

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
HIROHITO  
EMPEROR OF JAPAN

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

10:40 P.M. EDT

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

The Empress and I are greatly honored to be with you this evening, Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, and distinguished great guests representing the broad spectrum of the American people.

May I take this opportunity to impress on you our sincere appreciation for the cordial hospitality extended to us by the President and the people of the United States.

The Japanese-American relationship began some 120 years ago when Commodore Matthew Perry reached our shore to begin the process of opening Japan to the outside world. Five years later Japan dispatched its first delegation to the United States on the mission of exchanging the instruments of ratification of our treaty of amity and commerce. It is recorded that the delegation visited this Smithsonian Institution.

One of Japan's leading intellectuals at the time of my grandfather, the Emperor Meiji, was Yukichi Fukuzawa. He accompanied the delegation to the United States aboard the escort ship "Kanrin Maru." Upon his return, Fukuzawa wrote a book entitled "Seiyo-jijo" or "Things Western." In this volume Fukuzawa described how the United States, under the "purest form of republican government," had been living up to the ideals of its Founding Fathers, and included a full Japanese translation of the Declaration of Independence of the United States. His enlightening suggestions were a source of inspiration to the Japanese people of the time who were just beginning to emerge out of centuries of isolation into the age of modernization.

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Succeeding generations of Japanese and Americans have built on those early interchanges, establishing, in our time, a relationship of extensive cooperation in political, economic, industrial, academic, cultural and many other fields.

Today, as the United States is about to celebrate its Bicentennial, Japan and the United States have become the nearest of neighbors, despite the vast reach of the Pacific Ocean, which separates our two countries, and despite the great distances between our respective histories, traditions, languages and cultures. Never before in history have two such distant and different peoples forged such close bonds of friendship.

I am confident that friendship, so well tested through a number of trials in the past, is an enduring one which will withstand whatever vicissitude there may be in future history.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to join me in a toast to the continued health of the President of the United States of America and Mrs. Ford, and to the prosperity of this great Republic.

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THE PRESIDENT: Your Majesties, Mrs. Ford and I are deeply honored to be your guests this evening. Japanese hospitality is always warm and most gracious, as I can testify from my visit last year to Tokyo and Kyoto.

Your kind and very thoughtful words have made a deep impression upon Mrs. Ford, myself and the American people, and it is an honor for me this evening to have an opportunity to respond.

Your Majesties' visit to Washington has been pleasant, as I have gathered from our discussions, but all too brief. Tomorrow, you leave for a journey across America. Many Americans you will meet and the places you will visit have long-standing and important connections with Japan.

I am very pleased that your Majesty will see some of our small towns as well as our great cities. The farm you will visit in Illinois is symbolic of the importance of agriculture as well as trade in American and Japanese relations.

I am particularly happy that your Majesties will visit the oceanographic research centers in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and La Jolla, California, where some of America's leading marine biologists will have an opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Your Majesty's personal role in scientific research symbolizes the contribution that international scientific exchanges have made to the advancements of knowledge in our two nations and to their mutual benefit.

Mrs. Ford and I are very pleased that time has been found for Your Majesty, the Empress, to meet Americans who share her artistic interest in humanitarian concerns. We are glad that you will also have time to relax and enjoy other aspects of American life, such as football on Sunday, Disneyland later, and the tropical beauty of Hawaii.

Your visit, of course, draws attention as well to the place Americans of Japanese ancestry occupy in our national life. While their numbers are not large, their contributions to American life have been most significant.

Through quiet and very diligent endeavor, Japanese-Americans have attained highly respected places in the most exalted rank of every profession, in the arts and sciences and, of course, in public affairs. The cultural heritage that they have given us has enriched American life. They are actually a living bond between our two great countries.

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Your Majesty, when you assumed the throne in 1926, you chose the Japanese words "shiwa," meaning "enlightened peace," as the name of your reign. Those words expressed an exalted ideal and now in the unprecedented 50th year of your reign, the Japanese peoples' accomplishments and their place in the world have fulfilled your early hopes.

Your Majesties' historic visit has enhanced Japanese-American relations with a new dignity and it has made us even more aware of the benefits of peace as well as friendship between us. It has also reinvigorated our shared determination to encourage even closer ties and greater cooperation between the Japanese and the American people.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask that you join me in expressing appreciation for their Majesties' hospitality this evening as I propose a toast to their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress of Japan.

END (AT 10:56 P.M. EDT) /