

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 30, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
TAKEO MIKI
PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

THE STATE FLOOR

2:53 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome you once again to Washington, and I am particularly pleased that you, as a long-standing friend of this country, can visit us during our Bicentennial year.

When you were here last, slightly less than a year ago, our conversations reflected and strengthened the remarkably close relationship which had developed between our two countries.

In October of last year, we were all greatly honored to welcome Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan for a State visit to the United States. That visit symbolized in a very important sense the maturing of American-Japanese relations and the full fruition of friendship and partnership that we have worked so very hard to establish.

When we met last August, Mr. Prime Minister, we pledged to work to maintain our close ties and to broaden them, extending our cooperative efforts towards a solution of international as well as bilateral problems. It is my judgment that those pledges have been honored.

In the past year, our two Governments have worked very closely to the mutual benefit of our people in bilateral relations that is as comprehensive and as important as any in the world between the United States and other Governments.

We have also consulted frequently, candidly, productively on the many pressing issues that confront the world at large.

Only two days ago, we met with our European and Canadian friends and colleagues in Puerto Rico. There, as at Rambouillet last November, very significant progress was made towards securing a more prosperous and a more stable economic order benefiting all of our nations, and there, as at Rambouillet, Japan's participation was absolutely indispensable.

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Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the people of the United States, let me thank you and the people of Japan for your most thoughtful and generous gifts in honor of our Bicentennial celebration -- a beautiful, new theatre at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts here in Washington, D. C., and more than 2,000 lovely cherry trees to be planted in the Cities of Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

I might say parenthetically, that after the check was given this morning by the Prime Minister, or Mr. Ueki, we gave it to Roger Stevens, and while I was thanking the Prime Minister and the Japanese people, Roger Stevens dropped it. (Laughter) Where is Roger? But, nobody walked off with it, Roger.

Our relationship is remarkable for its ability not only to bridge the differences between our cultures but to strengthen those differences.

Mr. Prime Minister, our ties are blessed with a very vital dimension -- each country's interest in and willingness to learn from the culture of the other. Japan's construction of a new theatre in the Kennedy Center emphasizes the dynamic cultural interchange.

Last December, Mr. Prime Minister, you said it was your heartfelt hope that the cherry trees would be for generations to come a symbol of the ever-growing friendship, goodwill and mutual confidence of the peoples of America and Japan. I share that hope, as do all Americans.

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of my fellow Americans, I wish to thank you and the people of Japan for the gracious message which you presented to me this morning extending your congratulations on our 200th birthday.

I know that in our third century, Mr. Prime Minister, Japan and America will draw closer and closer together and that our two nations will continue to exert a positive and constructive influence on the course of world events.

In a recent Bicentennial tribute, you said America became great and will continue to be great, not because we are made up of one race, one religion or one culture, but because a diversity of people came to our shores to forge a lasting unity and a shared commitment to liberty, justice and equity and equality.

"The American experience," you said, "reinforces my faith in democracy." For that expression of faith, we are deeply grateful and by your visit here we are deeply honored.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask that you rise and join with me in a toast to the Prime Minister of Japan and to the warm and enduring friendship between Japan and the United States.

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PRIME MINISTER MIKI: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

You do me a great honor with this festive luncheon. In just four days you will observe your 200th birthday as a Nation. This is a cause for celebration throughout the world.

In Japan, we are reminding ourselves how much our friendship with America has meant to us. The United States has played a significant role throughout Japan's history, especially in the past three decades. In those years we have forged the broadest of friendly partnerships. Today, we are the two largest industrial democracies on earth, walking side-by-side toward a better world, free of war and want.

Japan's history would be very different if the United States had never declared its independence; so would the history of the rest of the world. That is what your Bicentennial means to the people of Japan. Because of America, democracy is there for many peoples and is a possible dream for the rest of mankind.

Permit me in that spirit to offer a toast to the future, to the continuing good health of President Ford, to the deepening of the friendship between the Japanese and American peoples, and to the success of freedom in the world during the third century of the United States of America.

END (AT 3:05 P.M. EDT)