Suzuki wrote.



Japanese residents in the United States, including young children of 6 or 7 years old, are now experiencing unreasonable hardships caused by the misunderstandings and the racial discrimination toward Japanese people. Not only Koreans and Chinese but also some Hispanics and Caucasians are looking down to Japanese and Japanese-American people. I feel greatly wronged about it as my family and I were not even born at the time of the WWII. Do we really want this kind of ethnical [sic] troubles in the future?

In the end, I’ve given up on substantiating or refuting the allegations. Obtaining the names of victims and details of the alleged bullying has proved to be as hard as finding the Yeti.

If anything, there is some irony in the assertion that victims who’ve suffered won’t come forth to testify about their suffering because of cultural reasons. One might be tempted to point out a similar unwillingness to air even more shameful treatment by those who worked in the comfort women stations.

I found it doubly ironic that Japanese politicians working tirelessly for the retraction of the Kono Statement – due to its “unreliable and unverified testimony” – offer no more than vague testimony regarding bullying in Glendale, and stonewall attempts at verification. As elected officials, they must surely recognize the need for transparency in public discourse. Their unwillingness, or inability, to persuade even a single bullying victim in Glendale to come forward and identify the tormentor(s) weakens their credibility and damages their cause. ●

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Tracking Southern California’s elusive “bullies”

by MARK SCHREIBER

When media and politicians use serious claims of bullying to buttress their political argument, should their sources be allowed to hide behind anonymity?

Japan observers would agree that much of the debate over contemporary events in the country remains internalized, never emerging from the confines of the language barrier or beyond geographical boundaries. But one topic – the alleged bullying of young Japanese students overseas – did receive coverage by domestic and international media alike.

Because of its shocking subject, the story was not only picked up by numerous media, but led a number of reporters, including this one, on a quest to shed light on its veracity. Unfortunately, none of us were able to discover the source, or to debunk the claims (proving a negative is tough stuff without cooperation). But the story’s shelf life as a popular meme is instructive in a number of ways.

The story began as a claim of blowback from the July 2013 erection of a “comfort woman” memorial in a park in Glendale, California. An article appeared in the *Yukan Fuji* last Nov. 5 titled “Open letter to Yohei Kono on the comfort women issue: ‘Did he know of the falsified survey contents?’” For those monitoring the right’s discontent, there was little new. The article attacked the 1993 “Kono Statement,” an acknowledgement of the Japanese government’s culpability over the sex-slave issue and de-facto apology by Yohei Kono, then-Cabinet Secretary in the Miyazawa cabinet. But what caught the eyes of many readers was when it went on to tie Kono’s remarks to bullying and harassment of Japanese children by Koreans in Glendale, as alleged by members of the women’s patriotic group, Nadeshiko Action.

According to the group, the *Yukan Fuji* wrote, “Japanese children were being called ‘rapists’ by Americans” and that “children hesitate to use the Japanese language in public out of concerns for their safety.” The paper reported that one Ikuyo

Meet Japan's all-time favorite American tunesmith, though no one knows his name.

by MARY CORBETT

Japan's love affair with the music of one of America's most prolific composers started in earnest with the arrival of the U.S. Occupation forces in 1945. Today, despite changing musical tastes and a huge generation gap, the country's airwaves continue to be filled with the sounds of his catchy classics, like "Shall We Dance," "Blue Moon" and "My Favorite Things" – to name just a few of his eminently hummable tunes.

Richard Rodgers' songs are arguably the best-loved foreign tunes of all time in Japan. What is particularly impressive is that the public actually knows the lyrics to some of them – in both original and translated versions – in a nation of very few English speakers. Stop shoppers on the Ginza, or salarymen in Shimbashi, and chances are pretty good that they will be able to sing a full verse and beyond of "Do Re Mi," from *The Sound of Music*. How many Americans could do that?

The closest non-Rodgers contender of frequently sung foreign songs (after eliminating "Happy Birthday" for essentially having only five words), might be "Jingle Bells," except that very few Japanese who claim to know it can actually sing the lyrics beyond the first line.

But while the music is ubiquitous, his name is not. Though many of Rodgers' melodies are recognized national treasures, an online search in Japanese will have you digging through pages of an eminent British architect, and more recently, an American football player from the Green Bay Packers, before coming across the most popular and esteemed Broadway name of all time.

Want more proof that he's the most popular songwriter no one's ever heard of? Go to a match at FC Tokyo, a top J League soccer team, and you'll hear the rousing chorus of a stadium full of fans singing their anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone," entirely in English. They took their cue, of course, from the legendary Kop's fans of Liverpool Football Club. And, like most fans around the world who've had this sing-along melody deeply embedded in their passionate football memories, the FC Tokyo fans believe it is a song written by the Liverpool band Gerry and the Pacemakers in the 1960s. Not true. This, also, is a Rodgers' creation.

The song was played endlessly on Japanese television after the Tohoku Earthquake in 2011 as leading foreign-based soccer players' messages of encouragement poured in from around the world. Still, most football fans have yet to discover that the song was written by Rodgers and his lyricist partner, Oscar Hammerstein, for the musical *Carousel* in 1945. In fact, even FC Tokyo officials were surprised to find the true roots of what they thought was a quintessentially English anthem. "It's amazing to discover the Broadway origins of the world's most famous football song," says Nobuki Kobayashi, an executive of FC Tokyo. "We're eager to share this, with a special focus on Richard Rodgers, with our fans in the coming season."

So perhaps Japan can be forgiven that none but the most devoted fans of stage musicals know the name Richard Rodgers, or the even more widely recognized brand of Rodgers & Hammerstein.

In the U.S. and much of Europe, the two need little introduction. They were the unsurpassed masters of the blockbuster hit musicals and led the charge of revolutionizing the musical genre from showcasing thinly plotted vaudevillian

The enduring legacy of a song-writing enigma



Richard Rodgers

tunes in the 1920s into a new era of powerful social commentaries and Pulitzer-winning storylines such as *South Pacific* (spun together from the novel *Tales From the South Pacific* by the FCCJ's own James Michener), *Carousel* and *The Sound of Music*.

All of the above musicals are popular in Japan, and rare is a season when one of them, along with other R&H favorites like *Oklahoma* and *The King and I* are not being staged somewhere by the nation's most popular troupes, Gekidan Shiki and Takarazuka. This isn't the biggest musical theater market in the world, but within its select pool, R&H reign shoulder to shoulder with the king of modern musicals, Andrew Lloyd Webber. As popular as Lloyd Webber and his creations *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera* may be, however, you won't find many people on the streets of Tokyo able to hum along, let alone sing the lyrics, to any of his songs past the opening, "Memories . . ."

The startling volume of Rodgers' much-covered hits can be partly attributed to his extraordinary longevity, the start of which predates his partnership with Hammerstein by a couple of decades. Rodgers' very first mega-hit was "Manhattan," written with his Columbia University *sempai* Lorenz Hart in 1925, soon after leaving school, and it launched them quickly beyond Broadway into the popular music stratosphere.

Rodgers had both the artistry and pragmatic craftsmanship to ride the tide of evolving tastes right until his death in 1979. Though many of the Rodgers and Hart stage productions of the 1920s and 30s didn't transition well beyond WWII, the musicals left a legacy of indelible classic songs, such as "My Funny Valentine," "Blue Moon," "Isn't It Romantic," "This Can't Be Love" (a huge Nat King Cole hit), and the Academy Award-winning "It Might As Well Be Spring."

These form the core of Rodgers' jazz songbooks performed by everyone from Ella, Frank, Louis, Elvis and Miles Davis to more recent recordings by Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart and Alicia Keys. Even Lady Gaga can be heard belting out an impressive version of "The Lady Is A Tramp" with Tony Bennett in a recent album (and a must-see video). Rodgers' music translates as well commercially across generations as it does culturally.

Rodgers & Hammerstein's big break in Japan was undoubtedly the arrival of *The Sound of Music* in 1965, and the film's upcoming 50th anniversary celebrations being planned around the world may finally impress the august composer's name into Japan's collective memory.

TV and magazine crews, including a top-rated Japanese talk show, have been flying into Salzburg from all over the world in recent weeks to recapture the magical opening scene of Julie Andrews running up the hills made famous by the movie. And a number of tribute concerts and events are being planned in Tokyo to commemorate the half-century of its enduring popularity next year.

One interesting side note is that long before the movie's opening in Japan, one of *Sound of Music's* songs had already topped the local music charts, thanks to the passion of Peggy Hayama, a jazz star and huge Richard Rodgers fan. She often performed "With A Song In My

Heart," a favorite standard by Rodgers & Hart, so after a concert in Los Angeles to commemorate the centennial of Japan-U.S. relations in 1959, Hayama was persuaded by friends to fly to New York to see the Broadway production of *The Sound of Music*, starring Mary Martin, the season's phenomenon that everyone was raving about.

It was over 50 years ago, yet the elation of the opening scene was "so exquisite, though very different from the film version," that she still remembers it as a thrill that was to change her life. At intermission, noting that everyone was humming the "Do Re Mi" song, recalls Hayama, "I was rushing around the lobby to buy every souvenir and sheet music being sold to take home with me." That night, she began translating the song into Japanese, and by the time she landed back in Tokyo, the finished translation was ready to be presented to NHK, where it quickly found its way onto the premiere song program of its day, "Min-na no Uta." The song became an overnight sensation, and a beloved "Japanese classic" was born.

So why wouldn't the composer of all these classics that the Japanese have taken to their hearts have far greater public recognition, if only for the fact that he was the first person ever to win an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar and a Tony (in record numbers), not to mention his Pulitzer. It isn't as though there is some collective effort to deny the man his rightful place in the local music pantheon. In fact, many high-profile artists and influential producers here are ardent fans.

"Shall We Dance" was the theme song and inspiration for the movie of the same title by director Masayuki Suo, which took the world's film festivals by storm and was later followed

by a Hollywood version starring Richard Gere and Jennifer Lopez. Top stage producer Amon Miyamoto took on the task of re-translating all of Hammerstein's lyrics when he directed his much acclaimed stage production of *The Sound of Music*.

And, finally, nothing illustrates the hypnotic power of Rodgers' song-writing abilities like its appeal to advertisers. Rodgers' tunes have graced the television commercials of some of Japan's biggest advertisers, including Suntory ("Shall

We Dance"), Kirin ("You'll Never Walk Alone"), and Family Mart ("Happy Talk"), to name a very few. Japan Rail chose "My Favorite Things" as the theme song for a massive promotional campaign for Kyoto in 1993 that was to be a teaser in the lead-up to the city's 1200-year anniversary celebration of its founding the following year.

The public response was so impressive that the tune from *The Sound of Music* has become the virtual "Song of Kyoto." Some 21 years later, it is still being used for the breathtaking commercials, renewed every three months to showcase the ancient city in all its glorious seasonal colors, each time with a dramatically different musical arrangement.

But it just may be Rodgers' unparalleled versatility and the diverse timing and paths through which the songs entered the fabric of Japanese society that have confused the awareness of his amazing story. While his songs are broadcast, played, recorded, sung, hummed and performed in clubs and karaoke joints across the breadth of Japan, the enigma of Richard Rodgers, the most popular American songwriter that nobody knows, remains just that. How he would feel about it is anyone's guess. ●

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Full-court press



A controversial government minister comes to the Club to make her case – but the journalists in the audience have other ideas.

by JULIAN RYALL

IF ERIKO YAMATANI ARRIVED at the FCCJ thinking that she would be fielding the sort of softball queries she usually faces from *kisha kurabu* correspondents covering the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea, she was very quickly disabused of that notion. As soon as the question-and-answer session began, the focus of the Sept. 25 press conference switched to her knowledge of and support for Zaitoku-kai, an ultra-right group infamous for its hate speech demonstrations against Korean residents of Japan, and to her relationship with Shigeo Masuki, a former senior official of the group.

Yamatani's efforts to deflect the questions with a disarming smile, combined with her nonchalant dismissal of a *Shukan Bunshun* story – in which she claimed not to be aware that Masuki was involved with Zaitoku-kai, despite an accompanying photo of the politician with Masuki – failed to dissuade the foreign press from its line of questioning. She did, however, pointedly thank a Japanese journalist from NHK for giving her a brief respite by asking

her about upcoming negotiations with North Korea about the fates of the missing Japanese nationals.

It had all started so well for the minister, appointed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his cabinet reshuffle in early September to a position that also encompasses the National Public Safety Commission and oversees the activities of the police. In her opening comments, Yamatani had underlined her long track record of trying to secure the freedom of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea and to protect human rights.

She was a speaker at a United Nations symposium earlier in September and demanded that Pyongyang be held accountable for its human rights abuses. “We believe there is increasing attention being focused on this topic around the world and we want to take advantage of that momentum,” Yamatani added.

She also held aloft a large picture of Megumi Yokota, abducted in November 1977 at the age of 13, and insisted that the Japanese government would continue to put pressure on North Korea to “ensure a comprehensive resolution to this issue.”

Yamatani probably wished she had devoted more time to her presentation than to answering questions from the press, with Richard Lloyd Parry of the *Times* first up to ask her how long she had known Masuki, how many times she had met the former Zaitoku-kai official and whether she would be willing to “reject unconditionally the organization, the policies and sentiments which it represents.”

“My electoral district is basically the entire nation and, as a result, I travel throughout the country and I meet many people,” Yamatani said. “I did not know that Mr. Masuki is related to the Zaitoku-kai organization.”

Asked when she first met Masuki and how many times they have met, Yamatani claimed she has “no specific memory” of when or how many times she has met him. Avoiding a condemnation of the Zaitoku-kai, she said, “I do not believe it is appropriate to make specific comments about different organizations.”

Pressed on the point by Jake Adelstein, who pointed out that hate speech has been identified by the United Nations, the U.S. State Department and Japan's National Police Agency – which Yamatani heads – as an issue that Japan needs to address, the minister claimed that “*wa*” is of great importance in Japanese society. “Japan

has a long history of placing great value on the idea of *wa*, or ‘harmony,’” she said. “Japan has a long history of respecting the human rights of every single individual.”

Suggesting that groups that are behind hate speech that encourages discrimination “cannot be tolerated,” Yamatani added that any illegal activities should be subject to “the appropriate procedures” by the police and the courts. Responding to a question about the right-wing attacks on Japan's liberal media, primarily the *Asahi Shimbun*, and the suggestion that the government is encouraging that hounding of the left-of-center media, Yamatani insisted that “freedom of the press very much exists in Japan.”

One of the oddest answers was to a question by a TBS radio reporter who asked the minister about a previous written reply she had given to the broadcaster. According to the reporter, when asked what kind of organization she thought the Zaitoku-kai was, she had replied that it was trying to heighten awareness of the “special privileges” that Koreans receive. When he asked what special privileges she was referring to, Yamatani dodged the question by admitting to the reporter that her answer probably consisted of copy taken directly from the Zaitoku-kai website.

A rather stunning admission, but with time running short at the end of

Asked when she first met Masuki, she claimed she has “no specific memory”

the press conference, and Yamatani clearly keen to get to her next appointment, she declined to reply to some follow-up questions concerning Japan's international reputation should the government, and Yamatani in particular, continue to face questions about protecting the human rights of foreign residents of Japan.

She also failed to reply to a query suggesting that, in her position as a senior member of the government, she should have been aware of the policies and attitudes of Zaitoku-kai and that the failure to do so should have been sufficient for her to tender her resignation. ●

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Seoul Bureau Chief Tatsuya Kato is being investigated for an article on the South Korean president, but will he actually be punished?

South Korea vs. the Sankei

by MAX KIM

BARRED FROM LEAVING SOUTH Korea, Japan's *Sankei Shimbun* Seoul bureau chief Tatsuya Kato was summoned twice in August by prosecutors as they investigated defamation charges rising from his controversial *Sankei* article that questioned President Park's whereabouts during the April Sewol ferry tragedy.

The Supreme Prosecutor's Office recently announced its plans to prosecute Kato for criminal defamation, but with the presidential office avoiding getting directly involved and foreign press slamming South Korea for violating the freedom of speech, it remains unclear how the legal proceedings will unfold going forward – or to what extent they actually can.

Though a similar editorial in the local newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* – which Kato cited as source material – had already raised the same questions, his article raised noticeably greater furor in the Korean public. It was enough to prompt an angry conservative civilian-group leader to submit a bill of indictment directly to the Seoul Prosecutor's Office.

And because defamation law in Korea allows authorities to investigate a supposed offense even without the affected party's involvement, President Park herself is conspicuously distanced from the case.

Somewhere along the way, it became a diplomatic issue as well, when Yun Byeong Se, South Korea's foreign minister, unexpectedly pursued the issue with Japan's Fumio Kishida at a recent ASEAN Regional Forum in Myanmar. The question on everyone's minds, however, is: will criminal defamation charges against Kato actually hold up in court?

Those who say “no” roundly point to the fact that Kato's article heavily borrows from the earlier *Chosun Ilbo* editorial. They ask, if the insinuations that landed Kato in hot water aren't even really his, why is he alone being summoned for investigation? This is the grist of the *Sankei*'s defense, and though both Korean and foreign commentators have also raised this question, authorities

are tight-lipped on the subject.

The president's chief secretary Kim Ki-Chun's evasive reply when asked about President Park's absence – “I don't know about her exact whereabouts at the time” – is credited by observers as the event that launched the situation into greater (and more scandalous) public scrutiny.

Kato's primary source material, the July 18 *Chosun Ilbo* editorial titled “The rumors surrounding the president” by Choi Bo Sik, is the notable example. In analyzing Kim's ambiguous response, Choi explained it as “an attempt to protect the President.” But from what?

Kim's editorial hinted at an answer, stating, “There are rumors going around that the president was with a certain partner at an undisclosed location,” and later naming recently divorced Jeong Yoon Hwe as the “character in the rumors.” Though the rumors that fueled so much speculation remain unconfirmed, as far as Korean defamation law is concerned, their truthfulness may be beside the point. Experts on the sidelines agree that, considering the derivative nature of Kato's article, the crux of the defamation case is intent – rather than the truth about President Park's whereabouts.

A 1998 Supreme Court decision reads, “Even when the alleged fact is not proved to be true, but the presenter believes that the alleged fact is true and has substantial reasons to believe so, the action shall be deemed to have no criminal or reckless intent.”

Neither article, however, claimed any of these rumors were true – simply that they existed. The grist of *Sankei*'s own defense is that Kato merely paraphrased points already raised by the original *Chosun Ilbo* column, which itself refrained from making claims about the rumors' truthfulness.

Although those who support prosecuting Kato insist that the intent behind reiterating these rumors was indeed malicious, some others counter that it's an argument that's difficult to prove with the available facts. “It's plain to see that the [*Sankei*] article didn't actually make the conclusion

that President Park met this other man – it merely raised the question,” says Yonsei University criminal law professor Park Sang Gi. “You could ask whether, if these allegations turned out to be false later on, *Sankei* could be held liable for failing to factually back up their report. But as the article itself shows, they simply reported secondhand that these rumors are circulating in Korea – they didn't fabricate facts out of malice.”

Like many others who don't support prosecution, Park also says the media's interest in these rumors is simply a matter of course. “Unless someone can prove the author's libelous intent, it's hard to call this a valid case of defamation,” he says. “Raising these types of questions is part of the press's fundamental purpose and intrinsic function.”

And as critics of President Park's seven-hour absence have noted, there is a strong case for the legitimacy of airing out this particular rumor, since it concerns an incident that resulted in the death of nearly 300 students. The 1998 Supreme Court ruling also includes a provision protecting reports about public affairs, stating that, “the action has no illegality when the alleged fact is related to a public matter.” “The question of President Park's whereabouts is an issue of public significance. It's not just a matter of the president's privacy,” says Park.

And while the argument rages in the media, the presidential office appears to be shrewdly detaching itself from the case. Earlier this year, Cheongwadae (the presidential office) representative Yoon Doo Hyun had stated that the “Cheongwadae will fully follow through with all civil and criminal charges.” But more recent comments indicate a change of heart: “We are going to carefully observe the legal process initiated by a third party.”

As defamation laws in Korea stipulate that an offense will go unpunished only if the victim explicitly requests it, the presidential office's comments can only be construed as an implicit go-ahead.

However, with President Park's mysterious absence still unexplained, the presidential office's lukewarm stance, and mounting criticisms of the discriminatory investigation, even critics of Kato have suggested the possibility of a diplomatic solution. ●

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The WAW factor

by SONJA BLASCHKE

Here's how to promote the Japanese prime min . . . I mean, Japanese women

ON SEPT. 12, THE first day of the World Assembly of Women (WAW), the speaker was sharing some of her intimate family moments. "When we were on summer holiday, I cooked," she said, "and my husband cleaned the dishes." She paused for emphasis, then added, "He also took the trash out." Her words were met with thunderous, show-stopping applause that filled the event hall and washed over the man in question sitting in the front row. The speaker was Akie Abe, and the man lauded for his help with household chores was Shinzo Abe, the prime minister of Japan.

The clapping was initiated by Akiko Yamanaka, moderator of the WAW's "Special Talk Session." "I was proud to introduce Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at his policy speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations last year," her statement in the WAW booklet reads. While Yamanaka was introduced as "Visiting Professor at Cambridge University," she is not only a fellow member of the LDP, but once served as the director general of the party's Women's Bureau, and is the former Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Party politics could go a long way in explaining why, rather than directing the conversation between the two women on stage - Akie Abe and Cherie Blair, founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and wife of the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair - Yamanaka kept directing questions to the prime minister sitting in the audience. Instead of presenting the two women as successful and influential individuals engaged in interesting activities, she reduced them to the role of "wife of . . ." In doing so, Yamanaka passed up the chance to set a business-like tone for two days of speeches, panels and discussions in working groups among

women from 25 countries in favor of harmless gossip. It made Japan appear provincial rather than international.

Things didn't get better. In his own opening speech, Abe listed examples of companies improving their stance in promoting women to high positions. He spoke proudly of the computer company that collaborated with a jewelry brand to change the design of a laptop upon the suggestion of a female employee, so that it could be opened without ruining elaborately manicured fingernails. The rest of Abe's speech focused on his record of actions taken to raise the lot of women in Japan and what he's got planned for the future - like pledging "to eliminate the word 'childcare waiting list' from the Japanese lexicon."

Still, his words left many attendees impressed, especially those from outside of Japan, who were very likely the main target. Many of the mostly female speakers were surprisingly enthusiastic in thanking the prime minister and his wife for spending quite some time at the conference, and many attendees were also appreciative. "The WAW Conference for me was a clear demonstrable conviction of the government of Japan to see it did not lose the economic strength of its women," said Zia Mody, a corporate attorney who attended from India. "The personal commitment of Prime Minister Abe reinforced this." "There should be more heads of state like Abe", said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. She somewhat half-jokingly lamented, however, that Abe had stolen some limelight from her organization by giving away in his speech that UN Women was opening an office in Japan.

The only speaker who gave the impression that she was able to see behind all the clichéd phrases was

Messengers. A student addresses the media; Akie Abe; Akie Abe's husband, PM Shinzo Abe; IMF CEO Christine Lagarde.

Christine Lagarde. In her keynote speech, "The Economic Power of Women's Empowerment," the Managing Director of the IMF made a point of convincing male decision makers to promote women not for the sake of equal human rights, but because it could help their companies perform significantly better, lift the economy and give "Abenomics" a push. She repeated her widely quoted remark of 2012 that Japanese women could save Japan, and that gradually raising the country's female labor force to the average level of the G7 could raise income per capita permanently by four percent. Raising it to participation levels of Northern Europe would give Japan a further four percent. "Overly ambitious - perhaps, for now," she added with a smile. She packaged uncomfortable topics like immigration in words of praise of Japan's hospitality.

Several speakers praised Abe for recently appointing five female ministers. They might have been less enthusiastic had they known that some of them have a track record of being extremely conservative and actually obstructing gender equality. One opposes sex education at schools. Another wants the abortion law tightened. And the timing of their appointment a week before WAW was certainly not coincidental.

WAW was supposed to highlight women, their plights and their achievements and create public attention domestically and internationally. While it provided opportunities for the invited women to network, it also felt like a well-choreographed PR event to promote PM Abe as a modern statesman abroad. In that sense, it was successful; it even convinced some of the Japanese attendees of his sincerity. One, however, was less enthusiastic. Ayako Shiomura, whose speech earlier this year at the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly was interrupted by sexist remarks, said that Abe had tried to ignore the issue at the time. Now, Shiomura says, it is one thing to talk about the promotion of women. But it will take another ten years for true change to materialize. ●

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Noren by Kontetsu and Shin Nakamura



NOREN IS PART OF Japanese culture and tradition. The fabric partition has been used as signage or interior division. The first known usage of the word *noren* was in Zen textbooks in the Kamakura era. In the Edo era, with progress in dyeing and weaving technology, *noren* became widely used by the general public. Inside or outside, ordinary or extraordinary, *noren* gently provides a separation of space. Today, with a need for more global understanding and respect for diversity, we aim to take the notion of *noren*, swinging and swaying, as an alternative to building walls of separation. This is the "yura-yura" concept - a project involving various members in dyeing, design, weaving and photography. ●



Kontetsu and Shin Nakamura are 3rd and 4th generation members of Nakamura Inc., producers of kimono. Recently Kontetsu had been planning traditional-culture events aimed at the next generation, and Nakamura Inc. is promoting projects for a new standard for noren.

HEARD AT THE CLUB

Q: I'm from the Kokumin Shimbun. . . . there are people in Japan who hate Japan and I believe there are members of the foreign press who hate Japan. Is there any way you can get the police authorities to crack down on them?

A: I feel strongly that the freedom of expression and human rights of each individual must be protected.

Question to Eriko Yamatani, Chairwoman of the National Public Safety Commission & State Minister in Charge of Abduction Issue Sept. 25



JOIN THE MOVIE COMMITTEE ...

at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, Oct. 14 for *Nuclear Nation II*, the second chapter in Atsushi Funahashi's eye-opening documentary series on Fukushima's nuclear refugees. As in the first chapter, the film patiently observes the ongoing fates of evacuees from the tiny town of Futaba, who were forced to move to an abandoned high school in Saitama following the 3/12 meltdown. Mayor Katsutaka Idogawa, a former cheerleader for nuclear power who began questioning his convictions in the first film, is under fire for refusing to support the co-opting of Futaba's farmland as a dumping ground for nuclear waste. We watch with increasing stupefaction as the government continues to ignore his demands for empathy and the information vacuum continues to suck hope from the survivors. There is increasing desperation among the 600 residents still in the school, bickering over differing levels of resident compensation, and finally, a new mayor. But whither Futaba? *Nuclear Nation II* subtly highlights the unanswered questions about the true costs of nuclear energy and capitalism. (Japan, 2014; 114 minutes; Japanese with English subtitles.)

— Karen Severns



REGULAR MEMBERS

YUMI KAWABATA is a freelance automotive and environmental journalist.

She received a Masters of Engineering from Gunma University and worked as an engineer for three years before switching to automotive writing and editing for *Navi* and *Car Graphic*. After seven years, she expanded her focus to include international automotive and environmental publications. She specializes in hybrids, electric vehicles and environmental solutions for the automotive industry. She is also a jury member of the Japanese Car of the Year awards and is a member of the Automotive Journalists Association of Japan.

THOMAS STALDER is the correspondent for Swiss National Radio + TV SRF.

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