YEAR OF THE RED MONKEY: JOURNALISTS’ PREDICTIONS FOR 2016

ARE YOU REDDY?

Crock ‘n’ trolls
Should journos fight back?

Profiled
Stefano Carrer
Ex-hostess, deaf single mother – and politician
Greener mobility requires less weight and friction

Today, the world’s automakers are driving different roads to greener mobility: hybrids, electric vehicles, fuel cells and radical improvements to conventional powertrains. But no matter which road they choose, all automakers must reduce both weight and friction to maximize gains in environmental performance. And for that they depend on NSK, the world’s largest supplier of automotive bearings.

Reduced friction in moving parts means less energy is required to make them move. The same is true when you have less mass to move. That’s why R&D efforts at NSK are focused on developing new bearings that do more with less: more motive power with less friction and weight. We don’t often make headlines, but NSK’s efforts are a key factor in the drive to greener mobility.
WISHING ALL MEMBERS A Wonderful New Monkey Year – the best in health, wealth and may all your dreams come true!
Perhaps this sounds like wishful thinking, but a good dose of positive thinking is, I believe, the best way to launch 2016 at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club – which is tackling important issues to maintain its fiscal health and journalistic integrity.

On the management side, the board will be looking to finally clear the staff litigants’ case. A settlement has already been reached at the Labor Tribunal and final payment now awaits GMM approval.

A nagging issue is coping financially, especially with the stark fact of the dwindling numbers of journalists, as they move to other locations or simply retire from their jobs. Your ideas and support are most welcome.

On the journalism front, the Freedom of the Press Committee is planning a seminar in the new year to shed light on the deeper nuances of this critical topic. Indeed, against the spanning of cultures in a growing globalized world, the definition of press freedom must also address the complexities of multicultural societies while maintaining absolute respect for the right to information and speech. Thanks to the diversity within the FCCJ we can expect a lively discussion and fresh perspectives that will contribute to the ongoing international debate on press freedom.

I also would like to report that Asian journalists, who still represent a minority in the FCCJ, plan to start a new forum mainly to discuss and share insights on regional development. It is a well-timed move as Japan begins building stronger alliances with the fastest-growing region in the world. I am looking forward to the emergence of this platform, to which I will also belong, as a means of ushering in dynamism in the Club and to help pave the way to expand the numbers of members from Asia.

Finally, I forecast a more diplomatically active Japan in the new year as I observe the flurry of new approaches undertaken by the Abe government. The latest initiative was in December, with the high-level visit to Delhi by the prime minister to meet his counterpart, Narendra Modi. This resulted in new bilateral pledges and Shinkansen deals with the leader of the sprawling Indian subcontinent. The media on both sides have been supportive of a stronger alliance, touted as important for a security balance in the region, while pointing out the huge economic potential for both.

And so I wrap this month up with a toast to the prosperity of the FCCJ in the coming year. — Susvendini Kakushi

2015 by the numbers

**TOP 10 PRESS EVENTS OF 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dec. 15</td>
<td>Haruhiko Kuroda’s press conference topping the list for attendees (2013), but the governor of Okinawa, Takeshi Onaga (right) appeared twice during the year, with a total of 247 attendees.</td>
<td>141 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mar. 20</td>
<td>HARUHIKO KURODA, governor of the Bank of Japan</td>
<td>203 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jul. 23</td>
<td>TENG-HUI LEE, former president of Taiwan</td>
<td>184 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>TAKESHI ONAGA, governor of Okinawa</td>
<td>141 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jan. 9</td>
<td>TAKASHI UEUMARU, former Asah Shim bun reporter</td>
<td>132 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jul. 23</td>
<td>GISHI HOSONGO, AKIRA NAGATSUMA, KATSUYA OKAWA, DPJ presidential candidates debate</td>
<td>126 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mar. 4</td>
<td>KO NAKATA, expert on Islamic Law/Prof. Doshisha U.</td>
<td>123 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>EDDIE JONES, former head coach, Japan National Rugby Team</td>
<td>120 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>YASUO HASEBE, Prof. Constitutional Law, Waseda Law School, SETSU KOBAYASHI, prof. emeritus, Keio U.</td>
<td>107 attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mar. 8</td>
<td>KO NAKATA, expert on Islamic Law/Prof. Doshisha U.</td>
<td>107 attendees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP 10 FCC VIDEO VIEWS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Robert J. Shiller, “Are We Hedging For Another Financial Crisis?” which you can see on the FCCJ’s YouTube channel</td>
<td>9,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>YASUO HASEBE, Prof. Constitutional Law, Waseda Law School, SETSU KOBAYASHI, prof. emeritus, Keio U.</td>
<td>16,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HAYAO MIYAZAKI, film director, ‘Punches To Block Henoko’</td>
<td>15,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>YUENENO NITO, founder of Colaba, “Helping Highschool Girls Escape the Sex Industry”</td>
<td>11,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FUNASSYI, Unofficial mascot of Funabashi City</td>
<td>10,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SHIGEAKI KOGA, of the METI, “Chilling of Freedom of Expression”</td>
<td>10,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>YOSHIKAZU HATA &amp; YASUAKI ONUMA, “Comfort Women” Issue</td>
<td>5,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>HIROAKI KOIDE, former Kyoto U. Asst. Prof. “The Trouble with Nuclear Power”</td>
<td>4,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>JUNKO SHIDO, Mother of ISIS hostage Kenji Goto</td>
<td>4,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>KATSUHIKO ISHIBASHI &amp; SATOSHI SATO; “Concerns Over Restarting the Senda Reactors”</td>
<td>2,389</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WEBSITE FACTS**

Total Page views, Jan.-Nov., 2015: 761,523

**TOP 10 ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dec. 13</td>
<td>FAMILY CHRISTMAS PARTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td>AFRICAN SAFARI AT THE FCCJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>AMAZING THAI NIGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept. 3</td>
<td>OSAKA NIGHT: THE BEST OF OSAKA Bunraku COMES TO THE FCCJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct. 28</td>
<td>AN EVENING OF KAGAWA ATTRACTIONS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**10 OF THE MOST POPULAR BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Translator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival</td>
<td>by David Pilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Capital in the Twenty-First Century</td>
<td>by Thomas Pakenye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Critical Issues in Contemporary Japan</td>
<td>edited by Jeff Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fragrant Orchid</td>
<td>by Yoshiko, Fujiwara Sakuya; translated, with an introduction, by Cha-ning Chang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>If There Were No Japan</td>
<td>by Chia-ning Chang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Last Boat To Yokohama</td>
<td>edited by Jeff Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Life And Legacy Of Yoshiko, the Cross-Dressing Spy Who Commanded Her Own Army</td>
<td>by Beate Sirota Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Infamy</td>
<td>by Phyllis Birnbaum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Life And Legacy Of Yoshiko, the Cross-Dressing Spy Who Commanded Her Own Army</td>
<td>by Beate Sirota Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Life And Legacy Of Yoshiko, the Cross-Dressing Spy Who Commanded Her Own Army</td>
<td>by Beate Sirota Gordon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Monkeying around**

2016 promises to be a year of antic swings between craziness and simply more of the same – that is, if any of our journalist prognosticators' crystal-ball musings come true.

- **Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the new focus of his “Abenomics” economic program. “It will be robots,” he said and changed one of his ministers for a machine.**
  - **Alexander Lenin, Rossiya Gazeta**

Toyota Motor Corp. widens its lead as the world’s biggest automaker. But airbag supplier Takata Corp. is forced to abandon the airbag-inflator business after regulators order it to recall every single inflator it has made using the suspect ammonium nitrate chemistry linked to deadly airbag explosions and millions of recalled vehicles.

- **Seisologists Masaki Kimura and Katsuhiko Ishibashi's next prediction: a “big one” soon with an epicenter in Shizuoka Prefecture. Dr. Kimura says “by 2017.” The year 2016 will prove they’re not quacks on quakes.**
  - **Lucy Birmingham**

There will be several shooting matches in the Main Bar between supporters of the so-called ex-Presidents lawsuit and their opponents, and at least one fist fight, leading up to the March GMM vote on the merits of the case. But when it is all over the Club will still be standing. (Fingers crossed on that last one.)

- **Steve McCabe**

Demographic and economic reality make it clear the center of world gravity has moved from the Atlantic Ocean to Eurasia. Expect continued geopolitical turbulence, especially in the Middle East, as a result.

- **Benjamin Fulford**

In a dramatic volte-face, Japan relaxes its immigration policy to accommodate millions of U.S. citizens following the election of President Trump.

- **Justin McCurry, Guardian**

Tokyo’s basic taxi fares rise to ¥10,000.

- **Yasuke Watanabe, Kyodo, Tokyo**

**Beijing faces serious unrest in Xinjiang**

Abe reads election victory as mandate to rewrite Constitution

- **Julian Ryall, Daily Telegraph**

To bring good luck – and hence avoid the above – horoscope lovers can turn to the New Security Club. Seiichiro Murakami will quip: *To bring good luck – and hence avoid the above – horoscope lovers can turn to the New Security Club. Seiichiro Murakami will quip:*

- **Elichir Tokumoto**

There are several shooting matches in the Main Bar between supporters of the so-called ex-Presidents lawsuit and their opponents, and at least one fist fight, leading up to the March GMM vote on the merits of the case. But when it is all over the Club will still be standing. (Fingers crossed on that last one.)

- **Bob Whitting**

The government cuts the target again for women in leadership roles, this time to 5 percent by 2050, with Abe explaining in a speech at an international conference, “Japan must address its problems of low birth-rate and shortage of elderly care workers before it can allow women to abandon their duties in the home.”

- **Gavin Blair**

After the July House of Councillors election, Seiji Maehara, Sumio Mabuchi and Akitaka Nagashima will lead the JIP to form, along with some survivors of the JIP, a political party called the New Security Club. Seiichiro Murakami will quip: “They’ve left the JIP! When were they ever in it?”

- **Michael Cucek**

Increasingly common sights in Japan, 2016: Gororami, tornadoes, and mosquitoes in December.

- **Mary Corbett**

**Abe to launch panel to study Donald Trump’s immigration policies**

- **Andy Sharp, Bloomberg**

Tensions in Okinawa will boil over after clashes between police and protestors over the relocation of Futenma air base to Henoko lead to fatalities. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will continue to insist there are no other alternatives.

- **Eric Johnston, Japan Times**

Horoscopes will be scientifically proven to be so accurate that the difference between primaries will render reddish-brown orangutans entirely unsuitable stand-ins for red fire monkeys, and climate change will re-introduce dragons to areas of Central Asia (and Wales).

- **Andrew Puthcrap, cover designer, ox**

Despite the ruling by the Japanese Supreme Court against allowing married couples to keep their surnames, the prime minister’s wife Akie goes back to her maiden name Matsuzaki. To show that he is serious about “Womenomics,” her husband Shinzo follows suit and adopts his wife’s surname.

- **Sonja Blaschke**

As enthusiasm for Japanese food spreads around the world, 7-Eleven is awarded its first Michelin star for its famous cold spaghetti sandwich.

- **Richard Lloyd Parry, the Times**
**Listening with pen and paper**

As Japan prepares for the 2020 Paralympics, a deaf ex-hostess and single mother turned politician is striving for a “barrier free” Tokyo.

**Her success is part of a sea change. “In Japan diversity is becoming much more accepted.”**

By SONJA BLASCHKE

**Saito’s election success was revolutionary. But her disability was not the only reason why she was chosen as a candidate. In the mid-2000s, for example, she decided to run as a candidate for the city assembly in Saito’s native Toky.”**

**Japanese society has become more open and diverse in the last few decades – something that applies not only to fashionistas or foreigners, but also to people with a disability, like Saito.**

By SONJA BLASCHKE

“I n a nondescript narrow meeting room in the Kita Ward city hall, a young assemblywoman sits erect on one end of the sofa. Her demeanor is formal, albeit with a hint of insecurity, and it’s hard to fault her for this. Only nine months ago, 38-year-old Rie Saito became the ward’s first deaf assemblywoman, and she’s the first to admit that she has yet to get completely comfortable in her role.

She describes her strength as being “good at listening to people’s hearts.” She has no choice, really, because Saito has been unable to hear ever since she came down with meningitis just before turning 2 years old. The brain infection left her as one of about 840,000 people with a hearing disability in Japan. It didn’t have any effect on her ambition, however, neither deterring her from pursuing a lucrative career as one of Tokyo’s top hostesses, nor from successfully entering politics in April 2015.

An interview with Saito today is far from a silent affair. While she prefers to give her answers in writing, she is also adept at voicing her opinions. Becoming familiar with her way of speaking takes some time – her intonation is quite different from that of a hearing person, and she cannot pronounce some letters, like “s.”

“In the beginning we conversed with one another via the computer, even though we sat facing each other,” recalls her secretary, Ryo Masuawa. He has been working with Saito since her election victory at the end of April 2015, and has become her second voice: for the sake of the interviewee he repeats many of her answers slowly and clearly, sometimes repeating questions very slowly so that she can lip-read and other times types comments into her computer.

When Saito speaks, it is with a visible effort to produce words with clarity, which are accompanied with frequent gestures. Her parents are not deaf. Japanese sign language, however, which she only knows on a beginner’s level. There are two ways of thinking on educating the deaf in Japan. One is that children attend special schools and learn sign language. The one that her parents followed believes in schooling deaf children like regular children, which is why Saito learned to read lips.

**SAITO’S ELECTION SUCCESS WAS REVOLUTIONARY. BUT HER DISABILITY WAS NOT THE ONLY REASON WHY SHE WAS CHOSEN AS A CANDIDATE. IN THE MID-2000S, FOR EXAMPLE, SHE DECIDED TO RUN AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE CITY ASSEMBLY IN SAITO’S NATIVE TOKYO.”**

**Saito’s life has been anything but straightforward. Frustrated by the discrimination she faced as a deaf child in Aomori, she later became a rebellious teenager who smoked, got drunk at an early age, and was even caught shoplifting. She left high school before graduation. Eventually, her attractive looks helped her gain work as a hostess, pouring drinks and entertaining male customers. In 2007, Saito moved to Tokyo, where she became a top hostess in Ginza. The hostess industry is an unforgiving one, and listening skills are considered key. Saito resisted writing down her thoughts with an elegant fountain pen. Luckily, calligraphy lessons had given her beautiful handwriting, and Saito soon had a lot of regular customers.

While in her mid-twenties, the unmarried Saito gave birth to a daughter, who she is now raising as a single mother. It was another challenge that she faced in Japan, a country in which 98 percent of the children are born within wedlock.

One would think that just one of the factors that labeled Saito as an “outsider” would be enough to stymie a political career in a society that cherishes uniformity. But despite all that, Saito decided to run in the mainstream of Japanese society, perhaps precisely because she story stray so far from the typical path. Her autobiography Hitsuji Hostess ("The hostess with a pen"), published in 2009 by Kobunsha, became a bestseller. Thrown into the vice of a TV drama and a manga based on Saito’s life story.

Then, after eight years of working as a hostess, Saito left her job. While continuing to write, she became active in campaigning for and supporting other disabled people. She began to realize that there was only so much she could do as a regular citizen, and she began to realize that there was only so much she could do as a regular citizen. She became a quasi-incompetent persons, i.e. comparable, for example, to people with a mental disability. As a consequence, their rights were severely limited. They could not get a loan, buy property or succeed the family business. It was only after pressure from the JFD that the Civil Code was changed to give them equal rights.

Now, in the run-up to Tokyo’s hosting of the 2020 Paralympics, Saito has vowed to make not only the city, but also the hearts of its citizens “barrier free.” “This would make life for everybody easier, especially the elderly,” she says. Disabled people are still quite rare in Japan’s political arena. But about the same time as Rie Saito’s election win, another deaf woman was elected to a local parliament in Hyogo prefecture. Saito interprets this as yet another sign of change.

**HER PRESENCE HAS ALREADY RESULTED in visible changes in the halls of power. Her office was outfitted with a colored laptop indicating the presence of a visitor. The assembly chamber was also technically enhanced. Saito can now give her required speeches using software that audibly reads out her words, a system that she finds very workable.**

“Hearing” what other people say, she says, has been more problematic. Voice recognition software displays on a tablet PC the words spoken by other legislators at the microphone. However, the lower level of the sound, especially during discussion sessions, can at times exceed 50 percent. In those cases, ward office staff sit next to Saito and jot down what the speakers say on a piece of paper.

The technological inroads used to help Saito’s disability have also been revolutionary, as legislatures throughout Japan ban technical devices. Now, for what is likely the first time in Japan, not only Saito but all legislators are free to use PCs in Kita Ward’s assembly. And deaf citizens who wish to attend public meetings can now borrow the devises. Saito has become a symbol, and her secretary says that whenever it is her turn to address the public at the assembly, around a dozen deaf people show up.

For the time being, Saito seems much more challenged by the demands of her new work environment than by disability-related hurdles of communication. Many of the routines of a legislator are new to her. She has struggled with some of the professional lingo, but she says she receives a lot of understanding and support from her fellow legislators. She also draws strength and courage from her voters: “We need people like you (in office), who live with a disability,” is something she often heard during campaigning. The feeling of having obligations to her voters weighs her more heavily than any fears of stumbling. “I want to work hard and deliver results,” she says. Saito keeps her ears open to the needs of others, and the requests for support are many. Saito’s attentive way of listening and communicating with pen and paper, which she honed during her time as a hostess, now comes in handy in her new career in politics.

“By choosing the appropriate Kanji characters for what one wants to say,” she says, “one can sometimes express even more with words that are spoken.”

Sonja Blaschke is a German freelance journalist writing for publications in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. She also works as a producer for TV filming in Japan.
Stefano Carrer

Stefano Carrer, who is from a small town in northern Italy between Milan and Lake Como, was born to middle-class parents in the early 1960s. In his youth he threw himself into a study of ancient Greek, “a very beautiful language, but a luxury. I regret not studying German,” he says. He knew early on that he wanted to be a journalist, and made his choices accordingly. “I never wanted to make much money, I just didn’t want to do repetitive things. And maybe I was idealistic. I wanted to contribute, to spread news.” And so I thought it would be good for my journalistic aspirations to have a background in law.” He took a law degree from the University of Milan, and a Master of Journalism at around the same time from the Institute for Journalism of Milan.

The beginning of his career in journalism was marked by encounters with two men who went on to become among the best-known Italians in the world. At the tail end of a year of compulsory military service, Carrer joined a lifestyle magazine focused on horse riding. His first assignment was to travel to the countryside with a photographer named Tiberti, who he later learned was a member of Operation Gladio, a clandestine “stay-behind” NATO operation for armed resistance in the event of a Russian invasion of Italy.

Together they drove to Tuscany, near Siena, to write about a blind young horseman known for terrorizing the countryside on his steed. Carrer’s editor later titled the piece “I See with the Eyes of my Horse,” and it became the first time that Andrea Bocelli, now a legendary opera singer, made the national press. “Bocelli gave me some tapes of his singing that I passed on to a music company in Milan;” he remembers.

The tapes were instrumental in Bocelli’s discovery, and Carrer still has the tenor’s letter of thanks. The remarkable story is capped off by the fact that Carrer was hired at the magazine by none other than Pierluigi Collina, a frustrated media company manager who later quit and went on to become the single most recognizable soccer referee in the world, officiating the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup final between Brazil and Germany.

Carrer traveled to New York to join the large community of Italian journalists there and was soon stringing for Il Sole 24 Ore, a large Italian financial daily rivaled only by The Financial Times. His first trip to Japan in 1991 was as a freelance international correspondent, a wonderful way to globetrot in which one called a number and chose a destination, paying perhaps ¥750 for a round-trip ticket in exchange for transporting documents and no checked luggage. Unfortunately, the system came to an end after 9/11.

He continued to write for Il Sole 24 Ore after returning to Italy, officially joining in 1993 to cover international finance and commodities. From 2000, Carrer’s reporting was increasingly Asia-oriented, and he became the de facto Asia correspondent from 2006 to 2009. Carrer was based in Italy but on vacation in Tokyo when the triple disaster struck in March 2011, and he extended his stay to cover the unfolding events in Tohoku and Tokyo. “I noticed that Japanese authorities were not particularly efficient in the first few days. Japan works best when the situation is under control, when the dimensions of the disaster are known and resources can be allocated according to an understanding of the big picture,” he says. One week after 3/11, Carrer found himself contacted for comment by other international news outlets, as not a few reporters had repaired to Osaka to do their jobs. His interviewers, in search of panicked on-the-ground reporting, were disappointed by his calm answers and cut things short. “In one interview I told them, ‘The only thing I am at risk of here so far is getting fat from the strange vending-machine drinks until more water arrives.’”

Carrer wonders what life as a foreign correspondent might have been like in the pre-internet age, given the time lag and the mechanics of filing a story in those days. To keep up with the demands of modern journalism, and to find an outlet for reporting that doesn’t make it to the printed page, Carrer taught himself video journalism on the fly, both shooting and editing, and has made more than 400 short videos in two years that can be seen on the “Pianeta Giappone” section of Il Sole’s website. They cover a wide range of topics, from culture to politics and finance.

As Il Sole 24 Ore’s East Asia Correspondent since April 2013, Carrer has been watching recent developments in Japan with great interest, and sees parallels with his own country: “Italy is constitutionally committed to repudiation of war as a means to solve international disputes,” he says. “But with our Italian planes, we ended up bombing Baghdad, Belgrade, Tripoli. We were dragged into counterproductive foreign wars by our allies, only to realize later that it was against our national interest. I worry that Japan may also lose the way to stay out of conflict that has until now served its national interest well.”

As this interview at the Club wound down, Carrer insisted on visiting the hallway leading to the elevators. “I’m impressed by Mushima, and of course by Kenzaburo Oe,” he says, indicating the portraits of past visitors. “But here . . . maybe the most important guest of the FCCJ’s last 70 years: Roberto Baggio!”
As most correspondents are only too aware, Fukushima has triggered a torrent of vitriol, which some have branded an “ultra-leftist North Korean spy” and repeatedly referenced in their public influence. When confronted by one of these more formidable trolls, simply remaining silent can eventually become a counter-productive strategy. It is a regrettable fact that a certain percentage of people tend to view dignified silence in the face of public accusations as some kind of an admission of guilt. If you are holding a position in which public perceptions about you can have a significant effect on your career or status, you simply have to defend yourself publicly in these cases, though different opponents may call for different strategies to counter them.

Teddy Zimbo, Videonews.com: “I’ve been in this business for a long time as the abuse doesn’t bother me any more, unless there are physical threats to me, my family or staffers. It’s just toilet graffiti and people give it too much attention because they don’t know how to deal with it. Shoving down abusers works in one way, however: instead of sitting back and just bearing the attacks, you do something and feel better. It makes it easier to cope.”

Tim Horynak: “Because of the endless torrent of stupidity and abuse online, comments on news sites are on the way out. They’ve been eliminated at sites like Popular Science, Reuters, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Daily Beast, CNN and others. Many are aware that there’s little value in allowing anonymous users on websites and social media. I expect the online landscape will move toward more of a Facebook-style basis of real names for dialogue as social media. I expect the online landscape will move toward more of a Facebook-style basis of real names for dialogue as social media.”

Hiroko Tabuchi, New York Times correspondent formerly based in Tokyo: “I talked to several journalists I respect for advice on how to deal with the torrent of ‘rants’ I was receiving, and was basically advised to ignore, grin and bear it. I think the let’s be honest, basically still white male-dominated) world of foreign media in Japan has very little understanding of how sick, personal and sexual online attacks on women can be – in a way they usually aren’t for men. Being a local journalist also means there’s a little escape. I was personally very disillusioned by the lack of any collective rage or even public support among the foreign journalist community for female journalists (not just me) who were publicly harassed online.”

Julian Ryall, The Telegraph: “I’m firmly in the ‘ignore them and hope to hell they go away’ faction. I just have too much to do to start a conversation with someone who, firstly, almost certainly has plenty of time on their hands – they’re unemployed (for good reason), they’re students of the issue I’ve written about and want to nit-pick over a 300-word article that I’ve written, or they’re some sad foreigner who has lived in the middle of nowhere in Japan for 20 years and assume that gives them the right to pontificate about all things Japanese and to tell everyone how much more intelligent they are than anyone else. The desk in London tells us to basically ignore the comments section on the bottom of stories. I get the impression they’re there to generate traffic and keep people coming back.”

Michael Penn, Shingetsu News Agency: “I agree that smaller trolls should be ignored. However, certain trolls have gained large followings and can wield an uncomfortable degree of public influence. When confronted by one of these formidable trolls, simply remaining silent can eventually become a counter-productive strategy. It is a regrettable fact that a certain percentage of people tend to view dignified silence in the face of public accusations as some kind of an admission of guilt. If you are holding a position in which public perceptions about you can have a significant effect on your career or status, you simply have to defend yourself publicly in these cases, though different opponents may call for different strategies to counter them.”

David McNeill: “I can put up with being called a liar. ‘Trolls elicit eye-rolling from our male colleagues’,” says Tabuchi. “Trolls elicit eye-rolling from our male colleagues. But there came a point where he felt enough was enough.”

As most correspondents are only too aware, Fukushima has triggered a torrent of vitriol, which some have branded an “ultra-leftist North Korean spy” and repeatedly referenced in their public influence. When confronted by one of these more formidable trolls, simply remaining silent can eventually become a counter-productive strategy. It is a regrettable fact that a certain percentage of people tend to view dignified silence in the face of public accusations as some kind of an admission of guilt. If you are holding a position in which public perceptions about you can have a significant effect on your career or status, you simply have to defend yourself publicly in these cases, though different opponents may call for different strategies to counter them. Teddi Zimbo, Videonews.com: “I’ve been in this business for a long time as the abuse doesn’t bother me any more, unless there are physical threats to me, my family or staffers. It’s just toilet graffiti and people give it too much attention because they don’t know how to deal with it. Shoving down abusers works in one way, however: instead of sitting back and just bearing the attacks, you do something and feel better. It makes it easier to cope.”
After almost two decades as a popular entertainment personality, Patrick Harlan is both cheerleader and critic of the Japanese media.

Patrick Harlan is both cheerleader and critic of the Japanese media.

Pakkun’s view from the inside

by JULIAN RYALL

JAPAN NEEDS TO MOVE away from news programs that shy away from controversy in favor of harmony, believes Patrick Harlan, the U.S.-born television personality, and embraces a model such as that pioneered by Jon Stewart in the hugely popular Daily Show on American screens.

“News, from an American perspective, is very different from news from the Japanese perspective,” said Harlan, who is one half of the PakkunMakkun comic duo but is also in demand as a commentator on television chat shows and recently started to host the TV show “Through Foreign Eyes.”

“My impression is that Americans thrive on controversy – and you only have to look at the leading Republican candidate for the presidency, he’s a walking controversy, and that’s why he is so popular.” When Donald Trump holds forth, ratings go up, advertising dollars flood in and the station is happy, Harlan said.

Speaking at a recent press event at the FCCJ, he said he believes that this country needs more stimulating debate of the news, more options on news coverage and more interpretation of the news. “The American edition of the BBC – that is the way we should be covering the news from the Japanese perspective, “ Harlan said.

“I myself try to create a little controversy and I later tackled the issue in the Daily Telegraph. I find that foreign journalists were less than perfect in their coverage of the stories. The government interfering with the media for the content of one of its broadcasts,” he said. “In America, the government interfering with the story would be the story. The government interfering with the freedom of the media would automatically set off an incredible response from all media outlets, not just the targeted one.”

In recent years, Harlan suggested, there has been a sharp decline in respect for the freedom of the press and the media in general. “I see this as a trend that isn’t just going to be more prevalent in Japan and I think that Japan would really need to have a walking controversy – and you only need the added provocation that the media would automatically set off an incredible response from all media outlets, not just the targeted one.”

He admitted that American news coverage was less than perfect as the news is served up here – “It’s over the top and alarmist” – but suggested that there are two countries to learn from each other’s systems.

That is where foreign correspondents have a role to play, he said. “Bringing foreign perspectives into Japan is a good move. The JRFU should try to avoid such faux pas, but it seems many organizations haven’t made much progress. The 2020 Olympics Administration organization has made such a mess of things that I don’t need to recap it here. And it seems that the organizers of the Rugby World Cup are headed in the same direction. The recent performance of the Japan team in England was one of the most embarrassing sports stories of the year, a PR gift from the gods. And the impact at home and abroad was astonishing. Wouldn’t the Japan Rugby Football Union (JRFU) want more of this lovely publicity?”

When contacted, Jones said he didn’t want to cancel the event, so PAC staff told the JRFU the Club would go ahead. The JRFU contacted Japan’s Professional Rugby Organizers Committee (PAC) and asked them to cancel the event, a blatant untruth, and asked that the Club cancel the event – with the added proviso that the members shouldn’t be told the reason, since it was the Club’s fault for not following procedure Hub.

Curiously, the JRFU then arranged a press conference for Jones – the man with no time – at the National Press Club, and then asked us to move our press conference to Nov. 2. Luckily, Jones agreed.

His appearance was one of the biggest press conferences of the year at the FCCJ. No longer under JRFU “supervision,” Jones said what he liked, which was that rugby in Japan is in a mess and, by implication at least, they need to work on their PR, an opinion that – while not particularly new – was a powerful message considering its source.

Put simply, sporting events like the Olympic Games, the Rugby World Cup and the Olympics need input from all sides and all sorts, including journalists, PR experts and the Japanese authorities, said Harlan.

“Japan was a difficult skill to master initially, Harlan admits, with politics and sex jokes effectively off-limits and “red-neck” jokes passing Japanese audiences by. He has also had to get to grips with the all-powerful agents who manage personalities here, as well as the convention of unsupervised “variety” shows on television.

While praising many aspects of the Japanese media world, he is frank about his concerns. “Japanese people do not grow up debating, so you see very little hardcore discussion of the news on television,” he said. “Instead, you see people being nice to each other, which is a trademark of Japanese society. But the exchange of ideas is not helped by that politeness. I think you can still have strong debate with politeness and I think you can have a strong press corps that is still polite without being namby-pamby and weak.”

He went on to point out some “fruity developments regarding freedom of the press recently,” including the example of a prefectural governor who refused to be interviewed by a newspaper because he objected to a article in a magazine affiliated with the newspaper.

“Instead, you see people being nice to each other, which is a trademark of Japanese society. But the exchange of ideas is not helped by that politeness. I think you can still have strong debate with politeness and I think you can have a strong press corps that is still polite without being namby-pamby and weak.”

I think you can have a strong press corps that is polite without being namby-pamby and weak.

JAN 2016      FCCJ

Fred Vercoe is a Chile-based freelance journalist.
... on Tuesday, Jan. 12 at 7:00 pm for The Actor, Satoko Yokohama’s first film since the much-lauded Bare Essence of Life. Busy TV actor Ken Yasuda gives an extraordinarily versatile performance in the role of a lifetime, demonstrating his skill in a range of parts on a variety of film sets and theatrical stages. The Actor, which world premiered at the 2015 Tokyo International Film Festival, highlights Yokohama’s flare for surrealistic touches, unusual imagery and offbeat musical selections. A witty, warm-hearted paean to a bit-part player – you recognize his face, but you can never remember his name – the film follows Takuji Kameoka as he auditions, rehearses and shoots, then drinks away his loneliness with fellow low-achievers in nearby bars. Then one night, he awakens from a nap and falls in love with the radiant bartender Azumi (Kumiko Aso). As if that isn’t enough, he’s invited to audition for world-famous arthouse director Alan Spesso (Ricardo Garcia). Suddenly, Kameoka is facing an existential midlife crisis ...

(Japan, 2015; 123 minutes; English with Japanese subtitles.)
URSULA HYZY is the bureau chief of Agence France-Presse Tokyo. It is her second Tokyo assignment, after a stint between Sept. 2001 and May 2005. Hyzy studied economics at university in Paris as well as Russian at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. Since joining AFP in 1992, she has held posts in Jilin, Lyon and on the Africa and Europe desks in Paris. She was then based in Washington D.C. and Moscow before heading AFP’s Warsaw regional bureau, which covers Poland, the three Baltic states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Prior to her Tokyo assignment in June, she was covering French macroeconomics at AFP’s Paris headquarters. Her native language is French and she also speaks English, Russian and Polish.

SONG KAN KAN is the chief correspondent for Shanghai SMG Media Center. Hailing from Beijing, Song has lived in Japan for 18 years, and has received a master’s degree in environmental information from the Musashi Institute of Technology. After her graduation, she has held positions at CCTV, NHK and Phoenix TV before joining Shanghai SMG, where she reports on political, economic and social news from Japan.

MICHIRO OKAMOTO is a Senior Research Fellow following the Middle East and the international affairs at Yomiuri Research Institute of the Yomiuri Shimbun. He studied Arabic and Middle East affairs in Tokyo University of Foreign studies, before joining the Yomiuri as a staff writer in 1983. He worked as a resident correspondent in Tehran and as Cairo bureau chief before he was assigned as the general bureau chief of the Americas in June 2008. He returned to the Tokyo head office in October 2011, where he has held posts as a commentary & analysis editor, international news editor and as deputy managing editor. Okamoto was born in Chitose-shi, Hokkaido.

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 ¥126,000 per month.

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.

Nexis 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 19F Club office.

When we say, “Imagine, change,” it’s no idle boast. For all of us at RICOH it’s an urgent call to action. We rode the wave of office automation for decades, making printers and copiers help people put their ideas on paper. But watching work-styles evolve we realized the need to imagine what’s next — and lead the way to change.

“Visual Communications” is one direction imagination leads us. Taking the value we’ve always offered to a whole new level. Sharing vital information securely across time zones and language barriers to achieve seamless teamwork worldwide.

Our imagination takes shape in a suite of new solutions like the RICOH Interactive Whiteboard DSS00. Its high-definition LCD display lets you present drawings, review designs and share comments in real-time with both on-site and remote audiences over a secure connection. Its electronic pen makes it easy to annotate and save notes as you go. With no software required, invited remote users can easily log on with a PIN code. At the end you can share the presentation or delete it. And, yes, you can still print it.

To learn more about RICOH’s Visual Communications, visit:
http://yotu.be/0JuDZafuF6

RICOH COMPANY, LTD.
PR Department
3-13-1 Uinca, Chuo-ku,
Tokyo 104-8522
Tel: 03-3784-5228
Email: info-pr@ricoh.co.jp
www.ricoh.com
WHAT IF YOU COULD ELECTRIFY YOUR DRIVE?
NISSAN LEAF

“I’M IN THE MOTHERSHIP WHEN I DRIVE.”
Deborah L, USA, LEAF Owner

Model may vary by country.

#BeElectrifying