

MEMORIAL  
SUNAO SONODA  
March 25, 1996

YOU MAY THINK IT IS UNUSUAL THAT I WOULD BE HERE TONIGHT TO HONOR A JAPANESE PUBLIC OFFICIAL TWELVE YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH. WELL, THERE IS AN EXPLANATION. WHEN I WAS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, I CAME TO KNOW SUNAO SONODA VERY WELL; IN FACT, WE BECAME FRIENDS.

AS YOU KNOW, MR. SONODA SERVED UNDER THREE PRIME MINISTERS AS FOREIGN MINISTER AND HE ALSO SERVED AS CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY. WHENEVER HE CAME TO WASHINGTON WE WOULD HAVE A CONVERSATION. AND THEN WE MET IN GENEVA AT THE CONFERENCE DEALING WITH THE TRAGEDY OF THE SO-CALLED BOAT PEOPLE BEING PUSHED OUT TO SEA BY THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT.

WE ALSO MET IN TOKYO. THE LAST TIME I MET HIM WAS WHEN I WAS VISITING TOKYO SHORTLY AFTER I HAD RETURNED TO PRIVATE LIFE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS HIS LAST DAY IN OFFICE, AND I BELIEVE HE WAS NOT FEELING WELL, HE NEVERTHELESS INVITED ME TO COME TO SEE HIM AND WAS VERY GENEROUS WITH HIS TIME.

WHEN I MET HIROYUKI SONODA, I ASKED HIM IF HE WAS SUNAO'S SON. I TOLD HIM THAT I REMEMBERED HIS FATHER FOR THE FASCINATING WATCH HE WORE WHICH HAD TWO WATCH FACES ON IT: ONE WAS SET FOR TOKYO TIME, THE OTHER FOR WASHINGTON TIME. MOST OF US HAVE A HARD TIME KEEPING UP WITH ONE TIME ZONE, BUT HE OPERATED IN TWO TIME ZONES AT THE SAME TIME.

OF COURSE, THERE IS ANOTHER CONNECTION OF IMPORTANCE. FOR SOME REASON, MINNESOTA ENJOYS A SPECIAL ADVANTAGE BECAUSE A LARGE SHARE OF AMERICA'S MOST BRILLIANT PEOPLE LIVE THERE. IT WAS ONLY NATURAL, THEREFORE, THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AWARDED FOREIGN MINISTER SONODA ITS DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AWARD FOR HIS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

IT IS NICE TO KNOW THAT THE SONODA FAMILY IS STILL REPRESENTED IN THE DIET. I AM PLEASED TO CALL HIROYUKI MY FRIEND. I AM ALSO PLEASED THAT SUNAO'S

WIFE CAN BE HERE WITH US TODAY SO THAT WE CAN TELL HER PERSONALLY HOW MUCH WE ENJOYED AND ADMIRERD HER HUSBAND.

I WAS FASCINATED BY AN ARTICLE THAT SUNAO SONODA WROTE ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN WORLD WAR II. HE WROTE THAT HE WAS SCHEDULED TO FLY A SUICIDE MISSION AS A KAMIKAZE PILOT ON THE DAY THAT THE WAR ENDED. HAD HE TAKEN THAT FLIGHT, HIS GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS TO JAPAN AND TO WORLD PEACE COULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED. WE ARE REMINDED AGAIN OF THE COSTS OF WAR AND THE BENEFITS OF PEACE EXEMPLIFIED BY HIS LIFE.

SUNAO SONODA HELD A GREAT MANY OTHER POSITIONS IN HIS LIFE, WHICH HE OBTAINED THROUGH HIS HARD WORK AND POLITICAL SAVVY. WITH NEITHER FAMILY FORTUNE NOR A COLLEGE EDUCATION, HE CAME TO HAVE A GREAT IMPACT ON JAPAN'S POLICIES AT A KEY JUNCTURE IN YOUR NATION'S HISTORY.

I WANT TO EXPRESS THE APPRECIATION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR ALL THAT HE DID TO STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. IT IS WITH FOND APPRECIATION THAT WE AGAIN REMEMBER HIS CONTRIBUTION TO ALL OF OUR LIVES.



# 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](http://www.mnhs.org)