A LIFE & A DEATH REPORTED IN DEPTH ON TWITTER
(BELIEVE IT OR NOT)
Ian Thomas Ash’s gripping timeline of one man’s reconciliation with his son before dying
At NSK, we're with you as you write

NSK may not be a name on the tip of your tongue, but there's a good chance our product is on the tip of your ballpoint pen. In fact, you will find what we do in almost every manner of familiar objects around you. It's mechanical and it moves and it's made in Japan, chances are it depends on NSK bearings, because we are Japan's leading bearing maker. If it's made elsewhere, there's still a good chance our bearings are inside - because we are No.3 in the world with operations in 30 countries. If you are a journalist we may not be what you write about, but when you do it with a pen we may be what you write with.
THANKS FOR THE TENTATIVE PREVIEW of the new club layout in the September issue. While acknowledging that tastes are bound to differ, I’d like to raise some caveats.

Some of the pictures show seating that looks more fashionable than comfortable. A club, being a home away from home, should emphasize comfort. In particular, a foreign club in Japan should avoid investing in typical domestically produced furniture. That is made with the typical Japanese body mass in mind. The commodious Main Bar chairs of two generations ago should be ideal. I have retained one and Geoff Tudor has several if anyone cares to look. You can sit in them happily for hours on end. Check dimensions including table height to make sure we can all fit in without economy class syndrome.

Particularly alarming features in the preliminary pictures are low-backed pieces – such as the reception area couch and the clearly anti-comfort stools surrounding the library’s “wara table.” (What is that, by the way?) As for stools in particular, I suspect most members would prefer to keep your feet on the floor – although well designed medium-to-high-backed stools along the bar, with well designed foot rails, shouldn’t be a problem. The library, I must say, bears no resemblance to any library I have ever used. Perhaps it’s partly the lighting effects used by whoever produced the picture, but I’m afraid it comes across like an airport duty free shop. Where are the books? Are you right in gathering that one would have to leave the library lounge and go next door to find bookshelves?

Finally, while the Japanese contemporary minimalist version of the reception area is reasonably attractive (much more so than the “straightforward modern” alternative), my taste has always been for something with more mass in mind. The commodious Main Bar chairs of two generations ago should be ideal. I have retained one and Geoff Tudor has several if anyone cares to look. You can sit in them happily for hours on end. Check dimensions including table height to make sure we can all fit in without economy class syndrome.

In response to your president’s November 2015 letter, I would like to thank Mr. Azhari for informing me of the seriousness of the problems the club faces. To this end, I have a number of questions I hope the president can answer.

1) I have seen nothing in Jo. Shimbun or in any notice sent to the members of the current Board that the club will be “insolvent” if it proceeds with the project. Can the president tell us today?

2) Records show that the board in office in spring 2013 committed the club to pay additional floor space, thus 80% higher rent, with no plan for increasing membership. I was told early on that the additional floor space would be assessed at the “same per tosho (3-8 sq.m.) rate.” Which means, based on our current rent budget, we will have to pay an additional ¥25 million or more in annual rent, which exceeds yearly profits generated from the ¥1,000,000 special levy. Please provide details of the business plan for that floor space. It would be best, I think, to do a “step down” lease agreement was approved, that “a detailed evaluation of the financial implications is still needed” There is no record of that evaluation.

3) Separately, I was told that Mitsubishi Estate would be responsible for constructing a new restaurant. I know nothing in board meeting minutes except a short note on Feb. 12, 2013 that “the step down” lease agreement was approved, that “a detailed evaluation of the financial implications is still needed” There is no record of that evaluation.

4) I have heard scuttlebut that the current floor plan will create operational problems for whoever we choose to run our bar and restaurant. Is this true? Compared to what many people think, the FCCJ is primarily a restaurant operation. An estimated 90% of revenues including fees paid to the club’s outsourcing partner and associate members is related to the club’s food and beverage operation. The project has no chance to succeed if the club doesn’t upgrade our F&B operation. And that begins with service and the menu, whatever the board thinks the new members will want.

5) Does the club have the management capability to handle that? The club’s board did not meet as planned on that day. The club has 16 board members, the number is 15, and no one present knew of any meeting.

6) Our Past president other than the current president, I am doing a project of this nature and scope. When the club undertook the 1993 bar renovation, we had a general manager, Albert Stamp, who held an MBA from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, one of the best in the world. When the club rebuilt its kitchen in 2001, the board had no idea of that caliber to assist us. The result: there were major design flaws and we purchased, in some cases, the wrong equipment.

Again, Khalid, thank you for your report.

Roger Schroffler
Former FCCJ president (1999-2000)

RESPONSE

1) & 2) The Finance Committee authorized the Treasurer to make a one-time reimbursement to the last two UMIS informing members that the Club can not afford the huge increase in rent that previous Board Members voted for after the last Fuji Bldg. rent. Nor can the Club afford projected moving costs. We have a Special Levy to cover care of that but that doesn’t mean we actually have that money because we are in deficit even with

said special levy. We also sent a letter to all current past members asking members for ideas, donations – eg. purchase chairs and wall plaques with individual member donations attached – and we get zero response.

3) A New FB contract from next September 1, 2017 will help put us into the black and cover our present costs, but not the increased rent when we move in October 2018. We have to use the budget to cover any reduced or deferred rent and seek additional sources of revenue beyond the usual cash contributions that the present membership dues and dues (which net everyone supports). Then we might be okay.

In regard to the search for a new provider, we have six FB candidates we have been talking to for months. We gave an RFP (in early November) and are anticipating their proposals in December. IRS has also been given the RFP. We want to choose one of the candidates by the end of the year. We have to inform IRS whether or not we will continue with them by February.

4) There is no way of telling whether or not the club will lose members by moving to the Fuji Bldg. because of the less convenient location, or gain members because we will have a new facility. That is in the realm of fortune telling.

5) Floor design in new bldg. is still being set up. All FB candidates have expressed dissatisfaction with it.

6) Our FB candidates have expertise. Replacements from different companies are talking to have design fee from some Cornell School of Hotel Administration Al Stamp attended. The chosen FB candidate will take over August 2017 and continue on in new building.

Also Bob Lucas and I talked to a consultant from the Consulting Group. The one good thing we can do about furniture is have our present round tables and armchairs replaced. That will likely be unsuitable for larger Western bodies and be cheaply built. He said our furniture would look great in the new Fuji Bldg. But the cost of the proposal is still very strong. The CM is considering other options, such as donations from those unable to afford the increased rent.

I believe the design of the FB facility at the new Fuji Bldg is flawed.

Robert Whiting
Treasurer,
Finance Committee Chair
The battle for press freedom on Okinawa

Far from the Tokyo media, journalists on Okinawa must struggle with authorities and the U.S. military to get their stories told.

by JON MITCHELL

I n a park near the seashore in Naha City stands the Memori- al to Fallen Journalists, a stone slab carved with the names of the 14 Japanese reporters – 10 of whom worked for the island’s former Okinawa Shimp — who died during the Battle of Okinawa. Among the copy the reporters filed before dying were articles with headlines such as “Grenade charge on enemy camp” and “Advance on Shuri thrashed by heavy resistance,” stories which glorified the combat and misled readers into believing the Japanese military was winning the war.

Missing from their reports was the reality of what was actually happening on the ground: the slaughter of Okinawan children drafted into the Imperial army, Japanese troops forcing civilians from their shelters instead of protecting them, the execution of Okinawans suspected as spies by speaking their own language.

By the end of the three-month battle, more than a quarter of the civilian population was dead and the cultural heritage of the former Ryukyu Kingdom was all but obliterated. As a result of this collective trauma and the role of their peers in romanticizing the militarism that destroyed their island, subsequent generations of Okinawan reporters developed a strong pacifist streak.

In romanticizing the militarism that destroyed their island, many Okinawan homes, the island’s media are keenly aware of their role of protecting the public’s right to know. They act as vocal critics of U.S. military misdeeds and Tokyo’s refusals to address the military presence more evenly throughout Japan. However this work has brought Okinawa’s media – and in the U.S. to act as though they still own the island as they did between 1945 and 1972.

Fortunately, like the obuse fighters guarding the rooftops of many Okinawan homes, the island’s media are keenly aware of their role of protecting the public’s right to know. They act as vocal critics of U.S. military misdeeds and Tokyo’s refusals to address the military presence more evenly throughout Japan. However this work has brought Okinawa’s media – and in the U.S. to act as though they still own the island as they did between 1945 and 1972.

During the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa last spring, this spirit was clearly on display when members of the media gathered at the Memorial to Fallen Journalists, united in her role as Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories, rallied the Okinawan publications. In 2000, Yoshori Mori, then Secretary General of the LDP and current Olympic czar, accused the local dailies of playing games with the nation and began to distance himself from the Japanese Communist Party. In 2006, present Tokyo Governor Yukie Koike, in her role as Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories, rallied the Okinawan publications. In 2000, Yoshori Mori, then Secretary General of the LDP and current Olympic czar, accused the local dailies of playing games with the nation and began to distance himself from the Japanese Communist Party. In 2006, present Tokyo Governor Yukie Koike, in her role as Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories, rallied the Okinawan publications.

So far, this year, the Thai military has drafted 250,000 residents to build bases, rapes and murders, hit-and-runs, aircraft crashes and environmental degradation. Then there have been the political oppression, as I first experienced a backlash against my own reporting in 2013, when the Pentagon attempted to oust local leaders who dared to speak up against the construction of Agent Orange on Okinawa. More recently, in the August edition of the Romania right-wing magazine Romania Turist, I was mentioned in a piece investigating the contamination of Kadena Air Base, central Okinawa. While the discovery of arsenic and chromium at Toyosu dominated nightly news shows and newspaper columns for days, little to no coverage was afforded to discoveries in January that Cadena had polluted the drinking water sources for seven municipalities – including Naha – with high levels of the contaminant, perchloroethane.

Not only is this conviction rooted in the experiences of 1945, it has been reinforced in the following decades as Okinawan pacifists have been attacked, intimidated, even murdered. As a result of this collective trauma and the role of their peers in romanticizing the militarism that destroyed their island, subsequent generations of Okinawan reporters developed a strong pacifist streak. Such attitudes have trickled down to impact the daily work of NHK, called for the destruction of the two papers. The statement with derision. The statement with derision.

The freedom of the press foundation, whose board includes Daniel Ellsberg and Edward Snowden, condemned the military’s actions against me. “Whether inside or outside the United States, the U.S. military should not be surveilling journalists and writing up intelligence reports on their lawful activities, full stop,” said Executive Director Trevor Timm. “By doing so these intelligence agencies are imperiling journalism in all home countries and sending a dangerous message about press freedom abroad.”

On April 30, Without Borders issued a statement that slammed the U.S. military and the Japanese authorities for their pressure on the Okinawa media. The statement toppled the [NHK] media’s apparent “copy and paste” approach to news, getting Naha – with high levels of the contaminant, perchloroethane. The rest of the national media and the Japanese-based international media chose not to report the statement. This is nothing new. In the summer of 2015, it ought to have come up with something a little slicker. Just look at its collaboration on Hollywood blockbusters such as Hurt Locker and Zero Dark Thirty (where the military’s right to know was more than protected by license plates and the US military’s right to know was more than protected by license plates).

Switch on FOX News or CNN and the lines between press freedom and Pentagon PR blur, too. For journalists and their bosses, military-related stories are very attractive. Fly-bys and bang-bang sound bites for their pressure on the Okinawa media. The statement toppled the [NHK] media’s apparent “copy and paste” approach to news, getting Naha – with high levels of the contaminant, perchloroethane. The rest of the national media and the Japanese-based international media chose not to report the statement. This is nothing new. In the summer of 2015, it ought to have come up with something a little slicker. Just look at its collaboration on Hollywood blockbusters such as Hurt Locker and Zero Dark Thirty (where the military’s right to know was more than protected by license plates and the US military’s right to know was more than protected by license plates).

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Jon Mitchell is a correspondent for Okinawa Times and regular contributor to the Pacific Press. In 2009, he was awarded the FCCJ’s Freedom of the Press lifetime achievement award for his coverage of Okinawan human rights issues.
Ken Moritsugu

BY TYLER ROTHMAR

Ken Moritsugu is a Tokyo-based writer and editor.

The career of Ken Moritsugu, the Associated Press Japan bureau chief, has seen him live and work all over the world, and the story of his many professional moves is bound together by a natural curiosity and dedication to his craft.

Ken was born a third-generation Japanese Canadian in Montreal, but moved to Philadelphia at the age of two when his father Henry, also a journalist, took a job at the Inquirer. The family later moved to New York, where Ken grew up, and where Henry remains an editor on the news desk of Long Island’s Newsday at the age of 82.

Although journalism seems to run in the Moritsugu family (his uncle Frank still writes for Canada’s Nikkei Voice at 94), Ken says it wasn’t always a clear choice. “But certainly it was always part of my life growing up. When I was a kid, my dad would bring me to the newspaper and the linotype operators would give me a little piece of metal with my name on it,” he recalls.

Moritsugu worked on the newspapers of his junior high and high schools in Long Island, and soon after he entered Princeton a rival interest in physics finally lost out to journalism. He majored in economics while stringing for area newspapers, interned at the Boston Globe and the Washington Post, and did a brief internship in Japan, reporting on the pharmaceutical market for a large firm.

He moved to the Japanese Times in Tokyo in 1984, becoming a reporter on what was then the Political/Economics desk. He stayed for three years, covering Japan’s trade relations with the U.S. and Europe. “It was the period of intense Japan-U.S. trade friction, the peak of the ‘Japan is No. 1, Japan is taking over’ era,” he says.

“When you’re out with people, you would debate what was Japan’s role in the world. It was sort of an exciting, frothy, intellectually stimulating time to be in Japan.”

Moritsugu was then accepted to a five-month internship at the European Community, the forerunner to the European Union. He left Japan in the fall of 1987, traveling by ferry to Shanghai, then from Beijing to Moscow through Siberia by train. He rode the rails through Europe and was proud when he made it to London without resorting to an airline. Once in Brussels, he interned in the EC press office, preparing news releases and background information for the press corps.

In retrospect, he says, his early days of travel and living abroad gave him fresh eyes on the U.S.: “America can be a very insular country, simply because of its size and dominance.

It allowed me to see my own country in a different light.”

He returned home in 1989, this time to the St. Petersburg Times in Florida, where he covered “an unsung supply of wild and crazy and woolly stories” in the local government, police and the courts. Three years later he left for Paris on a nine-month journalism fellowship before returning to Long Island for a six-year stint as a reporter at Newsday.

WHILE MORITSUGU LIKES THE writing process, what he really enjoys is the dialogue and ideological exchange of fieldwork.

While reporting for Newsday in Rwanda following the ethnic violence between the Tutsi and Hutu, he interviewed an old man who had lost his house in the violence, but was rebuilding. “He said, ‘You want to see it?’ and I said sure – and he took off uphill at an incredible pace,” he remembers. Though half the old man’s age, he struggled to keep up on what turned out to be an impromptu mountain tour. Moritsugu cites the episode as an example of the unexpected joys of his trade.

“Reporting from afar is one thing, but to be on the ground and hear people’s stories – there’s always a backstory that makes a black-and-white issue much grayer,” he says.

Moritsugu married Carmen Chan in 1999 and in 2000 joined the Knight Ridder newspaper chain in Washington D.C. as a national and economics correspondent. The couple moved to northern India in 2004, where Chan ran an NGO’s public health program. Working out of Delhi, Moritsugu strung for Knight Ridder, covering such stories as the Indonesian tsunami, and wrote for publications including CSO, Todays and Congressional Quarterly.

He joined the AP in Bangkok in 2007 as an enterprise editor, heading large-scale projects and features such as “China’s Reach,” a data-driven, multi-faceted look at that nation’s growing clout. In 2013, Moritsugu was named chief of the AP’s Tokyo bureau, where he works to orchestrate text, photos and video for the internet’s shifting formats. While there are fewer chances as chief to engage in the on-the-ground reporting that he loves, Moritsugu says he enjoys exploring new ways of telling stories with his team, and he’s grateful for the influence the profession has had on his life.

Journalism is challenging. The pay is not great, but it’s really given me this wealth of experiences in life, this incredible opportunity to go to so many places and meet so many people and learn so much about the world. And I’m just thankful and grateful as a person to have had that opportunity,” he says.

There’s always a backstory that makes a black-and-white issue much grayer”
Using the strict limits of a social media platform to tell a long-form story means breaking ground with technical, ethical and emotional issues.

BY IAN THOMAS ASH

It was on one of my visits, when his wife was not around, that Mr. Hata told me that he had a son from a previous relationship. His name was T, and Mr. Hata had not seen him in over three decades. Now he told me that he wanted to see his son before he died.

Mr. Hata’s son has an unusual name, so I was able to find him through a computer search in only five minutes (and which is why privacy reasons I decided to go with “T”). A bigger challenge was getting a reply to my messages. I tried Twitter, Facebook and Instagram before finally hearing back from him. Not knowing what had been told growing up, I had debated about how to refer to the man who was searching for him. I settled on referring to him as “a man he says is your relative,” accompanied by a photo.

T replied, saying that he had no memory of the name or face of the man, but that he would ask his mother. Adding to the difficulty, I had agreed to let Mr. Hata tell T that he was dying, so I was trying to impress upon him that time was limited without being able to tell him why.

At first hesitantly, eventually they began communicating directly. I was encouraged when I saw that T had tweeted the following on his account: "Emotional father who abandoned me at 3. A film director found me. Thought he was dead, yet he’s alive. But he’s got little time left. Trouble sorting my feelings. Plans for a reunion soon followed.

SHORTLY BEFORE THEY WERE TO meet, Mr. Hata said to me almost teasingly, “You want to film our reunion, don’t you?" Not wanting to alter their time together, I told him that I’d let them have their privacy and hear about it later. But just prior to the day of the event, I received a call from Mr. Hata. He had become much weaker and could no longer drive. He needed someone to help with his carefully planned agenda, to pick up T and his family at the station and take them all up to a hot-spring resort for the weekend.

While I felt saddened hearing of the loss of his independence, I was also grateful for the opportunity, since I felt an enormous responsibility as the one who had “found” T. And to be completely honest, I must also admit that a part of me thought it would be a real opportunity. I boarded a bullet train and headed for Tohoku armed with two cameras – one for film and one for photo.

In the two weeks since I had last seen him, Mr. Hata had become visibly weaker. Still he insisted on following the itinerary he had planned, including staying at different hotels and visiting several tourist spots. It became clear that it would be impossible to film while helping out. At the risk of sounding insensitive, while not attending the reunion would have been hard, being there but not being able to film felt like torture.

I don’t exactly remember where the idea to “live tweet” the reunion came from, but it was definitely a Plan B after filming. Live streaming was another idea, but that would have been exploitative, too much like reality TV. With Twitter, capturing photographs and written words would give me the ability to curate which moments I shared and offer context that a live-feed couldn’t, yet still lend the kind of immediacy and inclusion that audiences these days desire.

Whenever plan B chose, I was aware that there were ethical questions concerning the posting of the reunion in real time, and I knew if I made any major missteps along the way that there was the strong possibility of a harsh backlash.

The making of a twitter documentary: The last wish of Mr. Hata

With film-making, you only learn about the audience’s reception a year or more after it is made, but in this case the reaction was instantaneous. It was thrilling, nerve-wracking and humbling.
The FCCJ is pleased to offer members a substantial discount on subscriptions to LexisNexis' news database service, Nexis.com

The Members-only deal allows for flat-rate access at $7,900 per month—offering big savings on a service that normally costs ¥26,000 per month.

The service will be billed by the Club. The FCCJ benefits from all subscriptions sold under this arrangement.

LexisNexis provides access to news and information from more than 34,000 sources, including Kyodo News, Jiji, Yonhap, Xinhua, AP, Reuters, AFP, all major world newspapers and specialist news sources. Also included is a database of U.S. and international company information, biographical databases, country profiles and a U.S. legal database.

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

spent looking over photos as Mr. Hata asked T to choose which one should be displayed at his funeral; when I asked T to help me wake Mr. Hata from a deep sleep, and he gently placed his hand on his shoulder and called, “Father.”

One night after Mr. Hata went to bed, I shared with T some of the enthusiastic comments the story of their reunion was receiving from people all over the world. With film-making, you only learn about the audience's reception a year or more after it is made, but in this case the reaction was instantaneous. In two weeks, people were sending words of encouragement and T and I were able to immediately respond with words of gratitude for their support. It was thrilling, nerve-wracking and humbling.

Reactions from around the world flooded in and my follower count soared. Compared to an average month, the engagement rate on my Twitter account doubled that month and statistics for retweets, likes and replies went up an average 10-fold. I became more conscious that what I was producing was being “consumed.”

This affected how I told the story, such as how much personal information I chose to share with the public. I consciously decided not to use their full names, the names of the places where they live or even the circumstances under which the father and son were separated. And yet, because of the personal nature and immediacy in how I shared the story, I think most readers did not realize how much was not shared and instead were simply engaged in the story.

Which leads to another issue: how much to share what you are doing with your subject. Generally speaking, I would suggest that having your protagonist be so aware of the documentary process could negatively affect what it is you are documenting, so while I would encourage the filmmaker/journalist to be honest about what they are doing, I would also discourage them from sharing how their story is being received while it is still happening. That being said, I think one of the reasons T was so open and seemingly unaffected by the whole process was because he is a writer himself.

AT THE RISK OF sounding overly dramatic, the adrenaline rush of live-tweeting this reunion between a dying father and son was thrilling in a way that I have seldom felt when filming an interview. While the information received while it is still happening. That being said, I think one of the reasons T was so open and seemingly unaffected by the whole process was because he is a writer himself.

There is a most appropriate way to tell every story, and only certain stories are truly lend themselves to being told in real time on a public platform such as Twitter. As story-tellers, we must be aware that there will be time to edit and refine the story. But I would also caution against telling a story utilizing this method simply because one “wants to.”

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After the reunion with T, Mr. Hata’s health continued to decline. I traveled between Tokyo and his home in Tohoku as much as possible, shooting film as well as just being with him. My role had already evolved from filmmaker to friend, and during the last week of his life, I became one of his caretakers, helping to bathe and care for him.

I also continued to tweet the story of Mr. Hata until, three weeks to the day of his reunion with T, he died in his sleep.

Ian Thomas Ash is an award-winning documentary based in Tokyo who is in production for two documentaries, one about terminal care in Japan and the other the third installment of his series on Takuboku, due in 2018. His tweets of Mr. Hata’s last wish can be seen at https://twitter.com/DocumentingIan-see-his-tweets-event-3D

kept diaries in Roman letters that recorded his love for his wife despite the numerous sufferings of his deepening senility to his environment as he grappled with tuberculosis and his frustrations with the changes in a 20th century Japan that was ambitiously on the road to becoming a world power. He covered Takuboku’s despair and his individuality: one revelation was that Takuboku continued to refer to Russia in a present-tense that was superior to Japan despite its defeat by the Japanese military – a brave opinion during a time when the Meiji government was celebrating the victory as a landmark in Japan’s march into modernity. Takuboku’s storied career, however, was a short one, Keene explained. The poet died at the age of 26.

It was an evening of fascinating story-telling and treasured insights, the results of Keene’s enduring love for Japanese literature. He has an equal affection for the country, having it so that Takuboku’s stories, one, Keene explained. The poet died at the age of 26.

Keene first arrived in Japan as a translator with the American GHQ and was based in Okinawa, where he collected the testimony of Japanese soldiers. In subsequent writing and interviews, Dr. Keene recalls how that work awakened him to the poignancy of a fallen nation – captured young soldiers of the brutality of war and their longing for peace. Listening to their tortured accounts opened his eyes to the reality of war, and he remains a staunch pacifist to this day, often using his clout to speak up for the pacifist Constitution.

After retiring from teaching at Columbia University for six decades, Keene now lives in Komagome, the adopted son, a well-known shamisen artist. He is a cultural treasure and a bridge between Japan and the U.S., with his views widely sought by academics and experts in both countries.

The eminent professor and author stopped by the Club to discuss his new book.

An evening with Donald Keene

by Suvendrini Kakuchi

THE CLUB WAS GRACED last month by one of Japan’s finest men of letters when Donald Keene stopped by for a Book Break hosted by the library. There he presented his latest book, The First Modern Japanese: The Life of Ishikawa Takuboku, about one of the country’s most beloved poets of the early 20th century.

The 94-year-old shared with attendees the beauty of Takuboku’s tanka poetry, while using his research to illustrate a post that emerged as a sensitive individual documenting interesting times. The honest views of Takuboku, an atheist despite belonging to the family of a Buddhist priest, that are expressed in his poetry and diaries are greatly admired in reticent Japanese society.

“Takuboku’s poetry reveals that he belonged to a world that was unlike that of other tanka poets,” said Keene.

“Rather than the beauty of flowers, he wrote on subjects such as emptiness and death. Composing in truth was more important to him than beauty.” Keene explained how Takuboku

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For a Japanese journalist, an Islamic State logo leads to misunderstanding and incarceration in the dangerous region outside Mosul.

Behind bars in Iraq

by JULIAN RYALL

FROM THE VERY OUTSET of his press conference at the FCCJ in November, Kosuke Tsuneoka went to great lengths to make it clear that he is not an Islamic State sympathizer and that he despised the extremist group’s interpretation of Islam.

Tsuneoka - who had only arrived back in Japan two days previously after being detained for 12 days by Kurdish forces close to the Iraqi city of Mosul - was keen to set the record straight after a “stupid” error of judgment was compounded by some inaccurate reporting by local journalists that was repeated by international media.

The unmistakable logo triggered an immediate reaction from the security officials surrounding the venue and Tsuneoka was handcuffed and taken by police to an interrogation cell in a prison in Basra.

“Obviously, I was suspected of being an IS sympathizer,” Tsuneoka replied, “because I was speaking in English. That was my biggest mistake.”

Instead, it was a week before the door of his cell was unlocked and an official of the Kurdish forces in Baghdad was ushered in. Tsuneoka was offered a chance to return to Japan and, unthinkingly, had it in a pocket of his backpack when he tried to enter a press conference given by Iraqi President Fuad Masum, outside Mosul.

Kosuke Tsuneoka at the club

Behind bars in Iraq

by JULIAN RYALL

was, in fact, a medal that Tsuneoka had been awarded by Islamic State for acting as an interpreter on a previous trip.

The Kurdish authorities were not taking any chances, and gave Tsuneoka and transferred him to Erbil, where he was questioned for two days by security officials. “I didn’t feel the need to hide any information or be facing their questions, particularly those about my history of reporting from the area,” he said. “But the atmosphere changed and became almost genial – to the point where we were laughing together.”

The investigators were particularly amused by an exchange of messages between Tsuneoka and a Chechen commander fighting for Islamic State that he had met on a previous trip.

“Basically, that caused me to be a “dangerous individual,” Tsuneoka said. “That’s why he assumed that he would be released very soon. The Kurdish intelligence officers said they just wanted to check the contents of his mobile phone.”

Given that he was getting on so well with his captors, they had told him that they did not consider him to be a “dangerous individual.”

As and he continued his examination of going-on in the Blue House, Kato told a press conference at the FCCJ on Nov. 16, his reservations about the Park administration quickly grew. “My suspicions about the government’s lack of self-confidence and the president’s unique world view,” he said. “A name that has previously been a secret may very well have been impeached, the president of Korea was not aware of the details of the case, a case that much of the world was focusing on with criticism and concern, was very troubling and shocking to me,” Kato said. “And this is what led me to conclusion that the president was not receiving accurate information regarding political issues. She was disconnected. I concluded that she has no initiative when she makes statements and comments according a scenario written by other advisors or puppet-masters.”

Kato opted to fight the case rather than run the risk of being convicted of defaming the president. Although he faced an 18-month prison term if found guilty, he was only reappeared to take charge of the administration quickly grew. “My suspicions about the government’s lack of self-confidence and the president’s unique world view...”

Kato was charged with defaming the president. Although he faced an 18-month prison term if found guilty, he only reappeared to take charge of the administration seven hours later.

Kato was still in South Korea. “The fact that the president of Korea was not aware of the details of the case, a case that much of the world was focusing on with criticism and concern, was very troubling and shocking to me,” Kato said. “And this is what led me to conclusion that the president was not receiving accurate information regarding political issues. She was disconnected. I concluded that she has no initiative when she makes statements and comments according a scenario written by other advisors or puppet-masters.”

Kato said that he first came across Choi’s name in the summer of 2014, coinciding with the start of the “900 days in which I was in a battle with the Park administration.” Initially, Senior Blue House staffers took exception to Kato’s reporting, but he seems the Park administration later commissioned a citizens’ group to carry out various kinds of harassment before he was formally charged with defaming the president.

Kato was on trial, and he chose to be present on the day of the sinking of the Sewol ferry in April 2014 – a tragedy that claimed the lives of 304 people, the majority of whom were high school students. As well as quoting from South Korean炅槿佐的 sources, he also claimed that Park was with a man on the day of the disaster and only reappeared to take charge of the situation seven hours later.

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AFTER KATO REFUSED TO retract the article and issue an apology, he was instructed by local prosecutors. “For those of us familiar with Japanese democracy, a court is usually seen as a place to objectively make judgments based on law and evidence, a place to find out the truth and delivering justice,” he said. “However, in my opinion, the Seoul central district prosecutors’ office seemed to see court as a place to punish and condemn this unfavorable Japanese journalist rather than to serve as a place of judgment and a fair place.”

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Tannery: photographs by Akihito Yoshida

THERE IS A SOUTHWESTERN district of Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, called Hazaribagh that is known for its densely concentrated oxhide processing. Ninety percent of domestic oxhide production comes from Hazaribagh and is exported worldwide. Japan is the biggest importer of oxhide from Bangladesh, mainly in the form of about four million pairs of leather shoes per year. While the oxhide industry is the second biggest source of foreign currency after the textile industry, according to international environmental watchdog Blacksmith Institute, Hazaribagh is one of the 10 most toxically polluted areas in the world.

There are 150 to 200 oxhide factories with roughly 20,000 workers who handle the toxic chemicals with bare hands and feet. There are no safety regulations.

Unfiltered incinerators and dumping of unprocessed chemical materials are no safety regulations. Workers in the oxhide industry have all sorts of physical problems and a short and hazardous waste are common sights. Workers who spend substantial amounts of time here have many physical problems. They have many physical problems as a result of inhaling the toxic chemical fumes. Workers who spend substantial amounts of time here have many physical problems as a result of inhaling the toxic chemical fumes. Workers who spend substantial amounts of time here have many physical problems as a result of inhaling the toxic chemical fumes. Workers who spend substantial amounts of time here have many physical problems as a result of inhaling the toxic chemical fumes.

I headed to Hazaribagh to bear witness to the conditions of the workers in the oxhide industry. 

In 2017, the FCCJ will start a new initiative: “FCCJ in-house Networking,” bringing together working journalists and PR officials of associated member companies. It is the brainchild of the Club’s Membership Marketing Committee, of which I – PR director at Wacom, Co. Ltd. – am a member.

I became an Associate Member of FCCJ in May 2015 in order to develop and strengthen Wacom’s relationships with the foreign media. Club programs, such as “Meet the Press” – the series of speeches by bureau chiefs of the leading foreign media – are useful in that respect as we can get acquainted with the people involved in the program. Building on this momentum, the MMC is planning to begin a new initiative called “FCCJ in-house Networking” between working journalists and PR officials of associated member companies.

Specifically, this program offers a platform for match-making among journalist members, their colleagues and company PR representatives. Company PR officials will speak about their company’s business and products/services so that journalists can get in-depth, first-hand information direct from the source. Each session, which will last from one to one-and-a-half hours, will consist of presentations and Q&A sessions with representatives from two or three companies.

There are many opportunities in Japan, “hidden gems” one might call them, waiting for discovery by journalists. Some of them, the MMC believes, might be right under our noses, within the walls of the Club itself.

-- Ted Kanno

FCCJ IN-HOUSE NETWORKING BETWEEN JOURNALISTS & PR OFFICIALS

• FCCJ offers a platform for match-making among FCCJ-enrolled media and company PR representatives
• FCCJ gathers up to a dozen journalists for a session by company PR reps (30 minutes/company). 2-3 groups in one session will be arranged.

Company A
15 min presentation
10 min Q&A
5 min break

Company B
15 min presentation
10 min Q&A
5 min break

Company C
15 min presentation
10 min Q&A
5 min break

• Journalists can cultivate new information sources
• PR officials can develop and expand new media contacts

JOIN THE FILM COMMITTEE …

...at 6:45 pm on Wed., Dec. 14 for the extraordinary musical masterpiece The Ondekoza, which returns in a blaze of cinematic glory. 35 years after its heralded premiere and subsequent disappearance from public view. Marking the 100th anniversary of the birth of director Tai Kato (1916-1985), Shochiku has digitally remastered the documentary, and it is sure to astound today’s audiences not only with its glorious visuals and dazzling musical performance, but also with its groundbreaking photographic artistry. The film follows the young people who formed a Japanese music ensemble called Ondekoza in 1971 on Sado Island, under the leadership of Tagyasu Den. They live, rehearse and physically train together in Spartan conditions, crafting their own instruments, creating their own choreography and sewing their costumes. And then, they begin to perform. Working with legendary designer Tadanori Yokoo and Choyo Umeeda, who create colorful otherworldly sets, Kato’s unique camera techniques match their visual brilliance, capturing the performers as they achieve astonishing levels of virtuosity, transforming the screen into a perfect expression of art’s transcendent power. Acclaimed musician Eitetsu Hayashi, Ondekoza’s breakout star, and remastering producer Tetsuya Nakagawa will appear at a Q&A session following the screening. (Japan, 1981; 105 minutes; Japanese with English subtitles.)

-- Karen Severns

THE MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE’S “HIDDEN GEMS”

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Escorted by a motoc (a traditional bear hunter), six journalists took a short trek in the 12 Lakes area in a nature reserve, where they could admire the autumn leaves in the beech and maple forests for which the region is famous. They could also experience the sight of the season’s first snows in the local mountains.

In Hakodate’s Morning Market the party could experience the unique squid-fishing pool where visitors can fish for live squid. The price tag per creature depends on the market supply and is usually in the range of ¥800 to ¥1,000. Bad weather had prevented the local fishermen from sailing and had driven up the prices. Party member Hui Zhao caught a specimen costing ¥1,600, which was then cut, roasted and eaten by the FCCJ members.

In comparison to the rural farming villages of Tohoku, Hakodate – which was one of the first international treaty ports opened at the end of the Tokugawa government – shows a turn-of-the-century sophistication thanks to its churches and western-style restaurants.

The press visit was supported by the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), the tourism arm of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

– Haruko Watanabe
"I JUST FLOAT ALONG."
Pat M, USA, LEAF Owner

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ELECTRIFY THE WORLD.

#NISSAN