



## Getting Totalled ...

For some reason - we're not sure exactly why - we have had quite a bit of media attention here recently. The past few months have seen three or four offers to appear on TV programs (not all of which have become realized), and a number of interviews that resulted in stories in magazines.

One of the magazine requests was a bit different from the usual type that we receive. Nearly all magazines in Japan, no matter what their scale or genre, have some kind of 'human interest' section or column where they feature somebody doing something 'interesting', and over the years I have been interviewed for such columns many more times than I can count. But last month I had a call from a reporter from the magazine 'Josei Jishin', requesting an interview. I'm not quite sure how best to describe this sort of magazine for those of you not living here in Japan; perhaps the best analogy is to the 'supermarket checkout' publications in other countries. Their main content is celebrities and scandal, and the more salacious, the better.

Now there are no scandals here at Mokuhankan, so just why they would be interested in us was not clear. But it turned out that they wanted to do a multi-page story featuring 'Foreigners who are more Japanese than the Japanese', and wanted to know if I would be willing to be included. Now that is actually a very tired old theme, and my files are full of similarly titled clippings, but most of these editors are young, live very much in the present, and have no idea what was published just a few months ago, let alone a few years back, so they were thinking it was a bright new idea.

In any case, it seemed harmless, and my staff registered no objections, so we agreed to the interview. In due course the reporter came, accompanied by a photographer who shot basically non-stop during the session, which must have lasted around two hours or so. It turned out that the reporter wasn't familiar with my current work - the Ukiyoe Heroes - and wasn't much interested when we explained it to him. He had heard about my '100 Poets' series from many years back, and wanted to make that the focus of the story.

That was no problem for me, although it turned the interview into a kind of 'time slip', and I found myself answering questions I hadn't been asked for more than a decade. I explained my motivations for making those prints, who the collectors had been, and whatever other things he wanted to know. He was curious how many of the prints I had made, and I showed him the 'Business Transparency' page of my website, where people could select from my various print sets and see how many of each print I had made over the years. To end the session the photographer asked me to pose surrounded by many of the prints, so we set up a kind of display in one corner of the workshop in order that he could get the shot he wanted. They then left, promising to send a copy of the finished story later.

The magazine arrived just the other day, and I heard about it from my neighbour Yamaguchi-san. "I saw your story in Josei Jishin' this morning! You know I don't usually read that stuff, but it was in the doctor's office ..."

I asked if the story had been interesting, and his response was an admonishment, "You know, you really shouldn't talk about money like that to the media. I'm sure you are going to be getting a visit from the tax investigators very soon!"

Huh?

It turned out that the interviewer had taken the sales data from my website, made a total of the number of those poets' prints I had made, collated this with the price of the prints, and then published a grand total of

**David Bull**  
**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
**Tokyo Japan 198-0052**  
**<http://astoryaweek.com>**

revenue for more than twenty years of sales, giving a figure of something over a million dollars (in yen). Now that's an accurate figure, and actually, if he had included all the other series I have produced over the years since I hung out my shingle, the figure would be well over two million dollars.

So do I have 'millions' in the bank? Well, you all know the answer to *that*! Gross business revenue and net personal revenue are two very different animals, of course. I am getting by, but not much more than getting by.

But now my neighbour - and who knows how many other people - seem to think I'm a millionaire! I wonder just where he thinks I'm hiding the Mercedes!

**David Bull**  
**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
**Tokyo Japan 198-0052**  
**<http://astoryaweek.com>**