Remarks to the Japanese American Association of New York
June 6, 2013
George R. Packard

Ambassador Hiroki, Ambassador Sakurai
President Gary Moriwaki
Honorary President Susan Onuma
Vice President and US-Japan Foundation Trustee, Satoru Murase
Mrs. Nishimiya Yukiko
President Irene Hirano

I am very much honored to be with you this evening at your 43rd Annual Scholarship Awards dinner. I have long been aware of the fine work of the Japanese – American Association of New York in providing generous scholarships to promising students in this region. I am especially pleased to note that you are honoring the late Ambassador Nishimiya Shinichi through the establishment of a scholarship fund in his name and I am so delighted that Mrs. Nishimiya Yukiko could be here on this very special occasion.

There is one more reason why I am thrilled to be here. It turns out I am related – in a distant way – to your founder. My wonderful *sansei* son-in-law, David Takami, who lives in the Seattle area and is the father of my two wonderful half Japanese-American yonsei grandsons, is the grandson of the founder of this organization.

David reminded me recently that his grandfather, Takami Toyohiko, was born in Kumamoto in 1875, to a samurai family that planned for him to become a Shinto priest. Toyohiko had other ideas. He ran away from home at the age of 15 and got a job as a ship's captain's boy on a British ship that sailed from Kobe in 1891. He ended up in Brooklyn, learned English, attended Lawrenceville School, Lafayette College, and Cornell Medical School. He then established a private practice in general medicine for many years in Brooklyn and was chairman of dermatology at Cumberland Hospital. He married Sona Oguri and they had six children, including David's father, who went on to graduate from Princeton.

Dr. Takami Toyohiko founded and was first president of the Japanese Mutual Aid Society *(Nihonjin Kyosaikai)* in 1907, and later served as president of its successor organization, the Japanese Association of New York (*Nihonjin Kai)* which evolved in 1952 into the organization that is represented here tonight. So, however distant my relationship might be, I am proud to be the grandfather of two of Toyohiko's great-grandsons! [In the course of doing this research, I also discovered that I am related to your Vice President, Satoru Murase but that's another story!]

I would like to share a few thoughts with you tonight about a much neglected aspect of international relations. I am referring to the human dimension – the role of character and

personality and direct eyeball-to-eyeball communication -- that can affect so many aspects of the relationships between nations. I have chosen this topic because of my profound respect for Ambassador Nishimiya Shinichi and for his extraordinary success in representing his nation abroad.

Shinichi was clearly a professional, thoroughly versed in the practice and customs of diplomacy and in the intricate workings of bureaucracy. But he was much more than that, as all of us who knew him here in New York came to recognize. He was genuinely interested in learning in depth about our culture and he went the extra mile to reach out to a broad swath of Americans. He found so many ways to exchange views and to make friends here. And he had another rare quality: he was a good listener. The range of his fans and admirers was quite extraordinary.

I was particularly grateful for his welcoming and supportive attitude toward our foundation's US-Japan Leadership Program. He opened up his official home to our gatherings, joined our Advisory Board and was highly popular among the young leaders who got to know him. It was very clear that he enjoyed their company and vice versa.

I have no doubt that he would have enjoyed the same success in winning friends as Ambassador to China had his life not ended so unexpectedly and tragically. And I had fully expected him to show up in Washington some day as Japan's Ambassador. He would have represented his nation with immense success.

You might think it strange that someone who has spent many years in academic work, in political science and in the study of diplomacy would stress the role of individual human relationships in the affairs of nations. Indeed, our field of study has come to be overly defined these days by theories: the balance of power, rational choice, security dilemmas, alliance theory and so forth. These theories can be somewhat useful in giving students tools with which to analyze international relations, but they fall short at the end of the day in explaining the most fundamental events in human history. They tend to explain disastrous wars as driven by impersonal forces, the interplay of ethnic strife, nationalism, religious and racial conflict, economic inequality and so forth. No one individual is to blame. They pay too little attention to decisions by individual leaders that could have changed history. And they tell us very little about how to forge wiser foreign policy in the future.

Take for example, the personal relationship that developed between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Chairman Mikhail Gorbachev starting in 1985. No one could have predicted that these two leaders would find a way to end the Cold War, and avoid the terrifying potential of an all-out nuclear war.

Ronald Reagan was portrayed in much of the press as a somewhat amiable buffoon, given to taking his cues from 3 x 5 cards in his pocket. But a very different picture emerges from recent scholarship. For example, Jack Matlock, a staff member on the National Security Council, in his extraordinary book, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended,* [NY: Random House, 2004] recounts how Reagan prepared for the Geneva summit with Gorbachev in 1985. Matlock prepared some 20 research papers on various aspects of Soviet history and Russian culture. One paper, 8-10 pages long, and single spaced was given to the Reagan each week for twenty weeks. The papers covered the sources of Soviet behavior, the Soviet Union from the inside, , foreign policy and national security issues. The final two papers evaluated Gorbachev and his political objectives. Reagan devoured each of these reports. After reading one, he would scribble notes all over it, and recommend it to his staff. Robert MacFarlane, who was then Reagan's National Security Advisor, called these documents "the most important papers of the last twenty years."

Reagan and Gorbachev met five times between 1985 and 1988, and most historians agree today that these personal meetings, and the mutual trust they engendered, were critical to the process of ending the Cold War. Nothing can match the value of two leaders who have done their homework looking each other in the eye and coming away convinced that a deal can be made.

As you know, tomorrow, in California, President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping, will sit down together in what could prove to be an equally significant event in world history. The two leaders will meet at the Sunnylands estate in Palm Springs, (the home of the late Walter Annenberg) east of Los Angeles, for two days of broad, face-to-face discussions – far removed from the media and bureaucracies of Beijing and Washington. There will be no neckties, no elaborate protocol, and only a few close aides in attendance. They will look each other in the eye and decide whether there is a basis for peaceful coexistence. The outcome of these talks could shape world history for the rest of this century and beyond.

Elaborate preparations for this meeting have been underway for more than a year. National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon was in Beijing last week going over the agenda in minute detail. It appears that no subject is too sensitive or controversial to be raised: cyber warfare, the Senkaku Island dispute, technology theft, North Korea, trade and macroeconomic policy; the rapid rise in China's military power.

[I do question the wisdom of replacing Donilon with Susan Rice at this critical juncture, and wonder what the Chinese will think.]

The chattering class of media pundits is already spreading doubt that these talks will succeed. Some cite the Peloponnesian War which resulted from Sparta's fear of an

economically powerful Athens. Others, such as Princeton Professor Aaron Friedberg, appear to believe that the U.S. and China are destined to go to war. In his book, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* [2011], he seems to rely on balance of power theory and the lessons of history to argue that a rising power and an established power must inevitably go to war before the international order can accommodate the newcomer.

But this is a philosophy of despair. Reagan and Gorbachev showed that the "march of folly," in Barbara Tuchman's memorable title, is not inevitable, and in the age of weapons of mass destruction, not even thinkable. Where is it written in the bible that the U.S. must maintain mastery in Asia? Does a careful reading of Chinese history justify that conclusion that China is now or will be an expansionist power or that it must be the "master of Asia?" We must hope that Obama and Xi have read and understood their history. One glimmer of hope is that Obama, unlike most American leaders in the past, seems to be comfortable with Asians as a result of his boyhood in Indonesia and upbringing in Hawaii. Most other U.S. leaders in the past have been affected by racism toward Asians. Remember: Vietnamese and Koreans were known in the Pentagon as "gooks" in our wars against them.

Another tiny fragment of hope is that Xi's daughter attends Harvard and may have educated him a bit about the younger generation of Americans. She reportedly has resisted his efforts to get her to come back to a Chinese university. (Harvard women are like that, I have noticed). But mostly we must hope that both leaders have understood the domestic political and economic pressures facing each of them at home, not the least of which are the huge military establishments on each side that need to be controlled.

My understanding of American policy in Asia over the past 150 years is that it has been suffused with ignorance of the realities on the ground. . The conquest and colonization of the Philippines rested on President McKinley's view that he was bringing Christianity to "our little brown brothers" when in fact 80% of Filipinos were already Catholic as a result of Spanish rule. Imperial ambitions, racism, Woodrow Wilson's refusal in 1919 to accept Japan's motion to include a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Charter, and the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act which excluded Japanese from entering our country, were all factors that helped in one way or another to persuade Japan's powerful military establishment that its survival and imperial ambitions could be achieved only through war with America. Nothing can excuse the blatant insubordination of the Kwangtung Army's invasion of Manchuria and China, but I believe there were critical turning points when more reasonable leaders like Baron Shidehara could have prevailed and Japan's aggression could have been curbed. Nothing that the United States did in the period 1920-1940 lent support to the moderates in Tokyo. And there were no face-to-face meetings of the top leaders of the two nations.

What the U.S.-Japan relationship in the 1920's and 1930's lacked, as the two nations careened down the road to war, was a network of personal contacts and relationships that could inform and enlighten policy-makers on each side. On the Japanese side, you had powerful army leaders who had almost no contacts with the Western world. On the American side, we had only a tiny handful of experts on Japan, and none of them was in a position to influence policy. What Asian "expertise" did exist in high policy circles tended to be overwhelmingly sympathetic to China in its war with Japan – the result of Henry Luce's *Time Magazine* leanings, Pearl Buck's novels, and the missionary project which tended to favor China over Japan.

Was there any way in which personal relationships could averted the disaster of the Pacific War? One exception to America's appalling ignorance about Japan was Ambassador Joseph Grew who served in Tokyo for ten years between 1932-42 as the two nations careened toward Pearl Harbor. Grew, although he did not learn the Japanese language, relied on several experts including Eugene Dooman, who knew the language and culture. He cultivated, as best he could in the fraught 1930's, elements in Japanese society who sought a peaceful accommodation. You may remember that he tried to engineer a last minute meeting between Prime Minister Konoe and President Roosevelt in the summer of 1941 – even as Japan's militarists were plotting the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Robert Fearey, a young Foreign Service officer who served as Grew's special assistant, wrote an extraordinary account of this episode in the *Foreign Service Journal* in 1991. He believed that Konoe was prepared to make enough concessions on China and Southeast Asia in a meeting with Roosevelt, that war might have been averted. This is, of course, a matter of some controversy. Other scholars believe that Konoe would have been assassinated by the military had he made those concessions. We will never know. But Joseph Grew, after six months of internment in Tokyo, returned to the State Department and wrote a memo for Cordell Hull in the summer of 1942 explaining how the war with Japan could have been avoided. There were at least two copies and Grew kept one. Hull accepted the paper and it was never heard of again. Clearly the U.S. Government did not welcome this sort of revelation as it was exhorting Americans to make extreme sacrifices in the battle against Japan. After Grew's death, Fearey tried to find the other copy of the paper, but he could not succeed. Fearey went to his death fully convinced that a personal, face-to-face meeting between FDR and Konoe could have averted the war.

We could cite many other examples of the importance of personal ties in the conduct of foreign policy. For example, the relationship between Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru and General Douglas MacArthur during the Occupation of Japan, or the relationship between

General Eisenhower and General de Gaulle in 1944 at the time of the liberation of France from German occupation.

One strong believer in this kind of personal diplomacy was Edwin O. Reischauer. To cite just one example, Reischauer was convinced in 1961 that the U.S. military's continuing occupation of Okinawa was a time bomb waiting to explode. Powerless to change the attitude of the American generals who treated Okinawa as if it were a prize trophy won in combat that was never to be returned, he worked quietly through then Attorney General Bobby Kennedy to make his views on Okinawa known to President Kennedy. He succeeded in getting the President's attention, and persuaded John F. Kennedy to plan a visit Tokyo in February 1964. (This idea appealed greatly to Kennedy since President Eisenhower had been blocked from a planned visit by the protest movements in 1960.) On November 22, 1963, an airplane carrying Secretary of State Dean Rusk and five other cabinet members, was in the air en route from Hawaii to Tokyo, to work out the details of a presidential visit when the terrible news of President Kennedy's assassination reached it. The plane turned around, the visit of course never happened, and Okinawa remained a U.S. colony until 1972. And even today, despite its return to Japanese sovereignty, the prefecture remains a festering sorepoint in the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Let me cite one more case where personal familiarity matters in the conduct of foreign affairs. After Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson was faced with an excruciating decision on what to do about Vietnam. The pro-US government in Saigon was clearly losing the civil war. The question was whether to put U.S. combat boots on the ground to save the South Vietnamese government. Johnson set up a task force of some 40 members of the National Security Council, State and Defense Departments. Of the 40, only one relatively junior staffer had ever been to Vietnam. That young FSO, Paul Kattenburg, who had learned the Vietnamese language and culture on the ground in that country, spoke up at a meeting in January 1964. He argued that this was not a proxy war instigated by Communist China, as Rusk believed, but rather a continuation of the Vietnamese drive to oust the French and other western imperial powers – a desire for national independence. After that meeting, the task force leader, William Bundy, dismissed Kattenberg from the task force, telling him that his sort of pessimism was not needed in these deliberations. You know the rest. President Johnson, who had very little personal experience or knowledge of foreign affairs, allowed himself to be persuaded by Rusk, MacNamara and General Westmoreland (none of whom knew anything about Vietnam) to escalate the war, leading to more than 500,000 American troops on the ground, with 38,000 dead and many more wounded. We are still paying a terrible price for our ignorance.

Let me conclude by offering a few thoughts on the U.S.-Japan relationship today, and how personal relationships matter more than ever. I have come to these views after thinking about the 1930's and our almost total ignorance of each other.

The era when just a few powerful leaders on each side could control the relationship has gone forever. Today, the situation is reversed: everyone can play in this game, and no one leader or faction can dictate policy choices. In the U.S., traditional policy-makers in the White House and State Department must share influence with the Pentagon, powerful Congressional stakeholders, the K Street lobbyists, the media, big business, big labor and so forth. Everyone has a voice and no one element can dictate any particular outcome.

But let's think back to the 1980's. We can recall a US-Japan relationship that was hi-jacked by a small club of intellectuals and media types who called themselves "revisionists." Can you remember Chalmers Johnson, Karel Van Wolferen, James Fallows, Pat Choate and Clyde Prestowitz, for example? Fallows argued that the U.S. needed to "contain" Japan in the same way that it had contained the Soviet Union. Prestowitz, funded by southern textile interests, contended that Japan was out to destroy the U.S. semi-conductor industry. These folks were able to dominate the conversation about Japan and make the case that Japan was the implacable enemy of the U.S. Walter Mondale, you may recall, warned in his 1984 presidential campaign that American workers would be sweeping up around Japanese computers. George Friedman and Meredith Lebard wrote the book, *The Coming War with Japan (1991)* even though neither writer had visited Japan until they went there on a tour to promote sale of their book. In 1990, 68% of Americans viewed the economic threat from Japan to be greater than the military threat from the Soviet Union.

Even though these writers have been proven to be totally wrong, I would argue that that the relationship between Japan and the U.S. is still potentially fragile and subject to manipulation by special interest groups. And the only way to confront such erroneous views and mood swings is to create and maintain a strong network of leaders from both countries who have had first-hand experience with their counterparts, who have made personal friends and shared views across the Pacific and who can stand up to the mood swings and false images created by special interest groups.

And that is why the U.S.-Japan Foundation has launched a young leaders program designed to create such a network. (Forgive me for this brief commercial message!) Founded 14 years ago, the U.S.-Japan Leadership Program brings together 20 young leaders (ages 28-42) each country for two week-long conferences over two summers, once in Seattle and the other in Kyoto and Tokyo. They are drawn from all professions and fields, including a female Japanese race car driver and an American Jesuit priest.

These conferences encourage the free exchange of views, serious discussions on current issues, and bonding for the long run. Following these conferences, the alumni or "Fellows" of the Program are encouraged to stay in touch through a dedicated website, newsletters, and frequent reunions. So far, 307 leaders have participated. And many of these young leaders are clearly moving into positions of growing power in their respective fields. The hope and the intent is that, if our relationship is ever again threatened by the sort of nonsense that we saw in the 1980's, there will be a countervailing and corrective force on both sides of the Pacific to bring reason and sanity to the discussion.

This brings me back to my first point about Nishimiya San. It was his willingness to make friends here, to learn at firsthand about American life, to communicate and share views and to win the respect of so many of us: these are the qualities that are at the heart of successful diplomacy and a better world. We need to hope that his kind of outreach will be present in the talks tomorrow between President Obama and President Xi. We need leaders in every community in the U.S. and Japan who have had direct, personal interaction with their counterparts across the ocean. And I personally hope that the recipient of the newly established Nishimiya Scholarship will learn from his experience and be inspired by his example.

END