

The magazine of The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN



June 2020 Vol. 52 No. 6 ¥400

THE VIRUS

FROM A DISTANCE

OUTSIDE TOKYO



Fine dining



Open for lunch and dinner

Closed weekends

In this issue

THE FRONT PAGE

- From the President** by Khaldon Azhari 4
History lessons:
A look back at last century's pandemic 4
From the Archives
A cardiac surgeon pioneer 5
 by Charles Pomeroy

FEATURES

- The virus outside Tokyo** 6
 by Eric Johnston
- Flushed with pride**
The Mainichi Shimbun's secret wartime toilet source 8
 by Mark Schreiber

- In Memoriam:** 12
In memory of Stefano
 by Pio d'Emlia

- Toast to Old Nic** 14
 by John R. Harris



Page 12:
Stefano Carrer
at work

PROFILE

- Kantaro Suzuki** 10
Freelance
 by Gavin Blair

CLUB NEWS

- Club removes controversial *Number 1 Shimbun* cover image from website; New Members; New in the library 17
- Lens craft** 18
 by photographer Members

contact the editors
no.1shimbun@fccj.or.jp

Publisher FCCJ

Editor Gregory Starr
Art Director Andrew Potheccary
www.itsumo-music.jp/design
Editorial Assistant Naomichi Iwamura
Photo Coordinator Michiyo Kobayashi
Publications Committee members
 Geoffrey Tudor, *Orient Aviation* (chair)
 Peter O'Connor, *Freelance*
 Sonja Blaschke, *Freelance*
 Marina Yoshimura, *Student*

FCCJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Khaldon Azhari, *PanOrient News*
1st Vice President Monzurul Huq, *Daily Prothom Alo*
2nd Vice President Robert Whiting, *Freelance*
Treasurer Mehdi Bassiri, *Associate Member*
Secretary Takashi Kawachi, *Freelance*
Directors-at-Large
 Mary Corbett, *Professional/Journalist Associate Member*
 Abigail Leonard, *Freelance*
 Peter O'Connor, *Freelance*
 Akihiko Tanabe, *Associate Member*
Kanji Kazuo Abiko, *Freelance*
Associate Kanji Makoto Honjo, *Associate Member*
Ex-officio vacant

FCCJ COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Associate Members Liaison Keiko Packard, Yuusuke Wada
Compliance Kunio Hamada, Yoshio Murakami
DeRoy Memorial Scholarship Peter O'Connor
Entertainment Sandra Mori
Exhibition Bruce Osborn
Film Karen Severns
Finance Mehdi Bassiri
Food & Beverage Robert Kirschenbaum, Peter R. Tyksinski
Freedom of Press Abigail Leonard
House & Property Khaldon Azhari
Human Resources Khaldon Azhari
Information Technology Yuusuke Wada
Library, Archives & Workroom Koichi Ishiyama, Suvendrini Kakuchi
Membership Andrew Horvat, Peter O'Connor
Membership Marketing TBA
Professional Activities Tetsuo Jimbo, David McNeill
Public Relations Dan Sloan
Publications Geoff Tudor
Special Projects Haruko Watanabe

Foreign Press in Japan Robin Harding

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

Marunouchi Nijubashi Building 5F
 Marunouchi 3-2-3 Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-0005
 Tel: (03) 3211-3161 Fax: (03) 3211-3168 fccj.or.jp

Published by the FCCJ All opinions contained within *Number 1 Shimbun* are those of the authors. As such, these opinions do not constitute an official position of *Number 1 Shimbun*, the editor or the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.

Please pitch and send articles and photographs, or address comments to no.1shimbun@fccj.or.jp
 Read the *Number 1 Shimbun* online:
fccj.or.jp/number-1-shimbun

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Fellow Members,

The FCCJ is emerging from the coronavirus lockdown to face new challenges, not the least of which is to put the Club onto a sounder financial footing by extending our professional and social activities.

As we prepare to upgrade our operations in the Club to the “new normal” of reduced hours, distanced tables at the Bar, temperature checks and name registration at the entrance, etc., we are hoping Japan will flatten the curve and get out from the coronavirus soon along with the world.

Here, I must express on behalf of the board our profound thanks and appreciation to our dedicated staff who have worked on throughout the lockdown. They will continue to do their utmost to maintain maximum sanitary health on the club premises. Our valued members’ continued cooperation will be appreciated in this regard. From June we expect more news events, while the library and work room are still open as usual.

Please visit your club and enjoy the benefits of your membership, as our vendor, Bplan, has been serving us in the lockdown time and is preparing to upgrade the service. In this regard, the board adopted a resolution at its emergency meeting on Friday May 29 to negotiate to upgrade the service to meet the expectations of the whole membership.

My thanks also go to the *Number 1 Shimbun* team who produced the magazine tirelessly and although the April issue made some news in town in the last week of May, over the cover design, at the end of the day we can confirm that the respect that the editor and designer have for Japan and its people is beyond doubt. Humor is in the eye of the beholder.

On that issue, the board confirmed to the membership and to the whole of Japan that the FCCJ has been and will remain a hub of the freedom of the press and expression in Japan. This is a not a matter of compromise but we also had to listen to our lawyers’ advice who saw this issue was ultimately one of copyright: a legal issue. If there had not been a copyright issue the BOD would not have agreed to the removal of the illustration from the website. The decision was unanimous. No one opposed it. We believe in following Japanese law that we respect.

This issue is hopefully behind us now. We look forward to the future and hope that at this existential crossroads in the club’s history we can avoid getting lost in the past.

Before any plans or marketing, we need to be a united membership. Civil wars destroyed more countries than external wars did.

Something was in my mind during my press conference: most questions were from FCCJ members who were not happy with removing the cover from the website. I was glad to hear my colleagues’ grilling questions. Some found that a “division.” I found it a healthy, direct and transparent show for all of those watched it live. Yes there was a difference of opinion among some members over the board decision, but this is normal in an organization that has a long tradition of free expression, and in a country that respects the freedom of reporting.

I personally see no constraints against reporters in this country, Japan, and I am confident this will only continue.

We, at FCCJ, are waiting eagerly to cover Tokyo Olympics’ next year, and hoping the current pandemic ends with the upcoming warm winds of the approaching summer.

In conclusion I remind you that June is traditionally the election month of the FCCJ. I hope the membership gets involved this year, and helps the club stabilize in our new grand location and building.

– Khaldon Azhari

HISTORY LESSONS

A look back at last century’s pandemic

The first flu patients in Japan began showing symptoms around April, 1918. Initially, reported *Shukan Gen dai* (May 2-9), it was referred to as the *sumo kaze* (sumo cold) because a contingent of sumo wrestlers contracted it while on a Taiwan tour. Three of them expired before they could return home. As the contagion spread, the summer grand sumo tournament in Tokyo was cancelled.

At Yokosuka, 150 sailors in the Imperial Navy aboard the *Suwo*, a battleship salvaged from the Russian Navy after the Battle of Port Arthur and kept as a war trophy by Japan, contracted the disease. It soon spread to the army, rapidly filling a hospital located in present-day Shinjuku ward to capacity. By this time people were referring to it as *guntai-byo* (the military disease).

The first newspaper article to cover the pandemic was in the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* of June 6, 1918 with the headline “Strange epidemic in Spain.” At that time, Japan’s newspaper readers still saw it as “foreign news” that would have little effect on their own lives.

That was to change from late September when, as the *Gifu Shimbun* (May 4) reported, female workers at the Nichibo textile factory in Ogaki City began collapsing at their looms. More than 8,000 lives were lost in Gifu prefecture and news coverage at the time noted, “Each day several dozen caskets were lined up at the crematory in Takayama, and were cremated without Buddhist priests even taking the time to chant sutras.”

THIS WAS THE SPEARHEAD of the “first wave” of what came to be called the *ryukosei kanbo* (literally, contagious influenza). By October, the contagion had spread throughout the nation. Schools began closing and it was noted more than vulnerable age groups such as children and the elderly, people in the prime of life were dying.

The prime minister during the worst of the outbreak was Takashi Hara, who had succeeded army general Masatake Terauchi in September 1918. A former journalist for the *Yubin Hochi Shimbun* (later absorbed by *Yomiuri*), Hara was not only the first commoner to serve as prime minister, but also the first Christian.

Like his counterpart in the UK a century later, Hara also had the distinction of contracting the Spanish flu. After running a sustained high fever, he took to bed, but recovered and returned to work without requiring hospitalization. He was cut down by an assassin in Tokyo central rail station on November 4, 1921.

In Osaka, over 20 percent of the drivers of the city’s commuter trains and trams became infected, adversely affecting rail services. Another job category severely hit was telephone operators, who called

in sick in such numbers that there weren’t enough people available to transcribe telegrams announcing deaths.

The flu peaked at 130,000 in November and by the time the first wave had tapered off, about 38 percent of the population, or 21.16 million people, had been sickened, with 266,000 deaths.

By May 1919, flu fatalities had tapered off to zero; but from December of that year, a second wave began and peaked a month later. Health authorities noted that while the overall number of patients was fewer than in the first wave—probably due to more people having acquired immunity—around 20 percent of those contracting the disease died.

IN ANOTHER VIEW FROM a distant mirror, the *Kobe Shimbun* of April 9 reported that “Unethical businesses were gouging the prices of face masks.” Its issue of November 30, 1918 noted that at least 13,000 people in Hyogo Prefecture had contracted the flu, with numbers growing exponentially, causing schools and factories to close.

In Tokyo, the period from mid-January to early February was described as “three weeks of hell.” From Jan. 14 onward, the city’s newspapers issued daily reports of fatalities, with each day carrying more black-bordered obituary announcements. One paper was said to have run four full pages containing nothing but obits.

Not surprisingly the impact on the Japanese economy was severe, particularly on mining industries.

Not having the scientific means to identify the virus—the electron microscope was still over a decade away—scientists were in the dark about the nature of the virus. In desperation, people turned to oddball preventions and cures, such as a “medication” produced from grinding up roasted earthworms.

The two waves of the pandemic killed at least 450,000 people in Japan, and many more in its colonial territories of Korea (230,000) and Taiwan (50,000). Among the victims were a number of notable figures, including Prince Tsunehisa Takeda (age 36), author and critic Hogetsu Shimamura (47) and noted architect Kingo Tatsuno, designer of the Bank of Japan building (64).

According to the late Keio University professor Akira Hayami’s 474-page history of the pandemic, titled *The Spanish Influenza that Struck Japan: the First World War between Humanity and Viruses*, in January, 1919, the Public Health Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued several advisories to citizens: maintain distance from sick persons; avoid crowded places; wear a face mask or, if unavailable, use a scarf or handkerchief—practically the same regimen being recommended today, with the addition of frequent hand-washing.

(K.M.)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A cardiac surgeon pioneer



Dr. Juro Wada, a Hokkaido cardiac surgeon who in 1968 performed Japan’s first heart transplant in which the recipient survived for 83 days, speaks at the Club on Apr. 1, 1999. Charged with manslaughter over suspected misdiagnosis of the donor’s brain-death—a charge later dropped—he became the epicenter of an ethical storm that discouraged such transplants until after the Organ Transplant Law was passed in 1997. His appearance at the Club followed the first heart transplant to take place after passage of that law. Seated to his left is the FCCJ’s 1st VP Ed Neilan (Washington Times) and to his right is 2nd VP Kazuo Abiko (AP).

Juro Wada was born in Sapporo on Mar. 11, 1922, the son of a professor at the University of Hokkaido. He received his medical degree at the same institution in 1944 and worked in a local hospital. In 1949, he went to the US to further his clinical training and became a fellow at the University of Minnesota in 1950. Following stints at Ohio State University in 1952 and at Boston’s Brigham Hospital (Harvard University) in 1953, Wada returned to Japan in 1954 and established the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery at Sapporo Medical University in 1958.

The heart transplant in 1968 by Wada, the thirtieth in the world, was not his only pace-setting procedure in Japan. Between 1959 and 1965, he introduced several surgical procedures for heart and chest repair. He also performed the first successful operation to correct congenital heart defects in babies, the “Mustard” procedure named after its doctor creator. And in 1968, he developed the Wada-Cutter valve prosthesis for the heart in conjunction with the Cutter Biomedical Corporation. That device was later used in creating the first artificial heart.

In 1977, Wada moved to Tokyo to become Chairman of Surgery at Tokyo Women’s Medical University, and began traveling worldwide to attend meetings, give lectures, and meet with other cardiac surgeons. He retired from this position in 1987 to establish the Wada Heart and Lung Institute in Tokyo. In 2007, he was chosen as one of the top seven cardiac surgeons in the world in Athens, Greece, the same year he celebrated his fiftieth year of marriage.

Juro Wada passed away at the age of 88 on Feb. 14, 2011 at his home in Tokyo.

– Charles Pomeroy

editor of Foreign Correspondents in Japan, a history of the Club that is available at the front desk

By Eric Johnston

“You’re so lucky you don’t live in Tokyo!”

Over the years, I’ve heard that remark from any number of friends, colleagues, and total strangers overseas and throughout Japan who live in or visit Tokyo (though rarely in Tokyo itself). Usually, it comes from those who had a bad day at their office somewhere in the capital and are just blowing off steam.

Sometimes, it’s uttered in weary frustration by Tokyo residents who say are fed up after years of living with the obstinate, bureaucratic “Tokyo Way” of doing things, are burned out by the city’s stressful lifestyle, or feel that their fellow Tokyoites are cold, boring, and superficial.

What I had never heard, until this year, was that I was lucky not to be living in Tokyo because of its vulnerability to a pandemic.

In early February, three weeks before Hokkaido declared a state of emergency over the new coronavirus, I found myself in Sapporo. The annual Snow Festival was underway. But there was concern the raging coronavirus in China would keep attendance way down. Foreign tourists in town for the event appeared to be mostly from Southeast Asia or Japan-based Western residents on holiday. There was a noticeable absence of Chinese-speaking tourists. A few scattered groups of younger Chinese standing around the snow sculptures could be spotted, all of whom were wearing face masks. As were most other visitors, including myself.

In Sapporo’s Odori Koen, those of us standing in line at the food stalls for the lamb kebabs or local sake tensed up when somebody in our vicinity broke into a fit of prolonged coughing. But there was no panic or anger. Except for the lower-than-usual number of tourists, all appeared normal. In conversations with friends at the *Hokkaido Shimbun*, it was clear the coronavirus was a big story but not yet the dominant one.

That changed on February 28, after Hokkaido Gov. Naomichi Suzuki told people to stay at home and not go out unnecessarily. Suzuki took matters into his own hands and made the announcement following much confusion at the prefectural level after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe issued a sudden request that schools be temporarily closed as a measure to control the spread of the virus. At that time, Hokkaido led the nation in infections, with 66.

Well before universities in the rest of the country were forced to teach online, I heard grumbling from those teaching at colleges in and around Sapporo that their administrators were running around like headless chickens, holding meetings about coronavirus safety measures for the upcoming spring term. This meant groups of people sitting for hours without facemasks in a small room with the windows shut. It was a scene that would be repeated a couple weeks later in Tokyo and the Kansai region, until Japan discovered Zoom could be used to hold that three-hour meeting to decide when to hold the four-hour meeting to decide.

The frenzy of news stories about the coronavirus spread in Tokyo has obscured the fact that much of Japan has—so far, at least—managed to dodge the worst of the first wave.



The virus outside Tokyo

Taking care

Face masks being worn in Nishinari ward, Osaka on April 15

RICHARD ATRERO DE GUZMAN

AN OSAKA REBELLION?

Back in Osaka, we watched, along with the rest of the country, the saga of the *Diamond Princess*. There was a growing sense of disbelief and anger over Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s response. Osakans, not exactly strong believers in the wisdom of Tokyo bureaucrats and politicians, began to worry government officials were even more incompetent than they’d been after the March 11, 2011 Tohoku quake and Fukushima disaster. It grew harder to find anyone who believed either Prime Minister Shinzo Abe or Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike had the ability to take bold action or could speak plainly and openly about the crisis. It was time to take what local action you could for yourself and your family.

In early April, Abe finally ordered a nationwide state of emergency. But it was the local governors’ leadership or lack of it that would ultimately determine whether people agreed to stay off the streets in large enough numbers to flatten the infection curve. And here, an odd thing happened.

I would have bet any of my Tokyo friends a can of their favorite brand of lime chu-hai that Osakans would be the last to fall in line with a Tokyo “request” to self-isolate. The central government hoped for a 70 to 80 percent reduction in pedestrian and vehicular traffic, especially in the cities, in order to reduce infection numbers. I would have—and did—say that, in Osaka, we’d be lucky to see a 50 percent reduction.

But parts of Osaka actually saw more than a 90 percent reduction, a higher rate than the parts of Tokyo making the nightly news. Why? Because of the man-of-the-hour, Osaka Gov. Hirofumi Yoshimura, who urged everyone to stay home in a local media blitz. Through appeals passionately delivered and free of bureaucratic jargon and the too-clever-by-half English phrases that Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike (over)uses, Yoshimura convinced Osakans to do the impossible: to listen to Tokyo, whatever doubts they had about the competency of its politicians and bureaucrats.

A KANSAI HERO

Yoshimura is now the talk of the nation’s media for his bold leadership. Quick decision-making, independent of what Abe and Koike were doing in Tokyo, was an important reason he drew a lot of admiration. But Hashimoto also pointed out that Abe uses a teleprompter in his speeches while Yoshimura speaks to the media and public off the cuff. Just as Hashimoto did when he was in office.

Will Yoshimura’s political acumen lead to bigger things? Maybe. But as I write this in mid-May, it remains unclear if his independent “Osaka model” of standards for reopening businesses will lead to a second wave of infections. If it does, Yoshimura could go from media hero to media goat very quickly.

In Nara prefecture, where I live, the coronavirus seemed far away. Less than 100 people have been infected, only a dozen or so seriously, and only two have died in a prefecture with a population of 1.35 million. Not once between February and May did any of the park areas in my neighborhood close down. No busybody old men or rent-a-cop types standing at park entrances, putting up barriers or shooing children and adults away from enjoying a day outdoors.

There were no picnics allowed in the park. But people were strolling around—without facemasks—taking in the cherry blossoms, playing with their children, relaxed, and enjoying the excellent spring weather. It was made all the more excellent by the cleanest air in decades with everything shut down and with no appearances of Chinese yellow sand, which can hit western Japan particularly hard in the late winter and early spring months.

There was plenty of food at local supermarkets. But I also noticed several neighbors tending newly-dug vegetable gardens. Planting small, vegetable gardens in your back yard to get through a second wave of the coronavirus crisis might well be the next social “boom” that Tokyo media “discover.”

KYOTO: WHERE TOURISM RULES

If Osaka—and even before that neighboring Wakayama—showed political courage by taking their own actions quickly, Kyoto finished, if not last, then close to it. Kyoto is not known for being quick and flexible. But the prefectural and city leadership seemed exceptionally slow by comparison.

Kyoto’s tourism industry heavily relies on cherry blossom season to bring in revenue for its (way too many) chain hotels in particular, as well as local merchants. For a while in March, Kyoto politicians said little about the coronavirus, and were far more reactive than proactive. Worse, some Kyoto businesses didn’t appear to take the coronavirus seriously or want to admit that the cherry blossom season would not be a profitable one this year. The Arashiyama district of Kyoto even briefly launched an “empty tourism” campaign in February, an ill-conceived plan to lure people to Kyoto precisely because the coronavirus was scaring tourists away and Kyoto was quieter than it had been in years.

On May 18, there were only three newly confirmed coronavirus cases outside of Hokkaido and the Kanto area and things were reopening. Thoughts have turned to responding to the economic damage and ensuring area hospitals will have enough beds if (when) the second coronavirus wave hits. In addition, prefectures throughout the country were nervously looking ahead to the summer months. Heavy flooding during the rainy season or massive typhoon damage in August and September could mean lots of people, especially elderly, in evacuation centers, where the risk would be high of a coronavirus outbreak at a time when local emergency medical facilities were already overwhelmed.

In such a case, those living in a more rural area outside of a major city and its highly developed medical infrastructure may then tell their Tokyo friends and family: “You’re so lucky to live in Tokyo.”

Eric Johnston is Senior Kansai Correspondent for *The Japan Times*. The views above are his own and not those of *The Japan Times*.

Flushed with pride

The *Mainichi Shimbun*'s secret wartime toilet source

By Mark Schreiber

By the outbreak of the Second World War, radio had become the main means of disseminating news by most of the belligerents. In Japan, thanks to the government monopoly on radio, controlling the contents of broadcasts proved far easier than monitoring the print media, and by the 1930s radio had become the main vehicle for news releases and propaganda from the Information Bureau.

In *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War Two*, historian Thomas R.H. Havens wrote that from 1934, all broadcasting stations in Japan had been absorbed by the public corporation, NHK. After the war began, the state expanded radio audiences by waiving the monthly subscriber fee of one yen for large families or families with men at the front. While Japan in 1938 had only one-fourth as many radio receivers per capita as the US, authorities distributed receivers to poor villages, which could be shared by multiple listeners.

Havens writes:

Beginning in January 1938, the government broadcast ten minutes of war dispatches and news of the spiritual mobilization movement each evening at 7:30. Like Japan's newspapers during the war, NHK carried few reports of the European theater even after the fighting began in September 1939, and the Domei press agency remained the only official source of news throughout the period. Controversial political developments were never reported, and starting from the day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, weather forecasts were also suspended because they might provide the enemy with useful information.



Despite heavy wartime press censorship, a few news organizations made efforts to obtain and process what they could from the enemy's perspective. At the *Mainichi Shimbun*, this was done by slipping in alternative facts obtained by illegally listening to foreign shortwave broadcasts, and attributing the material to *Mainichi* correspondents who had become stranded in neutral counties when the war broke out, in such cities as Stockholm, Zurich, Lisbon and Buenos Aires.

The memoir *Fifty Years of Light and Dark: the Hirohito Era* (1975), published by the *Mainichi*, contained this brief passage:

Staff members of the Mainichi Shimbun stealthily vanished into the women's toilet, converted into a "black chamber." They set up a monitoring apparatus inside the toilet converted into a sanctuary free from military inspection and listened to shortwave radio (forbidden to civilians at the

time) to the BBC, Voice of America, Treasure Island, Ankara, and other foreign broadcasts.

The news obtained was circulated among the editors of both the vernacular and the English newspapers. Some of it was printed under the datelines of neutral countries...where there actually were Mainichi correspondents...This valuable but highly secret newsgathering activity was given an inglorious name, Benjo Press.

A *Mainichi Shimbun* article dated June 22, 2015, shed further light on details of the operation. On December 8, 1941, the day the war began, all newspapers were deprived of their means of obtaining news from overseas. In the *Mainichi*'s case, this included news from its reciprocal agreement with

America's United Press. The same day, a secret emergency meeting was convened at the newspaper's office, at which a decision was made to monitor shortwave radio broadcasts. In order to preserve secrecy, a women's restroom on the 3rd floor, adjacent to the newsroom, was cordoned off and converted to that purpose.

"On the wall outside the converted toilet, a wood *fuda* (name tag) identified the department as the *Obei Besshitsu* (Europe-America section annex)," the *Mainichi* reported. "The door was reinforced with a second layer of insulation to prevent sounds from leaking out, and black velvet curtains were strung on the windows. There was also a bunk bed where shift workers could repose."

The late Zenichiro Watanabe, a member of the newspaper's Europe-America section, recalled that the monitors consisted of a team made up mostly of eight *nisei* reporters in their late 20s or early 30s holding dual nationality.

ON THE DAY THE WAR BEGAN, ALL NEWSPAPERS WERE DEPRIVED OF THEIR MEANS OF OBTAINING NEWS FROM OVERSEAS.

Since signal reception was generally poor during daytime hours, the team would monitor frequencies late at night, listening to broadcasts from the US, UK, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Australia, China and others. They scribbled down notes as they listened to news, advertising, and propaganda broadcasts. Their notes were then typed up. Staff in the annex would push a button, sounding a bell in the editorial section, summoning a messenger, who would collect the transcription. At the editors' prerogative, material to be used in the print edition would be translated into Japanese.

The people engaged in these tasks had been sworn to secrecy. Insiders coined the name *Benjo Tsushin* (toilet press), which came into use in-house. The foreign broadcasts enabled *Mainichi* management to keep abreast of the global news while obtaining a grasp of what military headquarters was concealing.

For example, in the case of the Battle of Midway, which took place on June 5-7, 1942, foreign radio stations repeatedly broadcast news of the "decisive defeat of the Japanese fleet," with the sinking of four carriers, including Admiral Nagumo's flagship, *Akagi*. On June 10, the broadcast issued by Japan's military headquarters made no mention of the loss of the carriers, along with some 300 planes, but rather reported it as a victory.

While the *Mainichi Shimbun* editors were aware of the contradictory reports, the newspaper's issue of June 11 was under a number of legal restrictions controlling the news media and public security, and had no choice but to parrot the military's announcement.

Materials from the toilet press reported to the *Mainichi* management judged unsafe to use were stored in a paper bag and treated as top secret. Late editor-in-chief Motosaburo Takada recalled, "Newspapers were completely under the control of national policy, and became nothing more than 'bullets of paper.' Even toward the end of the war, they proclaimed that white was black, concealing the reality of defeat.

The toughest thing for us was to keep printing lies in order to uphold fighting spirit."

But sometimes the newspaper was able to slip in information in the form of *tokuden* (special wires)—claimed to have been filed from Lisbon, Stockholm, Zurich or other neutral countries—which were actually compiled from radio transcriptions received in the company's HQ building in Tokyo.

Via the shortwave broadcasts, "Toilet Press" was able to monitor particulars from the battles in Europe and at Guadalcanal, the death of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Yalta Conference, and the Potsdam Conference.

On May 7, 1945, German Chancellor Admiral Doenitz had formally announced unconditional surrender of all German armed forces via radio. In its morning edition of May 9, 1945, the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported Germany's unconditional surrender, with the report credited to an overseas correspondent.

Thanks in part to its proximity to the palace, which was off limits to U.S. bombers, the *Mainichi* headquarters building in Yurakucho was undamaged by air raids. The secret unit's work continued through the end of the fighting, but staff began urging it be shut it down because some felt, inexplicably, that "Things might go hard on us if the Americans find out about it."

On or about August 20, 1945, the toilet was restored to its original purpose.

Given the unbridled power of the secret police and military authorities during wartime, one wonders how the *Mainichi* succeeded in concealing its secret unit for as long as it did. Actually, it's quite possible that it didn't.

In March 2000, Taketoshi Yamamoto, professor of history at Hitotsubashi University, published a paper on communications in which he cited postwar testimony by a certain Kempeitai major, referred to only as "Tsuneyoshi," who claimed to have been aware of the shortwave monitoring activity. And the *Mainichi*, apparently, was not the sole offender.

"I personally did not listen to any broadcasts, but I clearly remember that several Tokyo newspapers (*Asahi* and *Mainichi* at least) had receivers," he testified. "It was decided to let them monitor the broadcasts."

The Kempeitai major claimed that nearly all officers ranked above field grade (major) knew about the monitoring of foreign broadcasts. He also remarked that some members of the military who were party to this information shared details selectively with civilians.

"While in Hokkaido in March 1945, I often heard comments about broadcasts from Saipan," he was quoted as saying. "Most of the leaders of the government and military listened to them every day. However ordinary people didn't have receivers that could pick up such broadcasts. So it became natural for soldiers to leak bits of information to civilians."

Once Japan emerged from national seclusion in the mid-19th century and energetically sought out knowledge about the wider world, not even the draconian restrictions imposed by the military government could eradicate its appetite for news and information from abroad. While limited in its influence on the public, the three and one half-year existence of the *Mainichi*'s clandestine "Toilet Press" stands out as a notable example of civil disobedience conducted by Japanese media organizations and individual reporters during the war years. ●

Mark Schreiber currently writes the "Big in Japan" and "Bilingual" columns for *The Japan Times*.



Kantaro Suzuki *Freelance*

By *Gavin Blair*

Not graduating high school and then working for TEPCO for seven years on the maintenance of power cables under Tokyo is far from a typical career arc for a bilingual Japanese journalist. Though with the name he bears, Kantaro Suzuki was perhaps always fated to take the road less travelled.

“My grandfather was a *shinyo tokko-tai* (motorboat suicide unit) stationed in Taiwan,” explains Suzuki in a socially-distanced interview via Zoom. “He was waiting for the order to attack when Kantaro Suzuki, a former navy commander who became prime minister at the end of the war, convinced the Japanese government to surrender—so his life was saved.”

His grandfather wanted to name his own son after the PM, who survived three assassination attempts, but decided that the postwar era was maybe not the time for such a moniker. It was given to his grandson instead.

Suzuki began teaching himself English while at vocational school and by the time he was ready to quit TEPCO had become proficient enough to win a scholarship to a college in Ohio on the basis of his application essays. While majoring in East Asian Studies, with minors in Geography and Chinese, Suzuki says his view of Japan’s role in the war was impacted, not least by “many deep conversations with a great Chinese professor, who was intimidating at first.”

Not interested in becoming a journalist at the time, Suzuki recalls how the “passionate debates” on campus about then candidate Barack Obama raised his awareness of politics and the media. “I wanted to do something to contribute to society, and Obama’s ‘Yes We Can’ slogan kind of inspired me,” he says, and led him to journalism.

Returning to Japan, he began a master’s in journalism at Waseda University in 2009, writing about the rise of the Democratic Party of Japan and other political issues of the day for domestic magazines while studying. Struggling to make ends meet as his course came to an end and considering giving up on his new career, the triple disasters of 2011 led to a gig as a news assistant at the *New York Times*’ Tokyo bureau. His contacts and inside knowledge from his TEPCO days proved invaluable, but coverage wound down in the aftermath, and Suzuki “looked for a new challenge. I wanted to be a reporter, like the guys I’d been working with.”

His heart set on working in one of Asia’s growing economies where he could utilize his English and Japanese, Suzuki cold-called the *Daily Manila Shimbun*, a bilingual Japanese paper in the Philippines. Although impressed by his experience at the *NYT*, the editor said they had no vacancies. “I told him I was

“I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY, AND OBAMA’S ‘YES WE CAN’ SLOGAN KIND OF INSPIRED ME”



coming anyway and that I’d bought a ticket,” recounts Suzuki with a laugh. “I said I would work for free for a month and if they thought I was worth hiring they could take me on as a full-time employee.”

Working brutally long hours, he covered politics, business, Filipino ‘comfort women’ and crimes involving ex-pat Japanese, as well as 2013’s super typhoon Haiyan. “I was one of the first journalists to land and there were still bodies in the streets,” says Suzuki. While there, short of supplies, “I had to beg the military for water and food.”

Having spent nearly five years in the Philippines, where he met his wife, Suzuki left in July 2016, a month after Rodrigo Duterte took office. “He was not the reason I left, but all my sources at the ministries were out,” says Suzuki.

Back home again, he began writing for BuzzFeed Japan, but found he was ill-suited to churning out articles at breakneck speed and the associated demands of social media. A year later, he began freelancing again, writing articles and working as a photographer and live-streaming producer.

In 2017, he teamed up with Norimitsu Onishi, with whom he had worked at the *NYT* in 2011, for a feature on isolated elderly people. Titled “A Generation in Japan Faces a Lonely Death,” it became a Pulitzer finalist. “We talked every day for months with elderly people about life and death and I learned a lot,” Suzuki says.

Another inspiring story was a recent piece on a Cambodian para-athlete who was raised in Japan after being born in a refugee camp in Thailand and is now a coach of young rowers. The article, in English, was his first for a Cambodian news agency, and collaborating with media across Asia is something Suzuki is keen to do more of. He is also set on covering the largely untold stories of the growing number of Asians working as interns or trainees in Japan.

Suzuki says his early belief that as a journalist he would “change society directly or make the world better . . . was actually wrong.” He now thinks, “You have to distance yourself, you’re not an activist, you’re a reporter. I was also very idealistic; I didn’t think there were dishonest journalists, but now I know there are,” adds Suzuki with a wry smile.

Despite some tough times and a little disillusionment, Suzuki is sure he made the right choice in his change of career. “Financially it’s tough, but I enjoy this reporting job,” says Suzuki. “The idea that through my reporting and writing I can inspire someone, or trigger or motivate them, is just fantastic.” ●

Gavin Blair writes for publications in Asia, Europe and the US.



In memory of Stefano

By Pio d'Emilia

Stefano Carrer, 59, our long-time friend and colleague, passed away on May 21, in Italy. He was returning from a whole day of hiking near his home city, Como, where he he was serving the lockdown period at his parents' old house. He was late, and called his relatives who were waiting for him to join them at dinner. "Sorry I'll be late," he said. "Please go ahead. And don't worry." They didn't. They should have.

Sometime after that call, at around 7:30 pm, he disappeared. Rescue teams, which are very efficient in Italy thanks to thousands of volunteers and experienced alpine guides, started to look for him in the middle of the night. It took them two full days, a helicopter and several drones to find his body at the bottom of a very steep ravine. We can only hope that he died immediately, without any painful suffering. Aldo, his brother in law, joined the rescue team and formally identified the body. He also made sure nobody else saw it.

Stefano was an FCCJ member for the last 20 years or so. A senior member and mutual friend once called him "the good Italian," as compared to the bad one, me. He was right. For as much as I could be nasty, irreverent and (at times) furious, he was always gentle, polite, patient, and reasonable.

We knew each other for the last 30 years or so, and never, ever fought, or even got into a heated discussion. He was always on the side of wisdom. Ready to give in, even to somebody who was wrong, because he knew that what counts, after all, is the truth. And he usually was right.

THE TRIPLE TRAGEDY OF March 11, 2011 brought us very close. On the very first night of the earthquake I called him and told him of my intention to try to reach the Sanriku coast and possibly Fukushima Daiichi on my scooter. My intention was just

to let him know, something colleagues usually do in emergencies. I never expected him to ask me, "Do you have a spare helmet?" But he did; and I did.

In a matter of minutes we hit the road in the direction of Fukushima in the middle of the night, doing live reports here and there on Skype, which we were both using for the first time. Unfortunately, the road was totally blocked after Iwaki, so we had to return to Tokyo, wondering what to do. He was the one who had the brilliant idea to fly "beyond the battle field": if we can't reach from south, he said, let's get there from the north.

We boarded the last flight to Akita (Haneda airport would close shortly after) and went on a hectic and quite unusual quest for a car. (Eventually we got one for free from a small public-works contractor who was a fan of Nakata and Moritomo, the famous Japanese soccer stars who use to play in Italy.) We reached a totally devastated city of Kesenuma at dawn. We were the first foreigners there, reaching it even ahead of the Self Defense Forces.

Among the first people we met was an old man walking amid the ruins of his home. When he heard us speaking he smiled at us, like only Japanese people are able to do even in the most tragical situation, and welcomed us in perfect Italian. We later found out he was a leader of the Japanese rowing team at Rome Olympics, back in 1960. We continued exchanging *nengajo* from then until he passed away last year.

AFTER ONE FULL DAY driving south along the coast, we finally reached our destination right in front of the main entrance of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. There were no check points, only a couple of unattended road placards that read: "danger, traffic subjected to regulation." I would never have imagined Stefano could be so fearless and brave, determined to get our story out.

Stefano pursued a journalist career, specializing in economy and finances, after graduating with a law degree. After a few years as a stringer in the US, he was hired by the the prestigious economic newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, the Italian equivalent of the *Financial Times* or *Nikkei Shimbun*. Japan was his dream, although nobody really knows what was the first impetus that drew him here. There must have been some personal reasons, probably an early love affair. He never married, but was very successful in getting women's attentions until he settled for the love of his life, Keiko, whom he was probably going to marry, in the end.

From his first moments in Japan on a formal assignment, he produced hundreds of stories—and, more recently, short videos—not only on the economy and finances. He was curious, deeply cultured, thanks to his classic studies, and a voracious reader. His stories, even the "driest" ones, always featured some proof of his deep understanding of the history, culture and tradition of Japan and East Asia.

Quite often, he also competently covered China, despite a very difficult relation with the local colleague who saw him as a threat for her post. This internal conflict probably contributed to the recent decision by the paper's bosses to close both offices, leaving East Asia with no resident correspondents. Stefano accepted the decision, of course, but was despondent



and frustrated by the move. The last time I met him in Italy, back in February, he mentioned for the first time that he was looking forward to retirement, something that was hard for me to imagine.

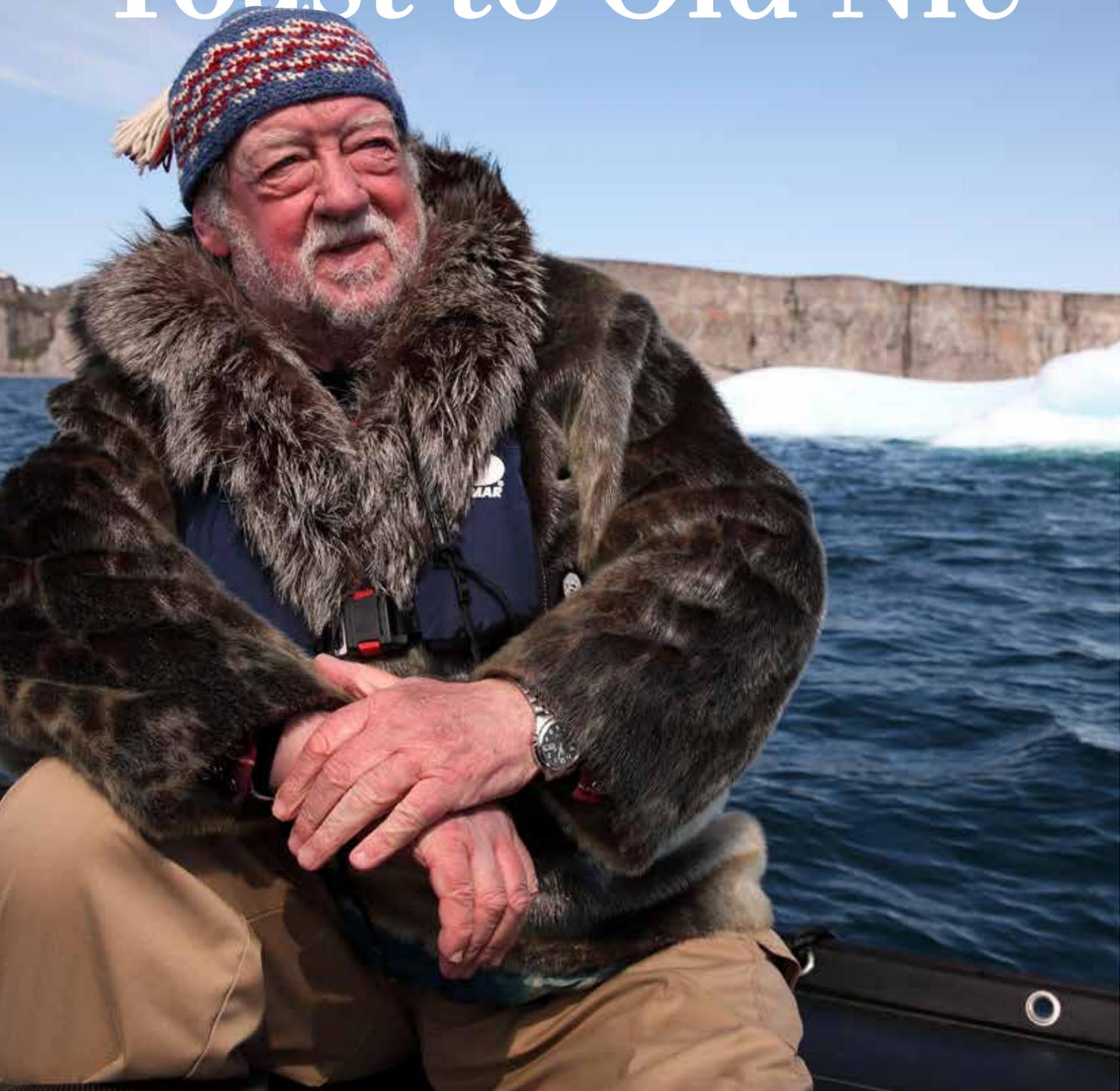
Besides being a great and competent colleague and a very close friend, Stefano was a very active person. We would play tennis here in Tokyo and he used to join a sort of FCCJ ski club that we informally created a few years ago, along with Anthony Rowley, Joan Anderson and several other mutual friends. We will always treasure deep in our hearts the memories of our off-piste slopes and wild onsen adventures in wonderful, wild Hakkoda in Aomori prefecture.

Ciao Stefano, we will all miss you very much. 🇮🇹

Pio d'Emilia is the East Asia Correspondent for Italy's Sky TG24.

A life well lived
Above, Stefano at the Club in 2015; opposite, clockwise from top, as the only foreign correspondent on Emperor Akihito's trip to Vietnam; with the author (center) and friends on an FCCJ ski trip; when a young man.

Toast to Old Nic



A tribute to the incomparable figure whose love for Japan's forest was legendary

By John R. Harris

For some reason, he hated the name Clive, so to friends he was “Nic.” But to millions of Japanese fans he was CW Nicol, that bearded old white guy, author of 100 books and scads of newspaper columns in Japanese, subject of countless media interviews, and an orator who held the rapt attention of audiences nationwide. No one who has come to these shores in the past 60 years has had a greater impact on Japan: its society, likely; its biosphere, beyond doubt.

Nic’s great feat was to reawaken Japan’s awareness of the vast forest that blankets this country, and the hideous damage done to it since the 1940s. Although he never shied from forcefully pointing fingers where warranted, he went about this more by inspiring awe and love for the forest through storytelling that was always at its most powerful before a live audience. In a country inured to droning, stone-faced orators, Nic’s singsong, Welsh-inflected Japanese, his passionate stage presence, his humor and innate narrative genius left few who heard him unmoved.

He soon became such a widely beloved figure (and a Japanese citizen in 1995) that advertisers begged him to be their pitch man, notably Nippon Ham and Nikka Whisky (of whose product he was inordinately fond). This funding enabled him in 1985 to establish his own forest reserve, the Afan Woodland Trust in Kurohime, Nagano—a 34-hectare tract lovingly restored over decades since. Afan attracted a stunning procession of pilgrims, from Monty Python’s Michael Palin and Margaret Atwood all the way up to Prince Charles and even, in 2016, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

TOKYOITES MAY BE TEMPTED to think, “That’s nice, but so what?” You can live decades in the city only dimly aware that 70 percent of this archipelago is forest. You may occasionally golf on its edge or hike groomed trails on sunny afternoons when all the forest denizens lay low, but few actually go deep in the woods. If like me, however, you live alone, smack in the midst of a Chiba forest where macaques scamper on the roof, boars dig up the garden, owls land on the deck and poisonous mamushi snakes lurk beneath the barbecue, Nic was “The Guru”—and I would devour his *Old Nic’s Notebook* columns in *The Japan Times*. Still, I never met him until . . .

Early in 2015 I was recruiting Japanese media and celebrity guests for an expedition voyage to the Canadian Arctic and Greenland, so I dropped him a line: “I have no budget to pay your usual fee, but I’ll ask anyway. We sail July 17 from

YOICHI YABE



Adventurer
Opposite, CW Nicol in the arctic; left, talking about the trip (with the author, left) at the Club

Kuujuaq, Quebec on the itinerary below. Call me if you want to come.” Thirty minutes later, the phone rang: “It’s Nic Nicol. I don’t care about the money; I want to go. July 17 is my 75th birthday and my adventures began at age 17 from Kuujuaq, where I was sent as the ‘advance man’ for a bird research expedition.”

That was the start of a remarkable friendship that continued after two weeks at sea with hour-long phone chinwags every couple of weeks and the occasional whisky-fueled storytelling session. Our bond was a shared love of Canada’s Arctic and Japan’s forest.

IT HAS TO BE said. Nic was an unashamedly prodigious imbibor from 6pm on (or 5 if his agent wasn’t looking), happiest and most entertaining when under the influence. He’d show up with a ¥50,000 bottle of 1997 single malt (made specially for him by Nikka) and the tales would begin to flow with the booze.

Some say he never let the facts get in the way of a good story, but Nic stories grabbed from the get-go. In his Welsh youth: “As a teenage wrestler I was making more money than my father, a Royal Navy officer.” In the Arctic: “When we overwintered in an igloo on Devon Island I was confronted by a polar bear. I had to shoot him, then stop my companions from eating the liver—because y’know, polar bear liver is deadly poison.” From his late-1960s days as warden of Ethiopia’s Simien National Park: “I shot and killed seven men once: poachers. It had to be done.” And then: “Fought my last brawl in Matsumoto when I was nearly 70. I was jumped by some yakuza whose illegal forest dumping I’d outed.”

He was an affable bear of a man, but you didn’t want to cross him. Of course, not all his stories were so pugnacious but they always took you to magical places . . . until late in the evening when the booze inevitably got the better of him.

I often had to help him to his bedroom door, most memorably at the end of a long, boozy wild-game barbecue on my deck with our local hunters. Well-besotted ourselves, we had to drag his vast carcass on a rug to the sofa. And yet, Lazarus-like he would rise in the morning fresh as a bloody daisy and off he’d go to give a speech, meet the Emperor or work on yet another book in Japanese. Few teetotalers could match that.

GUESS HOW HE CRANKED out all those Japanese books? Although a very fluent speaker, being illiterate in Japanese he wrote his manuscripts in long-hand romaji which helps then rendered into proper Japanese text. A bizarre method,



Nicol of the North

CW Nicol on the Adventure Canada trip (photographed by Yoichi Yabe)

but his narrative genius made it work.

Sadly, he began to suffer reverses in recent years. After his youngest daughter—an adult living far from home—was jailed on drug charges, his corporate sponsors dropped Nic like a hot potato. Such is the measure of Japanese gratitude.

That left Nic in financial straits just as he was diagnosed with a virulent colon cancer. He fought it tenaciously through multiple surgeries, chemotherapy and costly proton beam treatments. He was cheerful, mostly sober and productive throughout, continuing a hectic pace of speeches. But increasingly his energies were focused on a last mountain unclimbed.

Famed though he was in Japan, Nic's few English books never got much notice in his native UK, or in Canada—where he spent most of 20 years from 1958, becoming a citizen in 1967—or in that other large English-speaking country. So, in and out of hospital, he began scribbling furiously, recounting all his stories in an English manuscript he called "Road to the Forest."

He'd often phone to report his progress and (hugely honoring me) ask my advice on the Canadian stories he was most eager to tell. When Nic reached the Arctic in the late '50s, the indigenous Inuit were only just abandoning their nomadic ways in a painful transition to government-built settlements. Working out on the land in wildlife research gave Nic a very rare chance to share the last days of their traditional existence—an experience that affected him deeply. Knowing his testimony was important, he was determined to record it.

In late March, he phoned from a Tokyo hospital saying he had 80 chapters in the bag, maybe 200,000 to 400,000 words, along with hand-drawn illustrations. "And I've got good news: the infection's receded so end of the month I'm going home to Kurohime!"

Out walking in the woods on April 6 I suddenly thought to check on him and phoned—only to learn he'd died four hours earlier. After a few good nights at home, the infection brought on by his chemo came raging back and he was rushed to hospital. Not 48 hours later Nic was gone.

What has he left behind? Apparently, he was near broke by the end. But as that enormous manuscript was almost done, we can at least look forward to a massive feast of Nic stories—in English. Here's hoping it attracts a reputable publisher able to give it the edit it deserves.

And what of Nic's forest legacy? Sadly, Japan's contempt for its forest wealth is so entrenched that optimism is a stretch. We can only hope the seeds of awareness he scattered from Hokkaido to Okinawa bear enough fruit to make a difference. Absent that, the forests' best hope may be the aging and decline of the human population.

What Nic left me is the memory of how he used to sign off every phone call. "John," he'd say, "you're a dear friend." Likewise, Nic. God rest ye, the merriest of gentlemen. ●

John R. Harris is a Canadian speechwriter/journalist who lives in a forest near the surf beaches on Chiba's Boso Peninsula. Since age 18, work has often taken him to Canada's Far North.

FCCJ

Club removes controversial Number 1 Shimbun cover image from website



ON THURS., MAY 19, FCCJ President Khaldon Azhari held an online media briefing to announce the board of director's decision to remove the online cover image on the April issue of *Number 1 Shimbun* at the demand of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic organizing committee. The image featured the Tokyo 2020 logo manipulated to look like the coronavirus, illustrating the

damaging effect the COVID-19 disease has had on the Olympic games.

Azhari repeatedly stated that it was an issue of copyright, not freedom of expression. "The board consulted with our lawyers and specialized legal experts on the copyright issue and we were advised very clearly that our case in Japan was not strong," he said.

Following his statement that it was an issue of copyright, he went on to apologize for any offense caused by the image. "Clearly the cover offended some people in our host country Japan. [So] let me close by saying that we would like to express our sincere regrets to anyone who may have been offended on all sides of this issue."

After Azhari's remarks, some members of the Club joined the briefing and expressed opposition to the board's decision, claiming the publishing of the image should have been strongly supported under freedom of expression rights. Pio d'Emilia asked why the board had acted so quickly without taking the opinion of other members into account. Azhari defended the board's actions, saying they felt the issue should be immediately resolved. The same day, the Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto welcomed the Club's board of directors' decision, stating that organizers had been offended by the logo parody after hearing about it from someone in the media. He said that the organizers had not made any legal threats in the request to remove the image.

The magazine's editor and art director resigned in protest after not being consulted at any time during the board's discussion on the issue.

NEW MEMBERS



REGULAR MEMBER
Shiho Takezawa is an automobile reporter at Bloomberg. She joined the beat after a year with a rotational program, in which she covered economy, bonds, companies, and breaking news. Prior to Bloomberg, Takezawa was a student intern at the Tokyo offices of *The New York Times* and Ernst & Young. She graduated

from International Christian University last year with a bachelor's in Liberal Arts. In her junior year at college, she studied at UC Berkeley as an exchange student. She was born in Tsukuba and raised in Kyoto.



REINSTATEMENT (REGULAR)
Alexander N. Lenin is a staff writer for the Russian national daily newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* who has been assigned as its full-time Japan correspondent this year. The paper has a daily circulation exceeding 130,000 copies with 41 bureaus in Russia and abroad. Lenin has been in professional journalism

since 2008. He is a member of the Union of Russian Journalists and International Federation of Journalists as well. He held a similar position in Tokyo from 2015 till 2018.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Manabu Araya**, Asahi Breweries, Ltd.
- Kazunobu Imoto**, Asahi Breweries, Ltd.
- Yukari Hayashi**, Amber World Associates Co., Ltd.
- Seita Iida**, Yokohama Photo M Company, Inc.
- Hiroko Masuda**, M Company, Inc.
- Joji Okada**, Japan Audit &

Supervisory Board Members Association

- Masako Suzuki**, Pasona Group Inc.

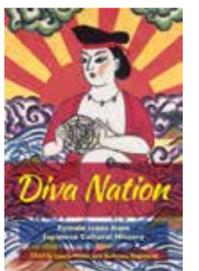
REINSTATEMENT (ASSOCIATE)

- Kuniyuki Shudo**, Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Holdings, Inc.

NEW IN THE LIBRARY

Diva Nation: Female Icons from Japanese Cultural History

Ed. by Laura Miller; Rebecca Copeland
University of California Press



Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond

Sonia Shah
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

A History of Discriminated Buraku Communities in Japan

Nobuaki Teraki; Midori Kurokawa; trans. by Ian Neary
Renaissance Books

Lens craft

An employee of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government holds a sign calling for people to stay home during the State of Emergency around the Covid-19 pandemic, in Kichijoji, Tokyo, May 3

by Rodrigo Reyes Marin





FCCJ

The
Foreign Correspondents' Club
of Japan

Where news is made