Putting “the Tigers” in their Classroom Context

By Linda S. Wojtan

First I would like to thank my colleagues for their thoughtful perspectives on Tora no Maki: Lessons for Teaching about Contemporary Japan, vol. I and II, and express my appreciation for the invitation to respond. Space considerations require that I comment only on a few key issues and leave many unaddressed.

Professor Rice states that a review of other supplementary materials confirms that Tora no Maki I and II do not “set new standards in content or creativity.” Having extensively used all the materials he cites, I must differ, and express not only my own viewpoints, but also those of many colleagues. Many in the field of precollegiate Japan studies have praised Tora no Maki I and II, specifically for presenting fresh material, especially in the lessons focusing on hansei, deregulation, kendama, the aging society, kaizen, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Further, although evaluation of creativity and approach are matters of opinion, all of the lessons should be credited for their ground-breaking attempt to link Japan-related content to the social studies standards of the National Council for the Social Studies.

...although evaluation of creativity and approach are matters of opinion, all of the lessons should be credited for their ground-breaking attempt to link Japan-related content to the social studies standards of the National Council for the Social Studies.
Quite frankly, I am stymied by Professor DeCoker’s assertion that these lessons can only be safely executed in the hands of veterans of Japan study tours.

Quite frankly, I am stymied by Professor DeCoker’s assertion that these lessons can only be safely executed in the hands of veterans of Japan study tours. Are only those who have been to Japan to be allowed to use any supplementary materials? I cannot find any compelling justification for this assertion other than his charge of lack of context. First, at the risk of sounding self-serving, I must submit that a careful review of similar collections of individual lessons reveals that these two volumes provide as much background and context as any of them. Indeed, in some cases the extensive information found in many Tora no Maki appendices exceeds the norm.

Secondly, if Professor DeCoker is referring to the wider context of the issue of teacher preparation regarding Japan, as I approach my twentieth year in the classroom, this has been a personal challenge for me. In the summer of 1995, including an increased U.S. share of the Japanese market, especially by setting targets for the opening of dealerships. Professor Rice implies that this matter has been resolved, offers the Saturn as an example of “dubious assumptions.” Since the issue is U.S. automakers’ penetration of the Japanese (not U.S.) market, the statement in I:54 is repeatedly as an example of “dubious assumptions.” Since the issue is U.S. automakers’ penetration of the Japanese (not U.S.) market, the statement in I:54 is actually still painfully accurate.

Figures for a six-month period in 1997 confirm that GM sold just 408 Saturn cars and station wagons in Japan, 1/500th of the 194,871 Camry sedans sold in the U.S. for the same period.