

THE HISTORY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY OF R.I. LINDA L. ANDREONI

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to explore whether the establishment of the Japan-America Society of R.I. (JASRI) continues to fulfill its mission to strengthen American-Japanese relations and international goodwill. The birth of the JASRI is based, in part, on the political transformation that took place in Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century. This paper looks at the connection between historical events and how economic reforms influenced East-West relations on an economic, social, and cultural level. I have also included relevant information provided by board members of the JASRI and comments by a Japanese affiliate living in Shimoda, Japan.

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The historical events which took place between Japan and the United States of America in the mid-nineteenth century provide a relevant backdrop to the current state-of-affairs between Shimoda, Japan and Newport, Rhode Island. The environment, which led to this association, is both interesting and significant as to why we are where we are today. In addition to developing strong, personal friendships among the citizens, the union has also influenced both cities socially, economically and culturally. This report seeks to examine the reasons behind the creation of this relationship based, in part, on the historical events leading up to present day East-West contacts embodied by this group. The effort put forth to form this society, along with the commitment to promote it, will prove to be the “access road” into the topic at hand.

To fully understand how this society evolved, it is necessary to briefly review a major period in Japanese history known as the Edo Period. By mirroring the present with the past, we can draw conclusions concerning future progress. It should also be noted that the original name of this society was Black Ships Festival (BSF) and later changed to Japan-America Society and Black Ships Festival of Rhode Island, Inc. (JASRI); therefore, these two acronyms will be used interchangeably throughout the report to represent the specific time period.

THE EDO PERIOD (1603-1867)

To many Americans, the Edo Period is known as the era in history in which the Shogunate ruled Japan. According to “Japanese History: Edo Period” this era began in 1598 upon the death of Hideyoshi. His successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu, became the absolute ruler of Japan. In 1600, he successfully defeated the Hideyori loyalists and other Western rivals in the battle of Sekigahara and was later appointed Shogun by the emperor and established his government in “Edo” Tokyo. By 1633 Shogun Iemitsu forbade traveling aboard and almost completely isolated Japan in 1639 by reducing the contacts to the outside world to very limited trade through the Dutch enclave at Nagasaki.

The Dutch monopoly of trade with Japan is so well known that Holland’s contact through the little island of Deshima is often only mentioned in passing. The agreement that resulted permitted one vessel yearly to enter Nagasaki (Teaze, 1953). During this era, all foreign books were banned. Despite the isolation, domestic trade and agricultural production continued to improve. The indigenous population was aware of crop growing limitations and observed routine food rations. The benefits of isolation, as the United States is well aware, provided the time needed to become self-sufficient and unified. During peacetime, samurais educated themselves in the areas of martial arts, literature, and philosophy. The most important philosophy of Tokugawa Japan was Neo-Confucianism which stressed the importance of morals, education, and hierarchical order in the government and society.

By 1720, the ban on Western literature was cancelled and several new teachings entered Japan from China and Europe. Today the neologism “globalization” is used to explain external connections to foreign nations. The penetration of new ideas, along with a steady decline in government revenue and wealth among the populace, led the government of Japan to increase taxes. Natural disasters and famine led to riots and the

social hierarchy began to experience the strength of the merchant class. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, external pressure to develop trade with Russia and other European nations eventually led to the end of isolation and the beginning of capitalism in the Meiji Restoration.

COMMODORE MATTHEW CALBRAITH PERRY

Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794-1858) was born to a famous Newport family. His father, Christopher Raymond Perry, was a merchant marine at the time of his birth and later became a Captain in the United States Navy. The Perry family dates back to 1370 when they lived in Devon County, England. His mother, Sarah Alexander, a well-educated woman of Scotch-Irish lineage had a high regard for duty, culture, and religion. His parents met on board a merchant vessel crossing the Atlantic and later married in October 1784. They settled on the Perry homestead, a farm in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. During one of their periodic stays in Newport, Matthew Calbraith Perry, their fourth of eight children, was born (Teaze, 1953).

According to Captain Jackson's report, Perry's early years were spent between Newport, the Perry farm, and family home at Tower Hill also in South Kingstown. Newport was an active port for foreign shipments, both exports and imports; and although difficult to believe, its foreign trade was once greater than New York in 1770. Perry began his naval career obtaining a midshipman's commission in the Navy on January 18, 1809. He was to report to the Naval Station in New York City for training on March 16, 1809 (Teaze, 1953).

On October 24, 1814 Perry met and married his wife, Jane Slidell, daughter of John Slidell, a well-known merchant of New York, and they had ten children. In 1839, Perry bought an estate in Tarrytown, New York that was referred to as "The Moorings". By 1841, he acquired the courtesy title of "commodore". But Perry's claim to lasting fame stems from his successful expedition to Japan in 1853-1854 (Teaze, 1953).

COMMODORE PERRY'S FIRST EXPEDITION TO JAPAN

As the West advanced into modernization, East Asia was still rejecting entanglements with it. The United States wanted to open trade with Japan for three reasons as stated in Commodore Perry's "Narrative of the Expedition to Japan—an Informative Look:" 1) because Japan's location was ideally situated to restock the coal supply needed for American steamships. Since Hawaii was already a "coaling port" another one was needed in the east; 2) in order to obtain positive assurance that shipwrecked sailors received good medical and physical treatment from Japan and; 3) because Americans had come to realize the importance of intercontinental trade and wanted to increase it with other countries including Japan.

Interestingly enough, Commodore Perry's memoirs indicate a salient reason for opening trade was the acquisition of California from Mexico since, geographically, it offered easier access to commercial trading in the Pacific. It was believed that California provided the "shortest route between Eastern Asia and Western Europe... [and was] becom[ing] a highway for the world" (Hawks, 1857, p. 95).

Due to the United States' interest in establishing relations with Japan, plans for an expedition were set in 1851. Commodore Perry was assigned to command the fleet in May 1852. His own accounts indicate how eager he was to trade with the East. After reading all that he could about the Japanese, he understood the exclusive system of Japan was not the result of any "national idiosyncrasy, but was caused by peculiar circumstances, long since passed, and was, in fact, in direct opposition to what history proved to be the natural temperament and disposition of the Japanese people" (Hawks, 1857, p. 96). Perry also noted countries such as England, Portugal and Russia were offensive and arrogant so Japan refused to deal with them. Perry believed Japan did not have such negative views of the United States, therefore he formally proposed to the government in Washington the idea of a peaceful mission to try and open friendly commercial trading with the Japanese. Perry was also wise in that he prohibited his squadron from communicating to any correspondents, hence eliminating interference with Russia, which trailed the United States fleet in the West Pacific (Hawks, 1857).

During a telephone interview with Kathleen S. Connell, former Secretary of State of Rhode Island and former President of Japan-America Society and Black Ships Festival of Rhode Island, Inc. (JASRI), I asked whether she felt Russia might have had an influence on Japan's decision to negotiate with America. She agreed that Russia was "just around the corner" and Commodore Perry's "timing was a definite factor" in the United States' ultimate success. In Captain Jackson's words, "Admiral Putiatin has been dispatched by the Russian

government to Japan...but arrived with his three warships at Nagasaki in August 1853” (Teaze, 1953, IV, 3).

Curley reports that Commodore Perry’s mission to open trade with Japan was encouraged by the United States Navy under the direct order of President Millard Fillmore. Perry was equipped with one of the strongest fleets of that time. Although physical force would be used if necessary, the fleet would at least present an image of strength and power (Curley, 2005). The objective of Perry’s first expedition to Japan in 1853 was outlined in 1852 and re-enforced by a letter from President Fillmore to the Shogun. Japan abandoned their code of exclusiveness in order to obey the universal law of hospitality and accepted the letter dated November 5, 1852. But the government there did so with restrictions. The Japanese interpreters clearly responded to Commodore Perry, “Therefore, as the letter has been received, you can depart” (Hawks, 1857, p. 305). Although Commodore Perry viewed his overtures as well received, Tomoo “Tom” Yamaguchi, a native of Nagasaki, Japan, who is now a resident in Warwick, Rhode Island and an active board member of the Japan-America Society, sounded another note saying, “Commodore Perry used gun diplomacy during this time....This was very unfavorable with the shogunate” (Curley, 2005, p. 9).

In conclusion, Perry was well-read on Japan’s national customs and expressed his sensitivity by sharing in customary greeting courtesies and ceremonious gift exchanges. He was also determined not to leave Japan without securing his intentions on behalf of the United States and furthermore refused to deal with any one other than the Emperor or their Foreign Secretary. He ultimately met with and presented the President’s letter (in English, Dutch and Chinese) to the Prince of Idzu, First Counselor of the Emperor and his assistant, the Prince of Iwami on July 14, 1853 (Teaze, 1953).

COMMODORE PERRY’S SECOND EXPEDITION TO JAPAN

Unbeknown to Commodore Perry, Japan was dealing with the illness and death of Iyeyoshi Tokugawa who died on July 27, 1853. He had been the Shogun since 1837, and many believe the anxiety caused by the sudden and pressing external affairs of the “barbarians” was too much for him. The Japanese attempted to postpone further negotiations, but Commodore Perry realized the urgency to press forward (Teaze, 1953).

In February, 1854, Perry returned to Japan escorted by double the fleet of steam ships and additional manpower for two reasons: first, he thought ships without sails would be more intimidating, and second, they were speedy (Curley, 2005). Upon arrival, he learned that the delegates had prepared a treaty which included virtually all the demands in Fillmore’s letter except—opening trade. Negotiations began in early March.

It is important to note that during negotiations a cluster of intercultural exchanges took place. Perry made certain that when he arrived in port that his fleet included a band to play American music while flying the American flag. Perry emphasized American notions of hospitality included “breaking of bread together” as a sign of friendship. In addition, he introduced certain technical advancements of western science, displaying a telegraph and a model railroad. The Japanese were impressed with these gifts from the West.

The Japanese exchanged gifts of brocades and silks, gold lacquer, porcelain, fans and pipe cases (Teaze, 1953). It was noted in Perry’s memoirs that rare small dogs, believed to be related to the spaniel’s family, were given as gifts to the President.

The Japanese also introduced the Americans to the art of professional wrestling. Kerr reported that Sumo wrestling was first performed for the Emperor of Japan at court banquets in the 8th Century A.D. The warrior class cultivated it and feudal lords maintained their own team of wrestlers. Perry’s memoirs indicated that these men were shaped more like monsters than men due to their massive structure. The brutal performances of these wrestlers created uneasiness among the Americans.

After intense negotiations the Japanese conceded to “opening trade” and signed the Convention of Kanagawa on March 31, 1854. The treaty guaranteed that the Japanese would save shipwrecked Americans, as well as provide food, coal, and water for any American ships that docked in Nagasaki. The same provisions would be available at Shimoda and Hakodate after five years. The United States also received permission to establish a consulate in Shimoda. Thereafter The Honorable Townsend Harris was sent as the first American representative in Japan arriving in 1856. The treaty was ratified during the incumbency of President Pierce and ratifications were exchanged between the two countries on February 21, 1855 (Teaze, 1853).

To gain a stronger perspective on this historic moment, I contacted Mr. Shigeki Shinji via email to share

his thoughts about how Japan viewed Commodore Perry's expedition. Mr. Shinji is the Executive Director of Shimoda Newport Club and lives in Shimoda, Japan. He said Japan had closed their door to foreigners for about 300 years in the Tokugawa Period. Japan was left out of progress in terms of Western technology from A.D. 1600 to 1850's. The young people of Japan looked toward modernization and sensed, without technical advancement, that the future of the Japanese would be compromised. The movement toward modernization was crucial to the growth of Japan and spread nationwide. When Commodore Perry had asked the country to open its borders to foreign intercommerce, the movement was at its peak. National isolation ended due to negotiations with Commodore Perry. Thereafter Shimoda was opened by a commercial treaty which also opened trade with Russia, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands and China. As a result, Japan could join the modern capitalist world. Study and cultural exchange, as well as industrial technology, also became possible and Japan was reborn as a modern state. Japan achieved remarkable development in the modern world. When Commodore Perry concluded the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States of America and the Empire of Japan in 1854—a "modern" Japan emerged (Shinji, 2005). It is important to note that the Japanese government remained open-minded toward learning Western methods and developed positive sentiments toward the U.S. as time went on.

HOW EASTERN CELEBRATIONS BEGAN

Mr. Shinji's email offered his view on how increased trade had affected Japan. He referred to Shimoda as an open port and the stage was set for future trade. He also noted that the first American Consul General, Townsend Harris, was encouraging and influenced the people of the City of Shimoda to think very highly of the treaty negotiators (Shinji, 2005).

On October 1868 in Newport, a monument was presented and unveiled at Touro Park by August Belmont, a relative of Commodore Perry. Mr. Belmont's mother unveiled it, and Mayor Atkinson accepted it in the name of the City of Newport. Touro Park was especially fitting as the land once belonged to an ancestor, and one-time Governor of the Colony of Rhode Island and the Providence Plantations, Benedict Arnold (1615-78) (Teaze, 1953, VI, 4).

In 1908, Japan held a 50th anniversary memorial service in honor of six Perry fleet sailors and three Russian fleet sailors who had died in Shimoda. However, the first festival was held years later and named after the vessels, "black" referring to the paint on the fleet and the black smoke from the steamships.

BLACK SHIPS FESTIVAL IN SHIMODA

The first Black Ships Festival (BSF) was held in 1934 whereby the city of Shimoda set in motion the foundation to celebrate the bilateral friendship established in 1854. According to Mr. Shinji's comments, the purpose of the festival was to shed light on the great achievements of the people, mainly Perry, who participated in the Shimoda "opening" and contributed to world peace and international goodwill. The festival is regarded as very important in that city in Japan.

Japan celebrated the 50th Annual Black Ships Festival, which attracted business, political, and social leaders throughout Japan. Forbes, a journalist for Newport Daily News, noted one of the most inspiring events of the festival was a speech by Toshiro Shimanouchi, Director of the America-Japan Society. Shimanouchi, born in Japan and educated in the U.S., covered the first Black Ships Festival in Shimoda in 1934 for an American-owned newspaper. He recollected that the dignitaries included the American Ambassador and Mrs. Joseph Grew. Mrs. Grew was the grandniece of Commodore Matthew C. Perry. Also in attendance was Adm. Katsuji Debuchi who became Japan's ambassador to the United States in the fateful year 1941. The festival was reported to the world by correspondents, "several wire services and Fox Movietone, and Paramount News" (Forbes, 1989). Shimanouchi expressed the view that despite pledges of friendship, our mutual hopes and dreams were shattered by conflicting interests and war in the 1930s and 1940s and created "frictions because we live in freedom and competition...[but] we must find ways to manage our problems wisely...and harmoniously" (Forbes, 1989).

Mr. Shinji's email pointed out that national rehabilitation after World War II quickly made great strides and that economically Japanese began to thrive. The tourism industry began to develop nationwide, and Shimoda aimed to develop an international hot spring destination. The city of Shimoda focused on the pride

of its citizens as the basic purpose of community building and promoted international goodwill exchanges with Japan and U.S. as partners. The idea of exchange between two cities that would offer international tourist attractions set the foundation for a sister-city cooperation program.

AMERICAN-JAPANESE RELATIONSHIPS ARE STRAINED

There are those who believe that Japan's entrance into World War II was due to pressure from Russia. Others claim that it was due to language barriers that resulted in misinterpretation and confusion. The end ultimately resulted in an irreversible state-of-affairs. Although the war severed the American-Japanese relationship for years, remarkable efforts were put forth by both nations to put the atrocities of war behind them and maintain relatively friendly relations (Connell & Rosenberg, 1995). The festival was temporarily suspended between 1941 and 1946 on account of the war.

But Japan's festival has been held annually ever since. Every May, Japan observes the Kurofune Matsuri (Black Ships Festival) and the United States Navy, based in Yokosuka, plays an integral role in this festival.

HOW WESTERN CELEBRATIONS BEGAN

Mr. David Rosenberg, current JASRI Coordinator of Affairs has been involved with the program since its inception. He located a copy of the "Centennial Commemorating the Opening of Japan in 1853" by Captain J. E. Jackson, SC, USN, Director of Continuing Education at the Naval War College in Newport, RI and prepared by Mr. Stewart J. Teaze. Most Rhode Island natives do not know that Newport celebrated the Commodore's achievements as far back as 1953. During this first event, it was noted that a monument commemorating Perry's first landing in Japan was unveiled on July 14, 1901 in an area known as Perry Park at Kurihama, Kanagawa Prefecture.

According to Mr. Ishii's 1954 report, part of a U.S. Department of State program notes that Shimoda initiated a formal sister-city relationship with Newport, Perry's birthplace, on May 19, 1958. It was concluded between Mayor Wilkinson of Newport and Shimoda officials (Ishii, 1992). Mr. Shinji added that the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, The Hornet, participated in the 1958 festival, and goodwill was at an all time high.

While discussing the events which led to the first festival with Mr. Rosenberg, he noted to me that though the BSF was conceived in 1983, Newport did not conduct formal ceremonies until 1984. The official documents were submitted to the State of Rhode Island and recorded on January 13, 1984 when Patrick G. Kirby (1983-1988) was Newport's mayor. Other mayors (Humphrey J. Donnelly, III, Paul L. Gaines, Robert J. McKenna, David F. Roderick, David S. Gordon, Richard C. Sardella and currently John J. Trifero) have continually supported JASRI/BSF.

BLACK SHIPS FESTIVAL IN NEWPORT

The first Black Ships Festival was held during July 23-25, 1984 in Newport and offered exhibits on Japanese Art for public viewing and a Japanese Tea Ceremony for selected sponsors and hosts at the Cushing Gallery, Newport Art Museum. A reception for sponsors and hosts, and special exhibits of the Perry family scrolls and memorabilia in the collection of the Preservation Society, was held at Chateau Sur Mer. That evening Japanese fireworks along with the Dixieland Jazz Band Concert entertained the public at Fort Adams State Park.

Robert J. McKenna, Newport's former mayor (1988-1993), provided me with insight into the significance brought about with the renewed interest and relationships that resulted from the unification of JASRI. McKenna graduated from Brown University and later joined the United States Army. After fulfilling his military duties, he returned to Rhode Island and taught American History at various institutions including Salve Regina University. Dr. McKenna is also the president of Rhode Island Independent Higher Education Association and chairman of the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority & Rhode Island Student Loan Authority.

Dr. McKenna was convivial while explaining the process that inspired the Black Ships Festival in Newport. In 1983, Mr. Tsumura, a Japanese businessman who dealt in pharmaceuticals, was in Newport having a yacht built. On this visit, he developed an appreciation of the port-city of Newport. He explored the idea of developing economic trade with Newport and thereafter contacted then Mayor Patrick J. Kirby. The mayor suggested a formal meeting and Mr. Tsumura went back to Japan to make the necessary arrangements.

Rather than returning personally, he sent two prominent individuals, Mr. and Mrs. Sohiko Yamada, a highly respected couple who spoke fluent English. McKenna stated that conversations were held in the upstairs dining room at the White Horse Tavern Restaurant in Newport, Rhode Island and that it was soon apparent that both cities wished to expand mutual relations and would begin exchanging ideas (McKenna, 2005).

This led to another question in our interview. What were the reasons Newport became interested in this relationship? Gubernick noted that Newport entered into an economic down-spiral in the 1970s after President Nixon pulled out a fleet of approximately 30 destroyers. By 1978 property values were at an all time low (imagine purchasing 40-acres of oceanfront property in Newport for a mere \$750,000). Newport was no longer the home of the America's Cup Race, and some heirs of the prominent families that owned summer mansions were leaving permanently. Newport had to shift its economic strategy and bring together new and old money. "We needed something to replace the fleet...We decided to market the Bellevue Avenue mystique", recalled Mayor Robert McKenna (Gubernick, 1988, p. 86). Of the one million Japanese tourists who visited the U.S. each year, thousands were already visiting the mansions that were maintained by Newport's Preservation Society which offered guided tours in Japanese (Gubernick, 1988).

Expanding on the sister-city relationship seemed an excellent way of fostering economic growth and cultural awareness while increasing tourism. With so many attributes such as the harbor and port and the rich history, it was time to tap these for economic benefit. McKenna cited these benefits during our interview: "Rhode Island does not produce natural gas, crude oil, electricity or food...but we can create people and we can educate them. We need tourism and culture" (McKenna, 2005).

THOMAS S. ESTES – UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR

Mr. Rosenberg mentioned another individual who was a leader and supporter of JASRI and fastidious about proper protocol--U.S. Ambassador Thomas S. Estes, Ret. He was the last ambassadorial appointee of President Kennedy. After completing his military and diplomatic assignments, including those at the Naval War College, he retired to Newport. In 1983, he went to work for the BSF, and it was he who recommended Kathleen Connell, former Secretary of State, to serve as President of the JASRI in 1991.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

McKenna was delighted to report that the first year the BSF was held in Newport (1984) the Japanese delegates brought along \$100,000 worth of fireworks and displayed them at Fort Adams. He was amazed at their generosity. Rosenberg recalled that the firework display was presented for three consecutive years.

Mr. and Mrs. Yamada shared their cultural exchange ideas about promoting awareness with BSF officials and always provided the necessary items needed to enhance a specific event. Cultural exchanges expanded to include Ikebana (flower arranging) Origami (paper folding), Kendo (martial arts), Japanese kite flying, traditional Japanese performing arts, and sporting events. Other important aspects of culture exchange included language, apparel and cuisine exhibits. I learned that to appreciate Japanese culture one must understand the symbolism associated with it.

With respect to Japanese tea ceremonies, I can recount my visit to Shimoda in 2003. I had the pleasure of experiencing both a Japanese tea ceremony and Ikebana. All women delegates who chose to participate were invited to the private home of Mr. and Mrs. Shigeki Shinji. Although there was a language barrier, the women had no difficulty interpreting Mrs. Shinji's hospitality. She was most gracious, dressed in a beautiful kimono, and directed us to remove our shoes outside the door upon entering. She instructed us to have a seat on pillows that were on the floor in front of a very low table. This is where we learned the art of Ikebana. The floral arrangement was created by using three branches and the position in which these branches were inserted (into a square shaped metal form which sharp quills) symbolized the sky, earth, and people. Thereafter she, along with her assistants, served tea in authentic and traditional Japanese-style.

Origami is an art form whereby you create objects with paper. An origami crane is a long-limbed bird made out of paper that symbolizes peace and good health. During my stay in Japan, the hotels routinely left a multi-colored paper crane on the pillow. Dr. Ritsuko Komaki, a Radiation Oncologist, grew up in Hiroshima in the 1950s and was taught as a child how to make origami cranes. Komaki believes that whenever someone "gets sick, you pray for them to recover; and if you make 1,000 origami birds, they will get better" (p. 79). Komaki lived through the results of the atomic bomb and saw the devastating effects of radiation. She believes

she has found a balance in life that helps raise patients' spirits and she has been instrumental in erecting an origami bird sculpture in the main foyer of her workplace in the U.S. This statue serves as a symbol of good health and also helps patients draw strength from the bird form (Meadows, 2005).

DEVELOPMENTS IN 1989

By 1989, Edward D. DiPrete was Governor of Rhode Island. Serving as Honorable Vice Chairmen then was Mike Mansfield, Former Ambassador of the United States to Japan and Nobuo Matsunaga, Ambassador of Japan to the United States. Mr. Charles B. Healy was serving as BSF President along with Col. William F. Long, USA (Ret.).

Administrative improvements were underway for the BSF. Mr. Rosenberg points out that he came on board when BSF's finances were slim in Rhode Island. But as time progressed opportunities came along. In 1988, David and Nancy Rosenberg were hired to run the BSF. In 1989, a three-year grant was awarded by the National Japan-America Society to assist in developing the organization and, thereafter, Ms. Maureen Mezei was hired as the Executive Director.

SUMO WRESTLING

Mr. Kenneth Kurze, U.S. Consul General, Ret. and active board member since 1989 assisted in this project by providing me with his collection of past Minutes, letters, and newspaper clippings relating to American-Japanese relations. Among his vast collection, I located several articles linked to BSF Minutes and the initial idea of introducing the sport of Sumo Wrestling. Corporate leaders of American and Japanese companies promoted the idea of the Sumo wrestling team (13 members) from the Japan Sumo Federation (Nihon Sumo Renmei), top Japanese amateurs. The Minutes note a few concerns: a lack of funding, the amateur nature of performances, and the level of the general public's interest. The possible advantages included the belief that their presence would serve as a magnet to attract people to come to the festival and persuade sponsors to assist with funding. The overall goal was to expose Americans to another dimension of Japanese culture.

The summary report concluded that the 1989 Black Ships Festival was one of the most successful to date and achieved its cultural objectives. The amateur wrestlers turned out to be fantastic, and the Sumo Tournament was so well received that the Board decided to place additional emphasis on marketing it for 1990.

DEVELOPMENTS IN 1992

By 1992, Bruce Sundlun was Governor of Rhode Island. Serving as Honorable Vice Chairmen of the JASRI/BSF then was Michael Armacost, Ambassador of the United States to Japan and Ryohei Murata, Ambassador of Japan to the United States. Kathleen S. Connell was then serving as JASRI/BSF President and Col. William F. Long, USA (Ret.) was its Vice President.

Among various issues, this year the festival coincided with the arrival of the "Tall Ships". This meant a possible increase of 30,000-40,000 tourists in Newport. This was also the year the Board decided to review the Corporate By-Laws and to bring them in line with the new mission statement of the organization. Lastly, the rather poor economic conditions in Rhode Island and in Japan, coupled with outspoken criticism toward the Japanese, created a challenging environment.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Based on information in Kurze's collection, we know that in 1992 Mr. Yamaguchi approached the board to offer his views on the Society's structure and events regarding BSF. The need to re-define the Society's mission statement, functions and future goals, and change the corporate charter was discussed. Suggestions included changing the Society's name by excluding "Black Ships Festival" which would broaden the scope of activities of Japan-America Society and perhaps encourage additional financial support from Japan.

This idea was circulated among the officers and directors and ultimately, the By-Laws were updated. As outlined in a memorandum entitled, "Organizational Structure to Facilitate Strategic Planning" the following issues were treated. By-Laws Article I, Section 1 noted the new name to be "Japan-America Society and Black Ships Festival of Rhode Island, Inc." (JASRI) It is important to note that the Strategy Committee emphasized that "distinctive and unique element" of the Rhode Island Japan America Society was the Black Ships Festival and that the festival provided a direct link to various groups in Japan. Under "Strategic Considerations", this memo indicates that the funding base of the Society would be continued via corporate and institutional

sectors (i.e., State government, universities and colleges, and foundations). Rosenberg noted today's funding is derived by grants provided from the City of Newport and the R.I. Department of Economic Development. The other half of the funding is derived from privately funded donations (Rosenberg, 2005).

In the JASRI quarterly meeting report, McKenna stresses the need to expand Rhode Island involvement and promote global programs to attract corporate membership. Under "Recommendations" it notes that "while the relationship to a "sister-city" event between Newport and Shimoda...remains important...its principal theme and activities are aimed for the members of the Rhode Island society". Therefore the future viability of the Society rests with expanded involvement by Japanese participants. The Newport Black Ships Festival should be developed as a major national and international event with an effort to maximize Japanese involvement.

The Minutes also point to concerns regarding the economic relationship between both nations as being strained due to "thoughtless rhetoric about trade practices and work ethics from politicians, manufacturers", these were seen to foster adverse affects. Rhetoric often means little, but at times it can announce a critical juncture in the development of social and political movement.

ANTI-JAPANESE SETTLEMENT

The anti-Japanese sentiment even hit home to Toray Plastics America. Toray's U.S. venture began in 1985 when it acquired R.I.'s Trea Industries and built a 213,000-square-foot technologically sophisticated plastics plant in North Kingstown. However, Japanese Takuya Takayama, President of Toray Plastics remained calm. An article from The Providence Sunday Journal entitled, "Despite Resentment, Toray finds success the Japanese way" points out "the once embraced...company has become a target in its own community, scorned for draining tax dollars" (Tooher, 1992, A12). Initially Toray was considered a "hard-won" trophy by the DiPrete administration as the government hoped to encourage foreign investment in a declining Rhode Island economy. Despite critical comments by Japanese about American workers, Takayama (who worked in New York for over 20 years prior to his current position) expressed that he found few differences between Japanese and American employees (Tooher, 1992, A12).

V-J CONTROVERSY

According to the JASRI President's Report in 1992, Bruce Sundlun, Governor of Rhode Island, suggested it was time for Rhode Island to join the rest of the United States and stop referring to the August holiday as, "Victory over Japan or V-J Day" and change the name to Rhode Island Veterans Day to honor ALL veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama and Desert Storm. According to the Minutes, a Bill to this effect was introduced in the Senate with the Governor's support.

Kurze's collection includes an article from The Newport Daily News entitled, "Celebration of V-J Day is inappropriate". Under the section entitled, "Our view", it is suggested that although it is important to "honor victorious American veterans who fought and won this war with special holidays-Veterans Day and Memorial Day...Victory Day [as now celebrated] is not a day for veterans but a day for gloating....[T]he true victory will come when wounds have healed, barriers are removed, and friendship replaces a half century of bitterness" (Our view, 1995).

Understandably, everyone does not share these sentiments. Supporters of the holiday suggest that it should not be forgotten and that America did not start the war. The Fourth of July is still celebrated and the British are not upset about it (Kimura, 1995). It is believed that Rhode Island celebrates V-J Day for several reasons but the most salient may be due to the great losses of Navy servicemen—compared to other states—R.I. had a disproportionately high percentage of veterans, approximately 118,000 veterans (Kimura, 1995). Although Dick Alexander, owner of Vinland Wineries in Middletown, shares the grief he believes that it is time to "shift the emphasis of our August holiday, making it a Day of Reconciliation" (Alexander, 1995, A9).

While writing this report, I became aware of just how unreceptive many older Americans are toward the Japanese to this day. When I discuss this issue with those who have direct dealings with the Japanese, the common consensus is that Japanese people are committed to morals, education and hierarchical order, the same philosophy followed centuries ago. So I often wonder why other ethnic groups are not singled out due to historical wartime conduct. Perhaps it simply stems from being the first nation to attack America.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Due to the economic situation in general—and the bank/credit union problem in Rhode Island

specifically—JASRI had difficulty raising contributions. It was during this period that articles appeared in the Providence Journal regarding public funds being spent on pilgrimages to Shimoda by Newport city officials (Abbott, 1992). According to Mr. Shinji, a large number of “citizens” have visited Shimoda since Mayor McKenna’s visit. This was terribly important to Japan, as they wanted to foster strong relations with the American people. The issue of community building and international goodwill was important now but difficult to attain.

The Japanese government continued to try to strengthen ties even during times of controversy. McKenna mentioned that at one point the gates at Touro Park, which houses a statue of Commodore Perry, were in disrepair. Hearing of this, Japanese officials agreed to contribute the money needed to renovate the gates. It also was noted in the Minutes of February 27, 1992 that Kiyoshi Iketani, Mayor of Shimoda, was committed to restoring the top of one of the four iron fence posts around Perry’s statue.

CONCLUSION

Beyond all the Japanese challenges in 1992, JASRI benefited from the additional tourism generated from the Tall Ships. This, coupled with sound leadership and perseverance, helped strengthen the relationship between nations. It must be noted that neither Rhode Island nor Newport received anywhere the financial funding compared to Newport’s sister-city in Japan. Rosenberg reports that the city of Shimoda has over 20 full-time employees who oversee the success of the annual festival compared to four in Newport. It must also be noted that Rhode Island is not the only city that holds annual Japanese events. There are 26 other cities within the United States that have a similar relationship and belong to the National Japan-America Society. But only Newport holds claim to the man who first brought about direct contact. The effort and creativity to promote this festival has required hard work, dedication, and voluntarism on the part of many who believe in the unity, spirit of goodwill, and world peace and are proud of Newport’s history (Rosenberg, 2005).

While reviewing a “Congratulatory Remarks on the 9th Newport Black Ships Festival” letter written by Masura Ishii, Superintendent of Shimoda Board of Education, I noted that he mentioned that twelve representatives of the city of Shimoda would take part in the 9th festival (1993) and that four municipal junior high students were going to stay with local families as part of the “Home Stay Program”. Representatives of the Mayor of Shimoda believe that this on-going program provides a platform for increasing cultural ties between the two nations, for fostering bilateral trust and friendship, and for rooting in students’ minds the value of world peace.

DEVELOPMENTS IN 1995

By 1995, Lincoln Almond was Governor of Rhode Island. Serving as Honorable Vice Chairmen of JASRI then was Walter Mondale, Ambassador of the United States to Japan and Takakazu Kuriyama, Ambassador of Japan to the United States. Kathleen S. Connell was serving as JASRI President along with Robert J. McKenna as Vice President.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

One question for the Board has been how to deal with language barriers and cultural differences? During the first Black Ships Festival held in Newport in 1984, it was noted in that event’s brochure that an Essay Contest would award two Rhode Island high school students a free trip to Japan by answering the following question, “What I would like to know about Japan?” This contest was funded by the Japan National Tourist Organization and the Japan Foundation for Ship-Building Advancement, in cooperation with the Providence Journal Bulletin.

Thereafter, the idea extended to The Newport Lions Club Youth Exchange Program which recruits host families who accept Japanese students who stay in the Newport area during the Black Ships Festival. These students are selected through a contest, which includes a test of their English proficiency. Kurze’s collection includes a letter dated February 13, 1995 and addressed to Rosenberg in which the Japan Society of Boston was pleased to announce the “1995 Tenth Annual New England Japanese Speech Contest” to be held for Japanese students of all levels. The focus of this contest is on exposing students, who already excel in language skills, to also expand other aspects of Japanese culture (Beattie).

There are also other organizations that endorse and sponsor educational awareness. The Newport Daily News ran a story on June 1, 1995 entitled, “Area Student earns visit to Japan”. The Japan Foundation Center

for Global Partnership (an exchange program founded in 1951 is a private, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to international understanding and world peace). They encourage further understanding of the Japanese culture by funding and arranging an international exchange program geared toward junior high students (Depa, III).

In addition to offering awareness programs directed to youth, full-day forums regarding U.S.-Japan relations, for adults are held periodically at Salve Regina University. Cultural, social and economic differences that strain relations between the two nations are ongoing topics and addressed frequently. The Newport Institute sponsored a conference held at Salve Regina University entitled, "Japan, Inc.: Partner or Adversary?" Masao Miyamoto, MD, an outspoken Japanese social and psychoanalyst who spent over ten years studying psychiatry in the U.S. before returning home, has commented on various problems in Japan. He is the author of "Straitjacket Society: An Insider's Irreverent View of Bureaucratic Japan" a book that offers constructive ideas for solving certain problems there. As Heath Twichell, executive director of The Newport Institute noted, "He's a Japan basher, [and] he's willing to say it's not all the Americans' fault, there are some serious things that need to be fixed in Japan," (Kilmczak, 1995, A5). Miyamoto stresses that many American companies fail to establish and develop business relations in Japan due, in part, to overlooking the importance of Japanese protocol. In Japan, it is more important to develop social and political networks than the product itself (Kilmczak).

In summary the year 1995 addressed the need for awareness and highlighted the call for further exposure and international relations via the JASRI.

PERSONAL VISIT TO JAPAN IN 2003

In Japan, they celebrated the 150th anniversary of Perry's visit with grandeur. As a participant, one of my most memorable events was the day of the formal ceremonies in which Mayor Ishii of Shimoda conducted a wreath laying ceremony at Commodore Perry's Memorial Park. Both Japanese and American servicemen were in attendance in their full dress uniforms. A wonderful display of military planes flew overhead and preceded the ceremony. We drove from the memorial to Perry's Landing Park where a statue of Commodore Perry had been erected. Many people attended this celebration of the "opening of trade" and the birth of modern Japan. Commodore Perry's significance in Japan receives the same attention as Christopher Columbus' significance in America. Students in Japan are brought up to understand who Perry is and what he did for the nation. Ceremonies continued in the form of a lengthy parade that passed through the city of Shimoda. The U.S. delegates were seated in convertible cars and open vans waving at the crowd. The crowd, in turn, reached out their hands to touch us, while waving the American and Japanese flags in unison, and thanking us for sharing in this significant event with them. It was truly a moving and unforgettable experience.

That evening the Japanese held a unique firework display in Shimoda. The performers, who are selected to participate, are required to carry a drum-like wooden apparatus which houses the fireworks. As the fireworks are fired, the residue (consisting of red-hot ambers) tumbles down directly onto the naked chests of the performers. They run around creating various designs until the fire extinguishes itself. It is an honor to be among those who are selected to perform. As a delegate, I felt privileged to participate in such a unique cultural celebration.

While reviewing the evolution of JASRI, I soon realized significant dates pressed the activities for that given year. Since Shimoda and Newport celebrate different anniversary dates (based on the birth of the Black Ships Festival in their respective cities) each city follows its own special calendar of events.

THE DEPTH OF TIES

This leads to a crucial question: "To what extent are current culture and economic ties between R.I. and Japan important to the historical relevance between our two nations? I found that an answer to that was given from Dr. McKenna. He pointed out that Mr. and Mrs. Yamada yearned to inform American citizens that the Japanese people were embarrassed and upset with their Emperor's, and the military's, decision back in December of 1941. The Yamadas' wish was to develop a sincere relationship with Newport. They were especially grateful for Commodore Perry's initial negotiations and were thankful that these two cities could celebrate a special historical moment by way of cultural and economic exchange. There are many Japan-American organizations throughout the United States, however, unlike other societies, the one in Newport holds a unique connection with Shimoda for it is the birthplace of the man who made open trade between East and

West possible (McKenna, 2005).

While reviewing an article by Rabson entitled, “Wartime language specialists celebrate reunion” I learned about the experiences of Milton Stanzler, a Brown University graduate who was studying law at Boston University when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He joined the service to do his part for his country. After years in civilian life back in the U.S., he hesitantly decided to return to tour Japan in 1991 with his wife. He noted, “We all had a little trepidation about visiting Hiroshima, but the reception was wonderful” (Rabson, 1993).

McKenna stresses the fact that he has never heard a Japanese visitor complain about America. He went on to explain how respectful the Japanese are toward those who have lost their lives during the war by stating that all the American gravesites in Japan are meticulously maintained to this day.

Another good illustration of the extent of the ties the Japanese have to Rhode Island was explained to me by McKenna and expanded upon by Mr. Kurze. The Japanese officials who attend the JASRI make a point of visiting the gravesites and of paying their respects to Mayor Wilkinson and Mayor Donnelly. Kurze also pointed out that Mr. Tsumura, the man who brought the idea of economic trade to Newport, was spellbound with the city and his final wish was to also be buried here in Newport, Rhode Island (Kurze, 2005).

Upon reviewing Kurze’s notes on this year’s opening day remarks by Donald Carcieri, Governor of Rhode Island, Carcieri noted that the economic benefits Commodore Perry bestowed on both nations continues to this day. Upon learning of the JASRI as Governor, and while attending a program in Boston, he observed a name of the panelist, Guy Perry. Carcieri learned that Mr. Perry was a graduate of Harvard in the 1980s and was one of Harvard’s leading students in architecture. Governor Carcieri was quick to point out that the Perry family was not only responsible for a wonderful historical moment but also that its heirs continue the Commodore’s great work of economic advancement by way of technology (Kurze, 2005).

What progress has been made since the JASRI inception in 1983? That depends on whom you ask. A reporter for Newport This Week claims that Rhode Island natives have no idea of the historical significance of the Black Ships Festival. However, he did note that Newporters link the Black Ships Festival to a weekend of sumo wrestlers and drum shows (Curley, 2005).

The awareness of JASRI has grown. Compared to the 1980s, its level of recognition by political leaders and dignities is strong and grows with each new state administration. On an individual level, exposure to Japanese culture and cuisine continues to promote awareness among average Americans. Terms like sushi and saké are no longer foreign phrases but delightful gastronomic experiences. Since the first Black Ships Festival was first held in Newport, friendly sporting competitions have been organized on golf courses and state parks. Kite flying competitions have become a widely accepted sport celebrated at Brenton Point State Park (Givens & Ventetuolo). The Burlington Taiko (taiko which means Japanese drum), the Soh Daiko Drummers and the world-renowned Taiko Dojo have performed together. The historical symbolism of drumming was originally a sacred act meant to drive away evil spirits. It has evolved into a stylized and ritual art form (Reimer).

Even more important are the organizations and host families in both Japan and the U.S. who make it possible for students to experience life away from home. It is very difficult to teach students about other cultures simply by reading books or surfing the web. Traveling abroad raises curiosity and understanding and helps reduce anxiety and ignorance. It also allows an individual to draw his own conclusions about other societal “lifestyles”. Our future lies among our youth and by giving them the possibility of visiting other nations, we will provide them with the tools necessary to make future political and economic decisions based on personal experience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Commodore Perry’s influence gave birth to increased Asian trade for the United States as well for others in Europe and Asia. As Captain Jackson noted in his report, this expedition was among the “greatest events in American history in its influence of the world at large—the other two being the Declaration of Independence and the Arbitration of the Alabama Claims” (Teaze, 1953, IV, 1).

America developed a strong Asian ally after World War II and the pursuit of minimizing preconceived notions and anti-Japanese feelings remains. As Mr. Shinji pointed out, most in Japan realize that Commodore Perry opened the way for future growth. It is only fitting that his legacy continues through the effort and good will of later generations.

Does the Society's Black Ships Festival still fulfill its initial mission? Times have changed many things over the course of 150 years. From my viewpoint, visiting Japan and experiencing the Japanese festival, I see a tremendous effort to continue strong social, economic, and cultural exchanges. I believe the Japanese government realizes that modernity means change and change requires modification.

JASRI works diligently to strengthen ties between cities and time has proven its success. In Newport, the festivities continue to struggle financially and may have lost some of their "exotic" allure due to globalization. Advanced technology and communication has drastically changed people's perception of "foreigners". The current political state-of-affairs can test our patience and trust between nations. Politicians, educators, corporations, and individuals need to continue supporting the efforts of JASRI to reduce barriers. Ambassador Estes once stated that, "The cardinal rule for any country is the protection of your vital interests" (Ruggeri, 2002, 1). He stressed that two of America's vital interests are its economic and political ties to Japan and that we must work diligently to strengthen them. But he also affirmed that Japan has its culture and we have ours and that differences will always remain, though they needn't create conflict (Ruggeri, 1992).

The year 2008 will prove to be a major celebration because it represents the 50th anniversary of the date when Mayor Wilkinson of Newport and Shimoda officials signed the sister-city relationship. During times of political uncertainty, we should be thankful for long-term friendships such as the JASRI. We need continued financial and moral support from political and private sectors to provide outreach programs necessary to educate our citizens. We are very fortunate to have this strong and meaningful connection with Japan and should continue to build upon it.

I leave you with a quote, "The division among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural...the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics" (August, 2004, 45).

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