

Akira Watanabe
Jl. Sumatera No. 93
Surabaya, INDONESIA

May 7, 1993

Dear Governor,

While my heart still remains in Oregon, I am already completing my tenure here in Indonesia, a great country of culture, tradition, history along with dynamism for modernization and development-----leader of ASEAN countries. Surprizingly well this country is maintaining stability in today's world where disturbances are seen as almost universal phenomena elsewhere.

You don't know, my dear Governor, how much pleasure and enjoyment and encouragement I had had in receiving your letter of true friendship.

As of May 20th the Government of Japan would issue an order home for me to be reassigned to an even more challenging task. I will once return to Tokyo toward the end of June so that my wife and myself would be able to be present in Their Majesties' audience on the 14th July for my appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Libya.

You might well remember, Governor, that I, preceding Portland assignment, was Japan's Chargé d'Affaires in war-torn Afghanistan (because Japan did not recognize Communist Regime in Kabul, I was not nominally Ambassador but Chargé d'Affaires, while Afghans maintained their Ambassador in Tokyo) and conducted the toughest ever negotiations with then Soviet Ambassador Tabie'ef (later he became Vice-Premier of Russian Republic) and persuaded the Ambassador and eventually Gorbachev to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan! Those experiences and valuable lessons I learned there, under the sky where rockets were flying overhead, would be made the most. And I am now determined to wage all my efforts in making Colonel Qaddafi Japan's real friend.

In June in Tokyo, a daughter of my long-time (40 years) friend Mr. Hisashi Owada is going to marry to the Crown Prince-----it was only like yesterday that we celebrated Masako's birth with lot of noise! When I was assigned to the Japan's Embassy in the Hague in August, 1960, Mr. Owada happened to go on an official trip to the Netherlands. We both were ambitious young men working in the most prestigious Treaties Bureau in the Japanese Foreign Ministry. We adjusted our itineraries so that to fly together just started KLM polar route to Europe by propellar plane-----twice as long time to go to Europe as by jets today.

My address after July 1 until late August would be:

Room No. 506 (TAISHI-SHITSU)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (GAIMUSHO)
2-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo, J A P A N 100

I am then scheduled to proceed to my new post in Tripoli.

Our fondest regards to Mrs. Attyeh and you

Yours sincerely,



Akira Watanabe

This Week

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Akira Watanabe

Career consulate strengthens
Oregon-Japan cultural ties

By Sam Weller

Bruce Williams

Old abandoned piano leaves
a sour note with landlord

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Chocolate chip cookies reminiscent
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Fishing with McQ

Lure of solitude stirs up
the little voice within

Akira Watanabe

Building a bridge of understanding

By Sam Weller

At first, the small device on the table before Akira Watanabe, Portland's Japanese Consul-General, looks like a well-used pocket calculator. And it is indeed one of the tools of Watanabe's trade: a microchip-driven English/Japanese translator. With the dexterity of a concert pianist, the diplomat sands his fingers flying across the keys, entering in an English word and watching the Japanese translation appear on the screen in *kanji*, the maddeningly complex alphabet Japan "borrowed" from China centuries ago.

"You see?" says Watanabe, 59. "Communication is not hard. It is *understanding* that is difficult."

For Akira Watanabe, communication and understanding have been the cornerstones of a diplomatic career spanning 36 years and four continents. After postings in Afghanistan (during the recent Russian-Afghan war), Geneva, Cairo, Amsterdam, San Francisco and Iraq, Portland must seem boring indeed.

After all, there are no warplanes and rockets shrieking overhead, no small-arms fire chattering a few blocks away, no bodyguards or armored limousines. And it's been ages since anyone saw tanks and armored personnel carriers rumbling through our downtown core. But Watanabe experienced all this and more firsthand during the first Iraq-Kuwait crisis back in the mid-'60s.

"Kuwait had just declared its independence from Britain," Watanabe remembers. "Iraq wanted to make Kuwait a province, but Kuwait wanted to be independent. Because Japan had very great oil interests there, we immedi-

"Progress is only possible when you can keep friendly relations and constructive dialogue going between countries."
—Akira Watanabe

ately recognized Kuwait's sovereignty. Iraq was furious, and expelled the Japanese ambassador to Baghdad.

One morning Watanabe woke up to a strange noise outside his window. He peered through the curtains to behold a long line of tanks rolling past his house. "For the next year, things were very difficult in Iraq," he remembers. But, he emphasizes, a solution was found through diplomatic and economic channels. Kuwait retained its independence, Iraq received the economic aid it needed, the Japanese ambassador was invited to return and relations between the two countries returned to normal.

Building cultural bridges

After a career that has taken him from Middle Eastern hot spots to the elegant capitols of old Europe, Portland must seem like a very placid place. But as Watanabe explains, the work of a career diplomat is never done.

"In Baghdad or Kabul (Afghanistan), my challenge was to change unfriendly people to friendly people," he says. "Here, Americans and Japanese are already good friends. That does not mean no problems exist between our countries — there is very much of friction in business and in cultural relations, and we must always be attentive to those situations. My task here is to improve a relationship that is already strong and beneficial to both Portland and Japan."

Watanabe is 14th in a line of Japanese consul-general in Portland dating back to 1908. A consulate is like a field outpost for a country's embassy, which is the home office of an ambassador and has near-sacred status, the equivalent of foreign territory on American soil.

From his 24th-floor office in the First Interstate Tower downtown, with its sweeping views over Portland's autumn-quilted West Hills, the pewter glint of the Willamette and the frosted crags of Mount Hood and Mount St. Helens, Watanabe acts as the official representative of Japan's government for Oregon, southern Idaho and Wyoming.

The consul-general's daily duties vary wide-

ly. He receives official delegations from Japanese business, political and educational leaders. He attends special events, like the recent German Reunification party for which he was forced to dust off his rusty German (Watanabe speaks English, German, Dutch, Arabic, Russian, French and Latin, in addition to his native Japanese). He presides over dedications, ground-breaking ceremonies, plant openings. He advises visiting dignitaries about how and where to do business in Oregon. He provides help to Japanese nationals living in his jurisdiction. The list goes on and on — and so does Watanabe.

"Just once I'd like to have a completely free weekend," he says wistfully, "instead of five events on Saturday and four on Sunday."

The consul-generalship is hardly all pomp and ceremony, however. Tragedy can strike in Portland as easily as on the streets of Baghdad, as Watanabe discovered this summer, when a young Japanese woman and her two young children were found murdered in Beaverton. Her husband, a Japanese national employed at a Sunset Corridor high-tech firm, was arrested and charged with the crime.

As the local representative of the Japanese government, Watanabe has stayed closely involved with the case, a sad duty he has upheld



"Of all the places I have visited," Watanabe said, "I feel very fortunate to be assigned to Portland."

a main component of Watanabe's job while stationed in Kabul from 1985-'87, but one requiring mature judgment and sensitivity.

This is especially true at a time when America's dominance in the world marketplace is shrinking, while Japan's is on the rise. Many American leaders prefer Japan-bashing to constructive leadership as a solution to America's competitive shortcomings. Resentment of Japanese investment and overall economic prowess is on the increase nationally, a fact that only complicates life for Japan's diplomatic corps.

Oregon's open arms

Although some anti-Japanese sentiment exists in Oregon, Watanabe says, it is far from widespread. As he told the *Business Journal* last year, "If we were not welcome (in Oregon), none of us would be here."

That welcoming attitude, as everyone

1984 as a joint venture between American and Japanese investors.

"There are now about 100 Japanese companies doing business in Oregon," Watanabe says. "I would venture to say that within two years, that number will double."

What do Japanese companies like about Portland? The famous Japanese television series "From Oregon With Love" helped, as did Delta Airlines' decision to offer daily flights from Portland International Airport to Japan. Portland is the closest major port to Japan. Land here is incredibly cheap by Tokyo standards. Our workforce is flexible and well-educated; water is clean and abundant; the Northwest's hydropower resources ensure a cheap and reliable source of electricity, an important consideration for high-tech firms. And Oregon's public and private-sector leaders, recognizing the importance of close connections with their Pacific Rim trading partners, have been very effective in offering incentives to Japanese investment.

"Vic Atiyeh-san was instrumental in laying the groundwork," says Watanabe. "His trade missions to Japan were instrumental in bringing investment to Oregon. He recognized the coming Age of the Pacific. Trade across the Pacific has been greater than trade across the Atlantic for several years now. It's a very natural progression, a historical progression that began with the development of civilization in the Middle East thousands of years ago."

Cooperation, not confrontation

Such revolutionary change can hardly be accomplished without some friction, especially between two economic giants like the United States and Japan. But as long as Watanabe is in office in Portland, change will occur in a civilized manner. "I believe in cooperation, not confrontation," he says. "Progress is only possible when you can keep friendly relations and constructive dialogue going between countries. In Japan, we know that we must do everything we can to keep the channels of communication open. We are so dependent on good international relations, because we have no natural resources of our own."

It is a philosophy that has served Watanabe well during his five decades in the diplomatic service. He entered Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs after graduating from the Tohoku University Law Department in 1954. Soon after, he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study law at the University of Michigan.

Watanabe's first diplomatic posting was as assistant attaché to the Embassy of Japan in The Hague, Netherlands. In 1963 he was transferred to Baghdad, where he experienced firsthand just how exciting the field of international diplomacy could become. He served in Japan's Permanent Delegation to the United Nations in Europe in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1969 to 1971, then was transferred to Japan's Ministry for Foreign Affairs in San Francisco, a posting he says he thoroughly enjoyed.

Watanabe's expertise in American relations led to his appointment to the task force organizing the first postwar visit to the United States of the Emperor and Empress of Japan in 1976. Duty in Tokyo, Atlanta and Kabul followed, before he finally arrived in Portland in December 1987.

Now Watanabe shares a home in Southwest Portland with his wife, Yoshimi, who has accompanied him everywhere his duties have taken him. The couple have a daughter, currently enrolled in law school at Lewis and Clark College, and a son studying at university in Tokyo.

After three years in the Consul-General's office, Watanabe's Portland assignment is already one of the longest of his career. "I have had no indication that I will be replaced here soon," he says. "I hope they are getting good reports of me in Tokyo, from my countrymen and from my American friends. I have served all over the United States and all over the world. Of all the places I have been ... well, I feel very fortunate to be assigned to Portland."



Japan's former Prime Minister Nakasone visited with Watanabe during a September 1990 speaking engagement at Lewis & Clark College.

with the same grave efficiency that has won him both high honor in diplomatic circles and the friendship of world leaders like Anwar Sadat, the late president of Egypt, and Jimmy Carter.

In fact, when Watanabe arrived in Oregon in 1987, he carried a letter of introduction from the former president to Governor Neil Goldschmidt, who had been Carter's Secretary of Transportation. "Mr. Akira Watanabe," wrote Carter, "...was a good friend to us in Georgia (where he had been instrumental in establishing Japan's first southeastern U.S. consulate in 1974). ...He visited in my home several times, accompanying Japanese dignitaries, and he was always generous with his time and efforts on behalf of me and my staff. I hope that you will soon have an opportunity to meet him, and I know that you and the people of Oregon will find a good friend in Mr. Watanabe."

At their first meeting, Watanabe told Goldschmidt that Japan and Oregon were already friends, that the people of Oregon had always been friendly and welcoming, "...especially of Japanese manufacturing and investment."

He was faced, then, with the delicate task of improving that relationship for both countries. Not as difficult a task as trying to persuade the Russians to leave Afghanistan (which was

known, has encouraged considerable investment in Oregon by Japanese firms in the past decade. Since his arrival in Portland in December 1987, helping companies make such investments has been an important part of Watanabe's job. When a Japanese company asks him about business conditions in Oregon, Watanabe replies, "For their operations, the general environment is favorable."

If that sounds a bit reserved, bear in mind that Watanabe is the representative of Japan's government, not Oregon's. He has Japanese interests at heart, naturally, and would certainly speak his mind if investing in the Portland area wasn't a good idea for his countrymen.

Since 1985, Japanese industrial giants like Epson, Fujitsu, NEC, Kyocera and Kotobuki Electronics have invested more than \$400 million in the Portland area. Their factories make everything from VCRs to printer ribbons to personal computers to halogen headlights. They employ more than 2,000 Oregonians.

Other Japanese firms have stakes in local, American-owned companies. Others have sunk millions into local real estate. The Banj. Franklin Building in southeast Portland was recently purchased by a Japanese real estate firm; the silver Pacwest Center was built in

Edmund Keene photo

Bar Menzies photo

VICTOR ATIYEH
GOVERNOR
1979-1987



INTERNATIONAL
CONSULTANT & TRADE

May 11, 1992

Consul General Akira Watanabe
Konsulat Jenderal Jepang
Jalan Sumatera No. 93
Surabay, Indonesia

Dear Consul General Watanabe,

It was so good to hear from you and to receive a copy of your most honored dinner with Empereor and Empress Akihito. What an incredible thrill it must have been for you to be with them, especially on an informal basis.

I also thoroughly enjoyed to have received the highlights of your amazing foreign service. Unquestionable you are held in very high esteem by the Imperial household and the foreign service.

My very best to you and Mrs. Watanabe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Atiyeh", written over the word "Sincerely".

Victor Atiyeh

May 12, 1993

The Honorable Victor Attyeh
Fax: 00-1-503-224-3209

Dear Governor,

With reference to my letter dated May 7th, 1993 to you, I take the pleasure to remind you specially that the government of Japan maintains its policy to keep strictly confidential of personnel matters until it is officially announced. In this connection, I have full trust in you, Governor, that you observe this tradition well and therefore not tell about my coming new appointment to any body including our Consul-General.

The only reason I wrote to you in advance was my friendship and the significance Japanese Government places in its Consulate in Portland, by assigning an ambassador-class Consul-General there.

Hoping you fully understand friendly gesture of mine.

Respectfully yours



Akira Watanabe
Fax: 62-31-51587
Indonesia ← Surabaya

VICTOR ATIYEH
GOVERNOR
1979-1987



INTERNATIONAL
CONSULTANT & TRADE

May 12, 1993

Consul General Akira Watanabe
Jl. Sumatera No. 93
Surabaya, INDONESIA

Dear Consul General Watanabe,

It was with a great deal of excitement and joy that we received the news of your receiving the honored position as an Ambassador for your country. That is clearly a recognition of your skilled and trusted service to Japan over these many years.

All that you have learned will be put to the severest of tests in Libya. Colonel Qaddafi is generally considered a "villain" by the world community and your efforts to have him change his ways and his image will be no small task. However, knowing of your tact and persuasiveness and determination I have confidence you will succeed. Certainly the story you tell of your outstanding service in Afghanistan should be a blueprint for things to come in Libya.

I am proud to have had the opportunity to establish a warm friendship with you. This pride is shared by Oregonians who have the knowledge that part of your distinguished career was served in our state.

Mrs. Atiyeh and I send our congratulations and very best wishes to you and Mrs. Watanabe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Atiyeh", written over a horizontal line.

Victor Atiyeh

P.S. You can be assured that your good news will be kept in strict confidence. We will anxiously await the official public announcement.

Akira Watanabe
Jl. Sumatera No. 93
Surabaya, INDONESIA

July 4, 1993

JUL 12 1993
Governor Attyeb

Dear Governor,

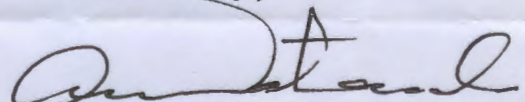
We are celebrating the 217th Anniversary of U.S. independence in the residence of American Consul-General in Surabaya.

Thank you indeed for your thoughtfull and warm words congratulating my new appointment. The procedure involved in this case under the existing international laws as well as customs, is taking little more time as was originally Japanese Government planned. It may be understandable because its importance. The so called "agrément" to this appointmenht by Col. Qaddafi is essential for officialization by the Japanese Government. However, the "agrément" is shortly expected to be conveyed to Tokyo from Tripoli in view of my pro-Arab stance throughout my carreer. Anyway, you are to be imformed as soon as it is officialized.

President Clinton has just appointed former Vice-President Walter Mondale as U.S. Ambassador to Japan and the Japanese Government is going to give its "agrément" for the appointment. I am profoundly impressed by the significance U.S. places in its Japan policy which is manifested by this decision of the President. Clinton's decision.

Wishing to see you wherever it may be,

Sincerely,


Akira Watanabe