

**Three journalists trace
their mothers' tumultuous journey
in new film about WWII Japanese war brides.**



fall seven
times,
get up eight

THE JAPANESE WAR BRIDES

A film by Lucy Craft,
Karen Kasmauski and
Kathryn Tolbert

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FALL SEVEN TIMES, GET UP EIGHT: THE JAPANESE WAR BRIDES

A documentary by Lucy Craft, Karen Kasmauski, and Kathryn Tolbert

Three Japanese war brides, and their respective daughters, trace the mothers' tumultuous journey to America as the brides of young US soldiers and civilians. Atsuko, Emiko and Hiroko were among tens of thousands of Japanese women who married American soldiers after World War II. They landed in 1950s America knowing no one and speaking little English. In brutally honest conversations with their daughters, they reveal the largely untold story of the Japanese war brides.

Despite lingering wartime enmity, nearly 50,000 Japanese war brides moved to the United States, becoming part of one of the largest waves of Japanese immigration to the country. They began new lives in difficult circumstances, scattered across the country in places where they were often the first Japanese ever seen. Living in mostly rural, isolated communities across the nation, the women were left largely to their own devices as they tried to navigate a racially segregated American society. Even for those whose choice of spouse proved to be a tragic mistake, there was no turning back. Many in Japan viewed them as social outcasts and even today the words "war bride" in Japanese carry such a stigma that people don't like to say them.

Directors Lucy Craft, Karen Kasmauski, and Kathryn Tolbert tell the stories of their respective mothers as journalists, but also as the mixed-race children who experienced firsthand their own mothers' struggles. Drawing on personal anecdotes, family photographs and archival footage, FALL SEVEN TIMES, GET UP EIGHT paints an intimate portrait of the Japanese war brides saga and helps bring to life this often forgotten episode in American and Japanese history. (2015, 26 min, U.S., English, HD 1080 24p, 16x9, Stereo)



Lucy Craft is a freelance journalist based in Tokyo, who works as a reporter and producer for CBS News and NPR.

Kathryn Tolbert is an editor with The Washington Post, who has received a Vassar College grant to collect the oral histories of Japanese war brides across the country.

Karen Kasmauski is a photojournalist and educator. She has won many awards, including for her work at National Geographic.



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Magazine

The Japanese women who married the enemy

By Vanessa Barford
BBC News, Washington DC

16 August 2015 | Magazine



Seventy years ago many Japanese people in occupied Tokyo after World War Two saw US troops as the enemy. But tens of thousands of young Japanese women married GIs nonetheless - and then faced a big struggle to find their place in the US.

For 21-year-old Hiroko Tolbert, meeting her husband's parents for the first time after she had travelled to America in 1951 was a chance to make a good impression.

She picked her favourite kimono for the train journey to upstate New York, where she had heard everyone had beautiful clothes and beautiful homes.

But rather than being impressed, the family was horrified.

"My in-laws wanted me to change. They wanted me in Western clothes. So did my husband. So I went upstairs and put on something else, and the kimono was put away for many years," she says.



It was the first of many lessons that American life was not what she had imagined it to be.

"I realised I was going to live on a chicken farm, with chicken coops and manure everywhere. Nobody removed their shoes in the house. In Japanese homes we didn't wear shoes, everything was very clean - I was devastated to live in these conditions," she says.

"They also gave me a new name - Susie."

Like many Japanese war brides, Hiroko had come from a fairly wealthy family, but could not see a future in a flattened Tokyo.

"Everything was crumbled as a result of the US bombing. You couldn't find streets, or stores, it was a nightmare. We were struggling for food and lodging.

"I didn't know very much about Bill, his background or family, but I took a chance when he asked me to marry him. I couldn't live there, I had to get out to survive," she says.

Hiroko's decision to marry American GI Samuel "Bill" Tolbert didn't go down well with her relatives.

"My mother and brother were devastated I was marrying an American. My mother was the only one that came to see me when I left, I thought, 'That's it, I'm not going to see Japan again,'" she says.

Her husband's family also warned her that people would treat her differently in the US because Japan was the former enemy.

More than 110,000 Japanese-Americans on the US West Coast had been put into internment camps in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attacks in 1941 - when more than 2,400 Americans were killed in one day.

It was the largest official forced relocation in US history, prompted by the fear that members of the community might act as spies or collaborators and help the Japanese launch further attacks.



The camps were closed in 1945, but emotions still ran high in the decade that followed.

"The war had been a war without mercy, with incredible hatred and fear on both sides. The discourse was also heavily racialised - and America was a pretty racist place at that time, with a lot of prejudice against inter-race relationships," says Prof Paul Spickard, an expert in history and Asian-American studies at the University of California.

Luckily, Hiroko found the community around her new family's rural farm in the Elmira area of New York welcoming.

"One of my husband's aunts told me I would find it difficult to get anyone to deliver my baby, but she was wrong. The doctor told me he was honoured to take care of me. His wife and I became good friends - she took me over to their house to see my first Christmas tree," she says.

But other Japanese war brides found it harder to fit in to segregated America.

"I remember getting on a bus in Louisiana that was divided into two sections - black and white," recalls Atsuko Craft, who moved to the US at the age of 22 in 1952.

"I didn't know where to sit, so I sat in the middle."

Like Hiroko, Atsuko had been well-educated, but thought marrying an American would provide a better life than staying in devastated post-war Tokyo.

She says her "generous" husband - whom she met through a language exchange programme - agreed to pay for further education in the US.



But despite graduating in microbiology and getting a good job at a hospital, she says she still faced discrimination.

"I'd go to look at a home or apartment, and when they saw me, they'd say it was already taken. They thought I would lower the real estate value. It was like blockbusting to make sure blacks wouldn't move into a neighbourhood, and it was hurtful," she says.

The Japanese wives also often faced rejection from the existing Japanese-American community, according to Prof Spickard.

"They thought they were loose women, which seems not to have been the case - most of the women [in Toyko] were running cash registers, stocking shelves, or working in jobs related to the US occupation," he says.

About 30,000 to 35,000 Japanese women migrated to the US during the 1950s, according to Spickard.

At first, the US military had ordered soldiers not to fraternise with local women and blocked requests to marry.



The War Brides Act of 1945 allowed American servicemen who married abroad to bring their wives home, but it took the Immigration Act of 1952 to enable Asians to come to America in large numbers.

When the women did move to the US, some attended Japanese bride schools at military bases to learn how to do things like bake cakes the American way, or walk in heels rather than the flat shoes to which they were accustomed.

But many were totally unprepared.

Generally speaking, the Japanese women that married black Americans settled more easily, Spickard says.



"Black families knew what it was like to be on the losing side. They were welcomed by the sisterhood of black women. But in small white communities in places like Ohio and Florida, their isolation was often extreme."

Atsuko, now 85, says she noticed a big difference between life in Louisiana and Maryland, near Washington DC, where she raised her two children and still lives with her husband.

And she says times have changed, and she does not experience any prejudice now.

"America is more worldly and sophisticated. I feel like a Japanese American, and I'm happy with that," she says.

Hiroko agrees that things are different. But the 84-year-old, who divorced Samuel in 1989 and has since remarried, thinks she has changed as much as America.

"I learned to be less strict with my four children - the Japanese are disciplined and schooling is very important, it was always study, study, study. I saved money and became a successful store owner. I finally have a nice life, a beautiful home.

"I have chosen the right direction for my life - I am very much an American," she says.

But there is no Susie any more. Only Hiroko.

The full documentary *Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight* will air on BBC World News this weekend. [Click to see the schedule.](#)

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War bride: Film tells journey from Japan to Pine City

Bob Jamieson, rjamieson@stargazette.com | @SGBob 7:30 p.m. EDT July 18, 2015

After WW II around 50,000 Japanese women came to the U.S., where they struggled with language and culture. The story of one of them, Hiroko Tolbert-O'Connor, of Pine City, is told in a new film.



(Photo: BOB JAMIESON / STAFF PHOTO)

There is a lesser-known slice of immigration in America.

An estimated 50,000 came to the United States following World War II from an enemy nation.

They settled in small towns, where they stood out, struggled with the language and didn't know the culture.

They are the war brides, the Japanese women who married American servicemen and faced disdain at home and the unknown abroad.

Elmira native Kathryn Tolbert is among three veteran journalists and first-born daughters of Japanese war brides who plan to tell some of their stories before the women, now in their 80s and 90s, are gone.

Their 26-minute documentary, "Fall Seven Times Get Up Eight: The Japanese War Brides," is scheduled for release this year, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. The name is drawn from a Japanese proverb about perseverance.

"It is the story of three mothers and three daughters," said Tolbert, 62, of Bethesda, Maryland, a veteran Washington Post editor. "It is the mother talking, and the daughter is part of that conversation. The film has each of the women talking about what life was like right after the war ... about her life and life in the U.S."

The film features Tolbert's mother, Hiroko Tolbert-O'Connor, 84, of Henny Creek Road in Pine City. It also features Emiko Kasmauski, mother of former National Geographic photographer Karen Kasmauski, of Falls Church, Virginia, and Atsuko Craft, mother of Lucy Kraft, Tokyo-based journalist for CBS and NPR.

The film was shot last fall in Pine City; Norfolk, Virginia; and Silver Spring, Maryland. Tolbert called it lyrical and evocative. She said it is not just a conversation, but includes footage from the National Archives and a slice-of-life look at the lives of the mothers now.

"You see scenes, preparing miso soup, the morning routine. It captures a sense of place and daily life," Tolbert said.

The documentary will have Japanese subtitles, and the plan is to show it at film festivals and Japanese-American museums, as well as sell DVDs.

"Right now, it looks like the BBC is very interested," Tolbert said of broadcast possibilities.

Hiroko will see the film later this month.

"I am kind of concerned how it is like. All through the years, she interviewed me. This is my life story," Hiroko said, fanning a thick sheath of typed pages. Those are from conversations with her daughter for a book that was never written, but will now find life as a film.

War and marriage

Hiroko Furukawa came from an upper-class Tokyo family, the daughter of a decorated Japanese Army officer who died when she was 6. The family moved to Korea when Japan occupied it, something she said her government encouraged. They moved back to Japan when World War II broke out.

Just as Elmira's factories, staffed by many female workers, converted to wartime production in the 1940s, so did the schools in Japan, Hiroko said.

"Toward the end of the war, our high school was turned into a factory. No classes; the whole school was turned into war production. We were only 13, 14 years old," she said. "We learned how to operate machines, make parts for Zero fighter planes. We were doing it to survive. We were doing it for Japan."

There was disbelief, she said, the day she and her classmates gathered around the radio to hear Emperor Hirohito tell them the war was lost, to stop their factory work and to go home. She was about 14 at the time and living 50 miles outside Tokyo. The country was devastated by Allied bombing, and the American occupation of Japan followed.

Hiroko met an American GI from Pine City named Samuel "Bill" Tolbert at the post exchange in Toyko, where she was a saleswoman. They saw each other for a year and got married in Japan in 1951. She was 20, he was 21.

"I really didn't know anything about him. I don't know his background, his family, his education. I didn't know anything. That was a great risk to decide to marry him and come over to the United States," Hiroko said. "I just wanted to get out. We had nothing in Japan."

Hiroko became one of 4,220 war brides documented coming to the United States in 1952. Though the War Brides Act of 1945 allowed American servicemen who married abroad to bring their wives home, it took the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 to largely lift the exclusion of Asians from coming to America.

She said she was pregnant with Kathryn, the oldest of her four children, when they arrived in the United States aboard a troop transport ship. That first night, in Seattle, she saw something that, to her, signified America and its wealth: "I saw a store window. There was a television. Ahh, this is what I heard about, a moving picture on the small screen."

Life in Pine City

A cross-country train trip to Elmira followed. There, two young relatives of her husband picked them up. What came next was completely foreign.

"They took us to my new home, which was my husband's parents' chicken farm in Pine City," Hiroko said. "I came to a chicken farm from the war-torn city of Tokyo. I walked into the farmhouse. It was very primitive. They were just chicken farmers. That is when my life began in Pine City."

She stayed behind while her husband spent two more years in the military in Hopewell, Virginia. She said she became worried when her husband's aunt told her it is unlikely any doctor will deliver her baby because "people are not going to forget the war."

That wasn't the case, she said. She met Elmira obstetrician Dr. King Snyder, a Navy corpsman during World War II.

"I was so worried they were going to reject me. He said, 'I am honored to take care of you.' His wife, Donna, became a very dear friend. She invited me to her home to show me a Christmas tree. I had never seen one," Hiroko said.

Snyder died in 2008. Kathryn Tolbert is named after one of his six daughters.

Hiroko and her husband had four children. They bought a small store on Hendy Creek Road from his parents, Tolbert's Market, and expanded it.

"I was determined. I didn't want to be a chicken farmer," she said, adding she was proud she was able to run the store herself for 20 years before selling it in 1995.

In a 1992 profile, part of a series on female entrepreneurs, she told the Star-Gazette, "We must believe in ourselves, that we are just as capable as men. We must set the goal and work hard."

Hiroko said she did not encounter prejudice in the Elmira area.

"For the most part, people were very encouraging to me. Anything I tried to do, they were helpful. I ran into many people who were wonderful to me. I never felt I was treated differently because I was the enemy," she said.

Hiroko and her husband divorced after 30 years of marriage. She got remarried in 2009 to retired Elmira police detective Richard O'Connor.

"When she went through the divorce, I didn't understand why she didn't move," Tolbert said of her mother. "She was always a city girl. She considered (moving) briefly and said my friends are here. I didn't realize how rooted she was here.

"I took out a map ... since 1952, she has lived her whole life within a two-square-mile area. This is somebody who grew up in Japan, Tokyo. She was a smart, ambitious woman," Tolbert said. "What I realized is she was quite emotional about the kind of life she built in Elmira and that people were good to her."

Stories to tell

There are more war bride stories to tell. That was evident, Tolbert said, when she and her colleagues quickly raised \$37,000 for their film on Kickstarter, a crowdfunding website. Besides money, comments came flowing in asking them to tell the story of other mothers, too.

"I felt I needed to gather the other stories. The film is pretty limited. It is three mothers, three daughters," Tolbert said.

She won a grant from her alma mater, Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, to spend a year traveling around the country interviewing Japanese war brides and their families.

That started this month. On July 9, she went to Wellsboro to interview a friend of her mother, Akiko Hewitt, who ran Akiko's Floral Arts there with her husband, Clark.

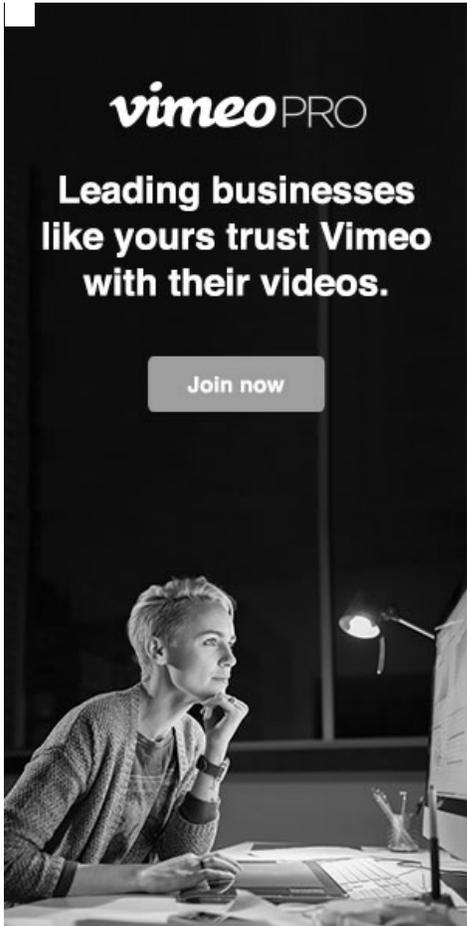
"The idea is to record interviews, edit them down and create an online archive of stories to display them with a slide show of family photos," Tolbert said.

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Daughters make film to tell Japanese war brides' stories

By Mike Hixenbaugh
The Virginian-Pilot
© August 15, 2015

NORFOLK

Emiko Kasmauski was working at a dance club in Yokosuka, Japan, in 1951 when she met the handsome sailor with wire-rimmed glasses.

In her, he found a bride. In him, she found a ticket out of post-war Japan.

Kasmauski, now an 81-year-old Norfolk resident, was among tens of thousands of Japanese women who married American service members and moved to the United States in the years following World War II. They became known as the Japanese war brides, though their story isn't widely known.

Now, three women - all eldest daughters of war brides - have produced a documentary, hoping to better understand the women who raised them. The 30-minute film, "Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight: The Japanese War Brides," will air on BBC World News this weekend. Its title is drawn from a Japanese proverb about growing stronger through hardship.

Kasmauski doesn't see what all the fuss is about. In an interview at her home this week, she joked, "You can make a story out of anything, I guess."

Her daughter, photojournalist Karen Kasmauski, has a different take. She partnered with Lucy Craft, a freelance journalist in Japan, and Kathryn Tolbert, an editor with The Washington Post, to make the documentary.

"These women made an incredible decision - often against the wishes of their family - to essentially marry their former enemy and move to a country they really weren't aware of," said Karen Kasmauski, who worked as a photographer at The Virginian-Pilot in the 1980s before going to shoot for National Geographic. "I don't know that I would have had the courage."

Unlike other immigrants, who tend to cluster together, the women who married their way out of Japan after WWII were scattered across the U.S., often settling wherever their husbands had grown up. For Emiko Kasmauski, that meant several months alone with two children in a trailer in rural Michigan while her husband, Steve, was on deployment. Later, they moved to Norfolk, where he was stationed.

Life in America proved isolating for many of the women. They arrived at the height of the civil rights era; Emiko Kasmauski recalls standing outside a public restroom in Norfolk in the early 1960s. One door was labeled "white only," the other "colored only."

"Which one am I supposed to go into?" she asked.

"I don't know," her husband responded.

Interracial marriage was still illegal in Virginia and more than a dozen other states. The couples would draw stares on the street. Worse, Karen Kasmauski said, many of the women clashed with their in-laws.

"My mother had a very hard time," she said.

In response to the influx of immigrants - an estimated 50,000 service members returned with Japanese brides - the federal government hosted cultural education camps to teach the women how to be good U.S. wives. The women learned how to prepare American meals and walk in high heels.

One thing apparently not covered in the courses: parenting. All three filmmakers said they had "complicated" relationships with their mothers, who had been raised in a far stricter culture. In the documentary, one of the filmmakers recalls her mother walking in during a middle school slumber party and saying, "I didn't know why anybody would want to be friends with my daughter. She is so stupid and ugly."

Those sorts of remarks - they sound harsher in English than they would in Japanese - weren't uncommon in the Kasmauski household: "I think the biggest challenge that she faced was, she was raising American kids," Karen Kasmauski said in the film. "She was always angry, always criticizing, very negative all the time to us. And my father would say, 'Well, you know, she's just Japanese.' "

Still, the daughters have come to respect their mothers' courage.

"What these women represent is what's good about people," Karen Kasmauski said. "That they can forgive and just go ahead, and just start lives with people who were their former enemy."

Emiko Kasmauski, whose husband passed away several years ago, has a simpler view. "I'm an American, because I live in America. I'm here."

Mike Hixenbaugh, 757-446-2949, mike.hixenbaugh@pilotonline.com

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June Otis

66 days ago

My mother was a war bride. When my father's CO asked her if she could make French fries and darn socks, she had to be restrained from walking out of the pre-marriage interview because she felt insulted. She was force of nature and an enigma-speaking broken English, but reading Agatha Christie and the classics in English; harsh and critical, but fiercely protective. Oh the stories I could tell. Wish they could have chronicled her life.

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Eilish Sefton

66 days ago

"Emiko Kasmauski recalls standing outside a public restroom in Norfolk in the early

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'War brides' documentary details lives of Japanese wives who came to U.S. after WWII

August 13, 2015  

By TAKESHI YAMAWAKI/ American General Bureau Chief of The Asahi Shimbun

“War brides” is an unfamiliar term for the younger generation, now 70 years after the end of World War II.

After the war's end, about half a million American troops and civilians employed by the Allied occupation forces were stationed in Japan. Many fell in love with Japanese women who were recently the “enemy.”

It is estimated that almost 50,000 women followed their husbands to the United States. Arriving in a strange land, they were known as “war brides.”

Journalists Lucy Craft and Kathryn Tolbert and photographer Karen Kasmauski—all daughters of war brides--produced a documentary centered on their interviews with their respective mothers, all in their 80s.

Tolbert, an editor at The Washington Post, says each and every war bride has led a distinctive life.

“There are many broken families and unhappy marriages, but there are also great love stories,” she says. “I don’t think you can say it’s one way or the other. It’s a process of assimilation of women who arrived in those circumstances.”

The 26-minute documentary, “Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight: The Japanese War Brides,” will be broadcast on the BBC World News between Aug. 14 and 20 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/n3cszlh9>). The creators hope to show the film in Japan and will update screening information on the website (www.fallsevengetupeight.com).

Craft, a freelance journalist residing in Tokyo and reporting for CBS, NPR and other media outlets, Kasmauski, a Washington, D.C.-based photographer featured in National Geographic magazine, and Tolbert met through mutual acquaintances and have been friends for more than 20 years.

Craft came up with the idea for a documentary four years ago while having a cup of coffee with Kasmauski. Previously, Tolbert had spoken to them about plans to write about war brides. Together, the three decided to move forward on the documentary project.

Having had little experience in filmmaking, they teamed with a production company called Blue Chalk and raised money online.

Using the crowd-funding site Kickstarter, they reached their goal of \$25,000 (3 million yen) in just 10 days, eventually raising \$40,000. Much of the funding came from relatives of war brides, such as children and grandchildren. Tolbert treasures many touching, memory-filled messages that accompanied the subscriptions, preserving all printouts.

It was common for war brides to face discrimination or be treated coldly. Tolbert’s mother, Hiroko, was no exception.

Hiroko followed her husband Bill to the United States and settled in his hometown in rural New York. She didn't own nice clothes so she tried to wear a kimono, which is traditional Japanese formal wear, but her husband strongly objected and became very angry. Her in-laws refused to call her by her real name and instead called her Susie.

The couple were later divorced, and Hiroko gained her husband's store as part of the divorce settlement to help support her children financially. Proving naysayers wrong, she expanded the business and successfully raised her four children.

"I think my life was pretty successful," Hiroko, 84, says. "I (grew) the business, I raised four kids, and they are very successful people, and I found a second husband. He's wonderful."

Not all these marriages may have been successful, but Kasmauski says, "What these women represent is what is good about people, that they can forgive, and they can go ahead and just start lives with people who used to be their enemy."

Kasmauski says her mother, Emiko, didn't act at all like the other mothers she knew. While her girlfriends' parents--a classic, Midwestern type--were very loving and supportive, her mother was always angry and critical of her children, leaving her feeling like there was a stranger in the house.

Kasmauski believes it was a big challenge for her mother to raise children in the United States. The Japanese tradition of children obeying their parents with unquestioning loyalty and reverence was very different from how Americans are brought up.

Emiko, now 81, lives near the naval station in Norfolk, Va., where her husband, Steve, was based for most of his career.

Kasmauski once asked her father, who died in 2010, "Why would you marry your enemy?" He replied, "Well, because the Japanese aren't our enemy. It was the governments that fought each other."

When Craft's mother, Atsuko, lived in Louisiana, buses were still segregated, and she was never sure where she should sit--so she sat in the middle. If someone said anything, she just moved to wherever they wanted her to move.

Now 85, Atsuko lives in Silver Spring, Md., with her husband, Arnold, 92. She still works part time for the National Library of Medicine database.

Today, she says, "I think Americans are getting more worldly, more sophisticated. I moved here and I don't feel any prejudice. So I think better days have come."

Craft says the stories of war brides show the best and the worst of human beings, all contained in one.

"I think the message for today is how could we be inclusive? How could we be a society where people are judged, like Martin Luther King said, 'on the basis of our character,' and not on how we look or where we come from?"

This is the message Craft hopes will remain with viewers.

By TAKESHI YAMAWAKI/ American General Bureau Chief of The Asahi Shimbun