

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
HIROHITO
EMPEROR OF JAPAN

THE STATE FLOOR

10:21 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Your Majesties, our distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

This first State visit to the United States by an Emperor and an Empress is an occasion of great, great importance to all of us. It symbolizes the very unique and the very close ties of friendship between our countries, as well as our people.

My Nation, Your Majesties, has looked forward to this happy occasion for a long, long time. Four years ago, it was a great honor for Americans, for you, Your Majesties, to stop in Alaska at the beginning of your first foreign travel as an Emperor and Empress. On that occasion, your stay was much too brief.

Last year, I had the great honor of being the first incumbent American President to visit Japan, and I am grateful, deeply grateful, and was obviously most impressed with the wonderful reception that I received from you, as well as the people of Japan.

The first official visit to the United States by a Japanese Emperor, occurring as it does during my Administration, is another source of great personal satisfaction. It was my profound pleasure earlier today to welcome you officially to the United States on behalf of all of our people.

While the cultural heritages of our two countries are quite different, our people share a very common aspiration and a similar commitment to democratic freedoms and institutions.

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Your Majesties, we confront together the challenges of an advanced industrial society and seek a very peaceful world in which all nations prosper and all people pursue fulfilling lives.

Because Americans and Japanese have patiently nurtured these very fundamental bonds, our cultural differences have been a source of mutual enrichment rather than a barrier to friendship and understanding.

Through the interaction of our peoples, Japan has very profoundly influenced America. Japanese cherry trees, as we all know, are well known to Americans because of their very prominent place in the heart of our national capital. These very beautiful cherry blossoms symbolize the profound cultural influence of Japan on modern America.

Japan's art, its architecture, its pottery, its prints, its gardens and, almost above all, its graciousness, all have enriched American life and American thought. The Japanese emphasis on consensus and harmony in human relations also influences the life, as well as the work of the American people.

Because Japan's influence upon America has been very subtle, it is not always easily recognized. Therefore, Your Majesty's visit provides Americans an opportunity to pause and acknowledge your country's contributions to our national culture.

Your Majesties, I can assure you that America places the highest possible value on our distinctive and mutually beneficial relations with your nation. Americans are determined to preserve, Americans are determined to strengthen our ties of friendship and cooperation with Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen, in that spirit, I ask all of you to join me in a toast to Their Majesties' continued good health and to the perpetuation of the sincere friendship between the American and Japanese people, which this historic visit symbolizes.

Your Majesties.

EMPEROR HIROHITO: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, ladies and gentlemen:

I wish to offer my sincere appreciation for your most thoughtful words. I am deeply moved by your warm expression of good will toward Japan and the people of Japan.

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Your visit to Japan last fall, Mr. President, brought a bright and happy page in the 120 year long history of Japanese-American relations. Ever since your visit, the Empress and I have been looking forward to this moment when we might be with you again, Mr. President, and with Mrs. Ford for the first time.

We also thank you cordially for your gracious hospitality this evening at the White House. We are mindful that in this house great leaders of your country have presided since the early years of the nation making their indelible marks on national and world history.

Our first night in the United States we spent at Williamsburg, resting from our long journey and savoring, in the calm atmosphere of that picturesque town, historic reminders of the birth of this Nation. Those associations are deepened for us tonight, in your company and in this historic house.

I recall the wise counsel which your first President, George Washington gave the American people upon leaving the office of the Presidency in 1796: "Observe good faith and justice towards all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all."

This precept is still valid in today's world. It is an idea shared by the Japanese people in their continuing efforts to cultivate peace and harmony within the international community.

It has been my wish for many years to visit the United States. There is one thing in particular which I have hoped to convey to the American people, should my visit be materialized; that is, to extend in my own words my gratitude to the people of the United States for the friendly hand of good will and assistance their great country afforded us for our post-war reconstruction, immediately following that most unfortunate war, which I deeply deplored.

Today, a new generation with no personal memory of those years is about to be in the majority in both our countries, yet I am confident that the story of the generosity and good will of the American people will be retold from generation to generation of Japanese for the rest of time.

The United States has made extraordinary contributions to the well being and progress among mankind during the past two centuries. Today, on the eve of your Bicentennial and amidst the shifting tides of history, the United States continues to stand for the high ideals which give this Nation birth.

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The American people are still contributing to further developments of this most vigorous and creative society and to the building of peace and prosperity in the world.

Mankind is now engaged in a common endeavor -- the creation of a just and peaceful international community. For this lofty objective, it is my hope that Japan and the United States, as two powerful and stable nations, will cooperate actively on the basis of even better understanding of each other through further dialogue, drawing strengths from the richness of our past histories and traditions.

Ladies and gentlemen, I propose a toast to the health of the President of the United States of America and Mrs. Ford, and to the American people on the threshold of your third glorious century as a Nation.

END (AT 10:33 P.M. EDT)