



Director Candidate for the Election 2022

Pio d'Emilia

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There was a time – not so long ago – when joining our Club was a must and a privilege for young journalists, especially for those among us, like this reporter, who were just starting their careers and needed a friendly and convenient place to work and gather news. I was among those lucky ones. FCCJ membership was a must and a privilege. But it was also lots of fun. We would meet in the bar from early afternoon and sometimes stay on until late night, if not dawn – talking, drinking, and, oh yes, fooling around. And yes, it's true that some members used the pool table for more than pool. Those times, unfortunately, are gone. Now, even those very few of us who still occasionally venture into the bar at night (well, evenings, given the elementary school closing time) are not necessarily met with an encouraging atmosphere. Let's face it. Walking into the FCCJ at night is like entering a cemetery, and when you do find someone to have a "lively" conversation with, management kicks you out dimming lights down and a harsh, shivering reminder that should never be heard in a professional journalist's club: "last order". Which means: "thank you very much, now go downstairs and take your business elsewhere". How sad and suicidal.

Apologies for this start. But those members who are still around from the '70s, '80s and even '90s know what I am talking about, and younger members should at least imagine what it was like to sit around the correspondents' tables talking to John Roberts. Murray Sayle, Richard Pyle, Peter Hazelhurst, just to name a few. Or when future stars like Yuriko Koike, our governor, used to come in as a guest and sit with us at those tables. Or when famous artists and writers would collapse in the bar and taken gently home by other members or instant friends. Now, we close the door. We can't even come into the club for coffee in the morning, which professionally means we can't even conduct a morning interview inside our club. And this is not because of the pandemic. It started before and seems to keep going.

This seemingly unstoppable drift away from being a "club" - and a journalists' club in particular – didn't happen by chance. The FCCJ has been hit by a triple "tsunami", just like the ones that hit our host country 11 years ago. But unlike those, among which only the nuclear accident was at least in part man-provoked, our decline has been substantially self-inflicted by a series of predictable poor - possibly illegal - decisions.

You all know what I am talking about: outsourcing our F&B operation, becoming a "public company" (Koeki Shadan Hojin) and, last but not least, "the move". At that time, only a few of us fought to avoid the triple disaster. Now, many members regret those decisions, including some who strongly supported them. Never too late. Damage is done. We must look forward. But let's have a real debate, share views, adopt swift, coherent and transparent policies. It's time for a real "united front".

In this time of crisis – a very deep crisis – I am hoping that a feeling of "unity" prevails over the various factions to overcome the present crisis and possibly even agree on some sort of "back to the future" policies. Returning to a Ippan Hojin status could be an idea to start with.

I am very happy that this year that we've seen a number of new "entries" running for the board. If elected I look forward to serving with them and contribute my experience in past board and over 40 years of knowledge of the club and our staff. FCCJ needs not only to be financially sound (the outgoing Treasurer did a tremendous job), but also sound in internal governance and, most of all, in our professional programs. We want to return into being the center of the "news world" in Japan, which I believe we somehow already started. This past year, with my co-chair of the Professional Activities Committee Jimbo-san and the support of many committee members, we proved it can be done. From Dalai Lama to Carlos Ghosn, several former PM and incumbent leaders of LDP we organized many big events, reminiscent of the old days. And we did it despite having to deal with Covid and a declining membership. Even if not elected, I would be honored to serve again under the next president, along with my incumbent Co-Chair. PAC is our flagship, no doubts. But we also need to produce other big events – culture nights and national nights with dinner – and link those to an aggressive membership drive.

Our best chance to return to the old days is to use what we did best in the past, to invite VIPs and prominent newsmakers, and make the club a place that FCCJ membership is a MUST!

For those who don't know me, I am a 68-year-old Italian with five splendid children, all grown up. I am fluent in five languages, including Japanese. I joined the FCCJ back in 1982, exactly 40 years ago and served several times in the Board

I have covered most of the recent breaking news in Japan and neighboring countries, including North Korea, which I had the privilege of visiting a number of times.

After working for a number of newspapers and magazines, I switched to TV in 2004 and since have worked as East Asia Correspondent of SKY TG24, an all-news channel based in Milan.

My favorite memory in Japan is when, in the early 1980s, I teamed up with the then-FCCJ President Jurek Martin to play tennis with then-Crown Prince Akihito and his Grand Chamberlain. We beat them 6-3. These are the types of events that I feel made the FCCJ great, and we should try to bring them back.

Thank you for your kind attention and hopefully, for your support.

Pio d'Emilia

Please find a few links related to my recent reports on Japan, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan and DPRK.

JAPAN NEWS

<https://www.rai.it/programmi/report/inchieste/Hibakusha-tesori-viventi-24463c09-3e15-4779-966f-c32f2ca781f1.html>

<https://video.sky.it/news/mondo/video/giappone-scarcerata-dopo-20-anni-fondatrice-armata-rossa-752992>

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<https://video.sky.it/news/mondo/video/giappone-biden-se-cina-invade-taiwan-interverremo-751539>

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