

Preface for Finlay Lewis Book

I am honored that the Japan Broadcast Publishing Co. has asked Finlay Lewis to update his biography for publication in Japan. My life is now literally an "open book."

When President Clinton asked me to serve as the United States Ambassador to Japan, I was delighted to accept. I have always believed in public service; I love the challenges and opportunities that public life has presented to me. I have been active in politics since I was a college student privileged to know Hubert Humphrey, a young mayor of Minneapolis who at that time was campaigning for the United States Senate.

Like Humphrey, I have always believed that democratic politics and good government can make a positive difference in people's lives. Throughout my public career, I have tried to affirm the values of human dignity and equal opportunity, of freedom and fairness. I have tried to stand up for, and stand alongside, the disadvantaged and vulnerable in society. I am inspired by the faith that, working together, free people have the capacity and the power to make this world a better place in which to live.

As a young Senator, I was involved in my nation's civil rights movement — the struggle to bring America's promise of freedom and opportunity to all of our citizens. As Vice President, our Administration sought to harness the influence and power of America to the cause of human rights worldwide. When I was running for President in 1984, I warned that we needed to get our economic house in order and our federal deficit down in order to protect the future livelihood of America's working men and women.

These values of democratic freedom and economic opportunity are as compelling today as they have ever been. Our challenge is to adapt them to changing circumstances. I believe our success in this task will depend very much on the quality of the relationship between Japan and the United States.

Along with the rest of the world, both of our nations are changing. Bill Clinton was elected President in 1992 on a promise to the American people about meeting the challenge of change. With his leadership, we have begun to reduce our

federal deficit, invest more in our workers, reform our health care system and show greater attention to the Asia-Pacific as a region crucial to America's future.

The Japanese people, too, are trying to meet the challenge of change. With the leadership of Prime Minister Hosokawa, political reform legislation was passed in early 1994. This promises to modernize Japan's political structure to make it more accountable and more responsive to the public. There is also growing public support in Japan for economic reform — including deregulation, market opening and progress toward a more consumer-oriented society with lower prices and higher living standards.

In the midst of all these changes, it is sometimes hard to see the basic principles that still provide a firm anchor for U.S.-Japan relations. But even in such times, we must continue to recognize the enduring strength of our shared interests and the mutual benefits of our cooperation. The relationship between our two nations continues to be a great international success story.

My job as Ambassador is to represent the American people in advancing our relations with Japan. I came to Japan with three purposes in mind: to build on the many successes and strengths of our partnership in security and political cooperation; to resolve our economic tensions within the context of our shared interests in a more open and growing world economy; and always to conduct our affairs with the dignity, mutual respect and statesmanship befitting two great nations.

- Our security partnership and political cooperation could hardly be better than it already is. This is of crucial importance because, even though the Cold War is over, the world remains a complicated and dangerous place. All three major wars in my lifetime were fought in this region. But our alliance with Japan is the foundation of peace and stability throughout the Asia-Pacific region. One of the great virtues of this alliance has always been its adaptability. The fact that it is as relevant today as it was in the midst of the Cold War shows the deep interdependence of American and Japanese national interests.

Japan and the United States are political partners on issues which literally span the globe. In Asia, we work together to ensure stability on the Korean peninsula, to support economic and political reform in China and to promote

further development of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The United States and Japan have a shared interest in strengthening multilateral institutions, and my country strongly supports a permanent seat for Japan on the United Nations Security Council. Our two nations also cooperate on a full range of "global issues" such as environmental protection, health, science and aid to developing countries. These programs are improving the living conditions — and literally saving the lives — of people around the world.

- Economics is obviously an area where our two nations have some tensions. But it is important to situate these differences within the larger context of our shared economic interests. Together, our two economies account for almost 40 percent of global output. Our economic interdependence is deep and fundamental. We have a common stake in a free and open world trading system.

As the world's second largest economy, however, Japan cannot continue to accumulate massive trade imbalances. For a half century, open markets in the United States have been an engine for global growth. Japan has been among the greatest beneficiaries; now it is time for Japan to accept its own responsibilities for international economic leadership. A growing world economy depends on a growing Japanese economy; an open world trading system depends on a Japan whose own markets are open; and a more open, growing Japanese economy is good for the people of Japan, too.

The United States does not want economic differences to spill over into the other areas of our bilateral relationship with Japan. Over the years, we have had trade disputes with Canada, France, Britain, South Korea and many other nations. Yet, in no instance have these disputes ruptured our broader relationship with these countries. There is no reason why it should be any different with Japan.

- Through it all, we must treat each other with dignity and mutual respect. This is why it is important to expand and strengthen the human connections between our two countries.

Helping to build goodwill and mutual understanding is the fact that more than three and a half million Japanese travel to America each year — almost 50,000 of them students. Unfortunately, we do not have a comparable number of Americans visiting Japan. But we are working to increase the number of young

Americans who come to Japan to study — because I believe the real future of U.S.-Japan relations rests with our young people.

Japan and the United States are two independent and sovereign nations. We each have our own national interests, and these will sometimes diverge. In itself, this is no cause for alarm. What we need is leadership in both countries that can help to strengthen our many areas of cooperation and to work through our differences.

Unfortunately, one of the easiest things to do in public life is to forget where you are going. You get intensely involved in many narrow issues and specific problems. Each one is important and deserves proper attention. But there is a risk of losing sight of the bigger picture. In my role as Ambassador, I want to keep the important things in mind. I want to make sure that we do not allow little things to pull us apart, because we have everything to gain from working together as partners.

I am a grandfather now. In a very real sense, I took this job for the sake of my grandchildren — because how Japan and the United States get along will say a lot about what the world is going to be like in the years ahead. If we handle our affairs right, if we build on the strengths and potential of our partnership, then the chances for peace, for prosperity, for more democracy, for a better environment, for people around the world — all of these will improve. This is the most important diplomatic relationship we have on earth, and we must make it work.

Ambassador Walter F. Mondale
June 1994



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Copyright in the Walter F. Mondale Papers belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org