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## Japan's next first lady has got stories to tell

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JOHN M. GLIONNA | Los Angeles Times

SEOUL, South Korea

She's a quasi political player, an eccentric former entertainer whose intense spirituality is ripe for tabloid fodder. She claims she knew actor Tom Cruise in a former life and once visited the planet Venus in a triangular spaceship.

Miyuki Hatoyama, the wife of newly elected Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, is a free-spirited woman whose views are drawing Western attention since her husband's Democratic Party of Japan swept into power in a historic leadership change last weekend.

The former singer-dancer in an all-female theatrical troupe and the ex-wife of a Japanese restaurateur in California, Hatoyama (who is 66; her husband is 62) met the new prime minister while he was studying engineering at Stanford University.

In Japan, she established herself as a "life composer" or lifestyle consultant who makes her own clothes, including a dress fashioned from hemp coffee bags. On the campaign trail, she demonstrated a passable Michael Jackson moon walk. She has written several books, including "Top of Form Bottom of Form Miyuki Hatoyama's Spiritual Food" and "Miyuki Hatoyama's Have a Nice Time."

There was a collection of celebrity interviews called "Amazing Events I Have Encountered" in which Hatoyama discussed an extraterrestrial jaunt she says she took during her first marriage.

"While my body was sleeping, I think my spirit flew on a triangular-shaped UFO to Venus," she said. "It was an extremely beautiful place and was very green."

Her book editor said in an interview with the Los Angeles Times that Hatoyama was misunderstood. Shunsuke Tsuchiya said the incident "happened while she was sleeping. It was just a vivid dream."

He described Hatoyama as a very social and straightforward woman with a wide range of interests, including spirituality.

"She does tend to like spiritual topics. She says things like, 'If you're with me, it won't rain.' She can be misunderstood. When you see what she has said in writing, it might be surprising."

As a guest on one late-night Japanese TV show, she talked of a desire to make a movie with Tom Cruise, who starred in 2003's "The Last Samurai."

"In my former life, I know he was Japanese. I knew him. So when he sees me, I think he'll say, 'It's been a long time.'"

Warning viewers that some of her observations might be considered "weird," she advised them to energize themselves each day by pretending to "eat the sun." Closing her eyes, she grasped and ate imaginary pieces from the sky. "Yum, yum, yum," she said. "I get energy from it. My husband also does this."

Koichi Nakano, a political scientist at Sophia University in Japan said voters here are used to free-spirited celebrities.

"There were some rumors about her eccentric behavior, and she does seem a little unusual for a Japanese woman her age," he said.

"I don't think any of this matters as long as it stays clear of issues regarding public policy," Nakano said.

Another Japanese cultural scholar was offended by Western media coverage of the new first lady.

"The foreign press always seems to reinforce stereotypes about Japanese women and culture -- focusing on extreme examples that are on the periphery," said Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow, a professor of education and women's studies at Toyo Eiwa Women's University in Tokyo and an author on Japanese feminism. "We know little about her in Japan other than she's a bit older than her husband. I don't think people here care very much about what political wives are like."

She said the Japanese certainly did not invent eccentricity among celebrities.

"Didn't Nancy Reagan do seances? Nobody cared about that."

Editor Tsuchiya said that Hatoyama's tenure as first lady won't be boring.

"It'll be fun," he said. "Out of all the prime ministers' wives, she may be the most social one."

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