DIGITAL DELIVERY

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

Watching the vloggers: Where the views are made

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

Profiled: Robin Harding of the Financial Times
Taking craftsmanship to the micro level

NSK crafts more than 2 billion bearings each year for use in a broad spectrum of applications, ranging from gigantic six-meter units weighing 15 tons, used in subway tunneling machines, down to one of the world’s smallest production bearings, a minute component with a 0.8 mm bore used in today’s ultra-compact personal computers. Tiny is the toughest because the smaller you go the harder it is to achieve uniform high precision. But NSK continues to push the envelope into the nanosphere, with feats that won us the coveted Modern Master Craftsman Award from Japan’s government. Whatever, wherever and whenever the world needs to move, NSK will be there.
It's been an honor and make it the best it can be. I salute you, gentlemen. I'm reading The Power of Habit, by New York Times reporter Charles Duhigg. I usually stay well away from books in the so-called self-help genre, but this is interesting stuff on the latest research and case studies on how habits form and can be changed.

My other reading included the minutes of FCCJ Board meetings and a General Membership Meeting written in September and October of 1975. I realize that sounds very sad, but as the Club is now in the process of moving, the minutes of 41 years ago make for a good read as they deal with the FCCJ's move from its previous location to the current premises in the Yurakucho Denki building. The minutes support the adage, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." That is, the concerns of members in 1975 mirror those in the Club today regarding moving premises. I'll paraphrase, but among the questions in the minutes is this one: "Will we be able to afford the rent in the bigger space in the Denki Building?" Countered by: "We won't get a better offer than the one by Mitsubishi." And they go on: "The Denki Building is inconvenient," said some. "We have to get our finances in order before we move," and "The Club should get smaller not bigger," were some others.

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

As those voices of 41 years ago echo through OCT 2016      FCCJ

There are many people I'd like to thank for the work I've done here.
by DAVID MCNEILL

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

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

After years of these calls, making it impossible to ignore: In 2004 it famously condemned the Hurt Report on the death of UK government scientist David Kelly with a one-word headline “Whitewash?” It clawed back circulation and won British newspaper of the year in 2004.

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

FROM THE START, INTELLECTUAL writing was a platform for some of the greatest first-person journalism of its pages and foreign news to some of the greatest journalists of its era, helped put the foreign pages up in lights but the Indy was full of other famous reporting names, including Patrick Cockburn, Rupert Cornwell and (until he left) Lloyd Parry.

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

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

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

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

The paper had relocated from the London Docklands to Northcliffe House off the Kensington High Street in 2008 – its fourth and final move in 22 years. The aim, of course, was to save money. It shared the building with the arch-conservative Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, London Evening Standard, the Metro and London Lite – hardly an easy fit for a freewheeling, centre-left title. Though it resisted political pigeonholing, the paper was ahead of the curve, sadly so. It survives as a digital publication, offline readership is up (helped by heavy promotion on Facebook and other social media).

Online readership is up (helped by heavy promotion on Facebook and other social media). Around two-thirds of the Independent’s UK readers access it only from mobile devices, according to Journalism.co.uk. But for better or worse, the Indy’s fate encapsulates the decline of old media and the rise of algorithm-led journalism.

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

As for me, I won’t miss those late-night calls. But I do sometimes long for the Indy’s beautiful bedlam.
The future of the media is you(tube)

by RICHARD SMART

Despite recent films extolling the heyday of investigative journalists, like the Boston Globe team that took on the Catholic church in the film Spotlight, traditional media jobs are no longer thought of as desirable by young people entering the workforce. In fact, in a CareerCast.com ranking of the worst professions to enter, a career in newsjournalism in No. 5 was broadcast, only barely beaten by the logger profession in second. There is one job in media, though, that is among the most desired career choices for 21st century youth: the YouTube star.

A look into the inner workings of the platform in Japan suggest that these starry-eyed job hunters, who likely see the platform offering a path to easy money and a lavish lifestyle, may want to rethink their ambitions. Earnings are opaque, trolls are common, a jensoo system that is as impenetrable as that in Job controls the trajectory of its stars, and just as the biggest newspapers of the world find themselves at the whim of the Facebook algorithm, so do “vloggers” – video journalists, like the Boston Globe team that took on the Catholic church in the film Spotlight.

Endless September is a phrase rarely heard outside geek circles. It refers to a phenomenon from the early days of the internet, when sophisticated, high-concept conversations on chatrooms would be disrupted once a year, then more often, then always, by the inane, the misinformed and trolls. Why September? That is when students arrived online, getting free online access at their universities. As more joined the internet, so did the tendency for dull conversation and trolling increase, making the September problem a year-round one.

Japan had its own endless September. Hikosaemon, a YouTuber with 85,000 subscribers who has been active on the YouTube site since around the time of its launch, joined to avoid the trolling and banality of comments sections in other areas of the internet. “It was a time when news forums turned into rage spaces for the expat community to vent,” he said. “I was more interested in discussion than foreigner fights.” Since the 1990s I was reading Japanese news online, and just as the biggest newspapers of the world find themselves at the whim of the Facebook algorithm, so do “vloggers” – video journalists, like the Boston Globe team that took on the Catholic church in the film Spotlight.

Three of the big English-language YouTube channels in Japan belong to Canadians Micaela Braithwaite (270,000 subscribers) and Sharla (467,000), and the American wife/Japanese husband team Rachel and Jun (679,000). All three are_page_9 members of the Number 1 Shimbun who declined to release personal data, indicating they simply didn’t want to hassle the threat of trolls seeking out your identity to harass you can turn a hobby, or possible career, into the sort of irri-
The issue of imperial succession was used in political manoeuvres with the press in Occupation Japan.

**By EICHIRO TOKUMOTO**

By indicating his desire to hand over the imperial throne, the crowning gesture in Japan's 32-year-old empire, he set off intense debate about the state of the imperial family and the institution of the monarchy itself. What started as rumor has become a real issue for the government, as it scrambles to find a legal way to handle any succession. Press coverage has been extensive, not only in Japan but worldwide.

This is not, however, the first time in the postwar era for the subject to arise, and not the first time it has caused great consternation for the interested parties. According to declassified documents of the British government, a group of Japanese and Americans engaged in behind-the-scenes political maneuvering to bring about the abdication of Emperor Hirohito soon after the end of WWII. And, whether willingly or through deception, there were a number of foreign correspondents that the tribunal's ruling that former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other Class-A war criminals would receive the death sentence, and rumors that former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other war leaders would resign. The timing was important. One month earlier, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo Trials, had completed its proceedings. It was expected that former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other Class-A war criminals would receive the death sentence, and rumors spread among correspondents that the tribunal's ruling would be timed to the Emperor's abdication. Their reports were circulated worldwide, resulting in a considerable reaction in Japan as well.

In the backdrop of the rumors over abdication soon after the war, there were behind-the-scenes political moves by people wishing to remake the emperor to their own advantage, and it's very likely that the Press Club correspondents were used in this to get intelligence. Since then, the young Crown Prince has grown, been crowned Emperor and the abdication issue again became furtive in the present government. It started with an article in the American Magazine 'News Week[sic]' . The report continued. "The Supreme Commander said that he was in agreement with my estimation of Prince Takamatsu, a former officer of the Imperial Japanese Navy, who would assume the role of the Crown Prince."

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

The same day, Howard Handelman, the FCCJ's first president and Tokyo correspondent for International News Service, joined the bandwagon, writing, "Japanese sources reported that Hirohito has been persuaded to step down from the throne in favor of his son, Crown Prince Akihito, who would reign until some future occasion, possibly for two or more years."

Handelman's report was followed by a similar article, in which he wrote, "Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who has been agreed with my estimation of Prince Takamatsu, whom he gravely distrusted. Rumors of the abdication spread among correspondents that the tribunal's ruling that former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other war leaders would resign. The timing was important. One month earlier, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo Trials, had completed its proceedings. It was expected that former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other Class-A war criminals would receive the death sentence, and rumors spread among correspondents that the tribunal's ruling would be timed to the Emperor's abdication. Their reports were circulated worldwide, resulting in a considerable reaction in Japan as well."

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

How to make Japan stories interesting to an international readership was the theme of a Meet the Press talk Harding gave at the Club in October last year. “The challenge I discovered - and it remains the challenge for all foreign correspondents - is finding ways to project Japanese stories so that they resonate with readers in major cities around the world. “Nobody in Japan would think of writing that story,” he says. “You don’t have those roles, so you don’t think about. Similarly, it wouldn’t occur to people abroad to think about how Japan does this.”

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

Though the FT’s Tokyo bureau has moved back into the Nikkei building - it was previously housed there before relocating - Harding insists there has been no attempt at editorial influence, “I’m the person most exposed to that, so if there was any, I’m pretty confident I would know about it,” he says. “We’re physically segregated from the Nikkei. Literally the only place we encounter them is in the canteen. The Nikkei is not a company controlled by a proprietor, like a lot of the UK media is,” he says. “It’s essentially an employee-owned perpetual trust and doesn’t really have any ideological interest in influencing us.”

Harding contrasts the situation with the former ownership by publicly listed Pearson, which had extremely ambitious requirements about how much money the FT was supposed to make, leading to a lot of instability. “I’ve been at the FT for 15 years and there have been three rounds of redundancies. In terms of an owner who’s going to be there as it makes the transition to online, they [Nikkei] are great.”

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

The FT, along with other global media outlets, has previously run stories criticizing the frequent leaking of financial data ahead of official results by Japanese companies to the Nikkei. Asked if he would still write the story today, Harding replies, “Definitely, though I might avoid the canteen that day.”

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

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

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

He joined the Financial Times in the summer of 2006 on a fellowship for leader writers. “I was deeply lacking in expertise about,” he says, “most of which I was supposed to be daunting. “I wrote about all sorts of things in those first two years,” he says, “most of which I was deeply lacking in expertise about, but then that’s journalism.”

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

Robin Harding
by GAVIN BLAIR

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

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

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

W
Russia before finally escaping to Manchuria where he found just graduated from university. Young Victor joined the White rivers, where his father, Victor Alexandrovich Pokrovsky, had Russia that lies at the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka and seventies and the heady days of the “Bubble Economy.”

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

**From Russia with love**

*By GEOFF TUDOR*

W hen Georges Pokrovsky celebrates his 85th birthday on Nov. 27, he can look back on a life encompassing an eventful childhood, Japan’s dark days of conflict and postwar recovery, the miraculous growth of the sixties and seventies and the heady days of the “Bubble Economy.”

An associate FCCJ journalist and magazine publisher, Pokrovsky has been an eyewitness to Japan’s modern history. His story begins back in 1937 in Kazan, a city in southwest Russia that lies between the Volga and Kazanka rivers, where his father, Victor Alexandrovich Pokrovsky, had just graduated from university. Young Victor joined the White Army and before escaping to Manchuria Russia before finally escaping to Manchuria where he found sanctuary in the city of Harbin.

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

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

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

**IN OCCUPATION-RULED JAPAN,** the Pokrovsky clan took stock of the situation. Most of them made plans to leave, though it took time for them to bear fruit. Lydia met and married a young American navy officer, William Kosar, and left for the U.S. in 1958. Victor, wife Irene and daughter Larisa joined them in 1964. But George had decided to stay put. “Originally my hope had been to train as an engineer, as my father had done,” he says. “But I had become disenchanted with education. I had missed years of school. I had gone without good food and had also experienced hard times. I was, you might say, an angry young man. I felt attracted to becoming a businessman.”

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

The job was short-lived. “When he noticed that the owner-publisher had too many rooms in the flat and the magazine was suffering, he asked to take over. But Preeneu went bust in 1954 and the owner-publisher disappeared.”

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

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

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

Then the nationality issue had to be dealt with. One of his ski friends spoke to his father who happened to be a close friend of a top man at the Ministry of Justice. “He’s a very curious foreigner,” George’s friend’s father told the ministry official. “He has his own hanko seal.” That was good enough for the official, who ordered his staff to arrange the paperwork without delay.

“From being a stateless person suddenly I was a Japanese national.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A long-time member of the Club looks back at a fascinating life – from wartime to the Bubble era; from ski resort owner to magazine publisher.
Shun Kato, born in Gifu in 1992, became fascinated with photography while studying at Nagoya University of Arts and Sciences, and after graduation he joined Jiji Press. The bulk of his work is in black-and-white and concentrates on people. His most famous series is ‘The Fishermen of Okushiri Island’ which led him to Tsukiji Fish Market.

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

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

Norman Pearlstine, Vice Chairman of Time Inc., speaking about the U.S. presidential election at the FCCJ on Sept. 11.
YOICHI TAKITA is a senior staff writer at Nihon Keizai Shimbun, covering macro economy and financial markets. He joined the company upon graduating from Keio University in 1981 with a Master’s degree in law. From 1987 until 1990 he was the Zurich Bureau Chief and from 2008-2009 he was the senior staff writer for Nikkei America. He returned to Japan in 2009 to the position of deputy chief editor for Nikkei, a post he held until 2011. In 2011 he took on his present post. In 2008, Takita received the Vaughan-Ueda International Journalist Award for reports on the Lehman crisis. He has written several books, including The Global Financial Crisis is Opening Pandora’s Box (2008), How to Read Interest Rates (2014).

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

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NEW IN THE LIBRARY

The FCCJ is offering a special deal for new Associate Members. From the beginning of September to the end of the year, those joining are eligible for a ¥100,000 discount off the regular fee of ¥300,000. If successfully approved, the applicants will be able to enjoy all the member benefits: attendance at all the major press conferences and professional and social events; dining services at the Main Bar, Pen & Quill Executive Dining area and the Masukomi Sushi Bar; special discounts on sports, arts and cultural events; free Wi-Fi half-price parking; the Club’s monthly magazine; and access to reciprocal press clubs around the world.

Present members can also benefit. A ¥20,000 restaurant voucher will be given to those who introduce successfully approved new Associates. For more information, or to pick up an application form, go to the front desk.

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