

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

Picture Bride by Dan McDonald



Japanese readers of this column likely came to America for a variety of reasons: work assignment, school or perhaps to experience a different culture.

American readers may recall family stories of ancestors fleeing persecution, poverty or war in search of a new start in the land of opportunity.

During the holiday break, I watched Picture Bride, a 1995 independent film about an orphaned girl from Yokohama who immigrates to Hawaii in the early 20th century. Riyo (Youki Kudoh) is the picture bride of an older Japanese man who labors in the sugarcane fields. Her visions of an American paradise are quickly shattered on her first evening with her husband in their small, isolated shack. Hearing the faint sounds of a woman singing, her husband Matsuji tells her the ghosts of the cane fields have come to welcome her.

The city girl from Japan struggles to adjust to the backbreaking work in the fields, but Kana (Tamlyn Tomita) befriends Riyo. Together they wash laundry for a white family and Kana confides that she sleeps in the cane fields to escape an abusive husband, singing her baby to sleep. When the workers burn the sugarcane at harvest time, Kana perishes in the fire searching for her baby, who wandered off.

Wishing to escape and return to Japan, Riyo runs away one night and falls asleep on the beach. In a dream, Kana tells her she is going home. When Riyo says she wants to go with her, Kana replies "Who's waiting for you there?" and wades into the sea, fading from view.

The film ends with Riyo, Matsuji and other Japanese workers dancing at an Obon festival. An older Riyo tells us that she still sometimes hears the faint voice of a woman singing, only to awake from a dream and realize it is her daughter singing lullabies to her own children. (Dan is a newspaper columnist, editor and Japanese translator. Interested readers can contact him at dan9605@hotmail.com)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Top Sales from Japan

Governor of Niigata Prefecture Hideyo Hanazumi Visits New York to Promote Niigata's Local Products and Tourism

Niigata Prefecture sponsored a tasting event to introduce their famous agricultural products, including sake, in New York on January 11. About 100 people in the food industry participated in the event. Hideyo Hanazumi, governor of Niigata, visited New York to promote Niigata and made a presentation at the event. The venue was the Park Avenue Winter (near East 26th Street) and various types of Japanese sake originally made in Niigata, including Hakkaisan and Kubota, were served with specially made

introduced a traditional aged soy sauce which had been stocked for a long period in a room covered in snow, as well as wagyu beef and gluten free noodles. Some of these products are available in the United

States.

Takashi Uono, president of Uosho Co., Ltd., said, "I cannot wait to introduce to New Yorkers our wagyu beef." They are currently waiting for a vendor's permit.

Zene Flinn, chef at the Park Avenue Winter, served original dishes made with ingredients from Niigata. Mr. Flinn visited Niigata last summer for a business venture to invite buyers, and while he was there he learned about ingredients used in the local food.

Governor Hanazumi introduced sceneries of the four seasons in Niigata as well as their special method of making Kanzuri (Japanese cooking paste) in a slideshow presentation. He had sake with participants at the sake section. (Photo and Article by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)

Specially made titanium cups from HORIE's collection attract New Yorkers at the reception.



titanium cups from the collections of HORIE Corporation. The day before the event two lavish parties had also been thrown: one was for NEW YORK NIIGATA KENJINKAI's 30th anniversary, led by Chairman Kenji Otsubo, and the other was for the 8th anniversary of NIIGATA NIPPO's international exchange branch with President Toshizo Oda at the Nippon Club.

At the tasting event, Uosho Co., Ltd.

Tidying Up and Sparking Joy! Marie Kondo's Method Goes Viral



Kondo at a book signing that took place in a New York bookstore. (May 2015/Shukan NY Seikatsu)

Since Marie Kondo, a world-renowned tidying expert, started her new Netflix show in the beginning of the New Year, the Konmari organizing method has gone viral in the United States.

The show has eight episodes aired globally. In every episode Kondo visits a family in the United States, helping clients de-clutter and choose joy. Right after the first episode was aired, millennials began going on Instagram to show off their de-cluttered drawers and are saying things like, "When I put all my clothes together, 90% of them didn't spark joy," and, "I'm very much into the Konmari method."

On January 11 the Washington Post reported that donations to Goodwill, a thrift store chain, were up about 66% from the previous year, and auction houses have been incredibly crowded with furniture pick-up reservations. According to their article, one of the reasons this is happening is because people were trying to clean their houses following the government shutdown.

Kondo published "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up" in 2011. The English version was later released in 2014, after which it became widely famous all over the world. She currently lives in California. (Kaoru Komi/Translated by Etsuko Noda)

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Advertisement for Maekake aprons. Text: 'Now is the time to spread Japanese traditional craftsman's skill. Art apron since Edo period. Maekake aprons have been used since 19th century for the purposes of advertisement and guarding hips. It is made of 100% cotton, thick fabric. You can enjoy traditional craftsman's handmade aprons.' Includes images of various aprons and prices: MAEKAKE 'YUME' \$59.00, MAEKAKE 'Kotobuki' \$59.00, MAEKAKE 'Daruma' \$49.00, MAEKAKE Tote 'Kokorozashi' \$59.00, MAEKAKE Tote Bag 'MAKOTO' \$85.00. URL: http://www.anything.ne.jp/newyork/

Advertisement for HAIKU Contest. Text: 'Apply for HAIKU Contest! Haiku is a poem following the syllabic pattern of 5-7-5.' Includes rules: 'Haiku in English may consider the following as a model: Across the still lake through upcurls of morning mist The cry of a loon'. HOW to APPLY: Website: http://www.artofhaiku.org, E-mail: HaikuGrandPrix@gmail.com. PROMOTER: New York Seikatsu Press INC. SPONSOR: ITO EN (North America) INC.

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