

AMBASSADOR HAGERTY: Konnichiwa. Ambassador Fujisaki, Deputy Foreign Minister* Sugiyama, Ambassador Okawara, Ambassador Saito, and all the distinguished AJS members here today: I want to sincerely thank you for your hospitality to welcome my wife Chrissy and me and our family to Japan.

I also want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the outpouring of sympathy that has come from all over Japan – from citizens and companies, our Japanese friends living in America – for the victims of Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. These sorts of disasters are tragedies indeed, but they also remind us of the close bonds, the “kizuna,” between our two countries. It very much touches us all, and I want to say thank you again.

I’d also like to speak to another important memory, and that’s to the sailors and the marines who have died recently that are based here in Japan. Ten sailors just passed on the U.S.S. John McCain. Seven sailors on the Fitzgerald, and we lost three marines in an Osprey accident. Twenty young people whose times came too soon, but it reminds me of the risk that our young men and women are taking to defend Japan, the United States, and our alliance in this region. It was a somber honor of mine to attend what is called the “return of remains” at Yokota Air Base about 10 days ago. I was with the families of the sailors that died on board the McCain. I was with their friends. And it brought home to me in a very close way that we owe all of them a debt of gratitude, as we owe the members of the Japan Self Defense Forces, a debt of gratitude for the risk and sacrifice they make on our behalf. So we can take just a moment of silence for them.

Thank you.

I’d like to say it’s a particular honor to be here today with you to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the America-Japan Society. In honor of this centennial anniversary, Vice President Pence wrote some very salient words. I’d like to repeat them. “The America-Japan Society has nurtured thousands of enduring ties between Americans and Japanese from all walks of life over the past century.” I think that says a great deal about the relationship – no one could have said it better than the Vice President, who has a very special place in his heart for Japan.

I’m also aware that the Emperor and Empress were with you in April to celebrate this centennial, again underscoring how important this organization is to the fiber of Japan and the relationship of our two countries.

And I too am honored now to offer my congratulations to this Society in this centennial year.

I’d like to give you some context for why I am so proud and honored to be with you today. It goes back many years. I was fortunate as a student at Vanderbilt University to study East Asian history. Later in my life, in my career, I was fortunate to be posted here in Japan for three years with the Boston Consulting Group. I served as a member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan. I served on the board of directors of the Far East Council of the Boy Scouts. And I was fortunate that my work with the Boston Consulting Group to work with Japanese and American companies as they really built economic ties that were critically important at that time.

I departed Tokyo and moved to Washington. There I worked on the President's White House staff with a portfolio that included international trade, defense, and the treasury. I didn't realize then how important those experiences might become later in my life, but I am very thankful for that foundation.

I've also had years of experience working as a private equity investor. That experience investing overseas and in America, I think, has brought acute appreciation for the success and the benefit that economic ties can bring across borders. And I look forward to sharing that unique perspective as I move forward in my job.

Also I had unique opportunity when one of my friends was elected governor of my home state, to join him in his cabinet. I took a sabbatical for four years and came in to work with our governor as his secretary of commerce. There I had the opportunity to strengthen our bonds with Japanese companies, and as Ichiro said, we were the No. 1 state in the nation for job-creation through foreign direct investment. Indeed, one country accounted for 60% of our success, and that was Japan.

And through that experience I understand that relationships are critical. And I am very privileged here to be advancing our relationship on behalf of the United States government.

More recently I've had the opportunity to be back in Japan and at a personal level to share this country both as a father and a husband. To be able to share the unique culture of Japan with my family is a true privilege. I want to thank the many people who have reached out to make great suggestions to us. I think we'll have a wonderful time over the next three or four years touring Japan and making more friends, many of whom are represented here today, across this nation, with the various chapters of the America-Japan Society across Japan. So I appreciate that and look forward to touching in with many of you as we travel the country.

I'd also like to emphasize how humbled I am and honored I am to be named ambassador to Japan at this time. Our relationship is absolutely critical. It's marked by a number of firsts. I think many of you know that the first phone call that President Trump received from a foreign leader was from Prime Minister Abe. The first visit of a foreign leader to President-elect Trump was again Prime Minister Abe's trip to New York. I was in Trump Tower when Prime Minister Abe arrived. That made a deep and important impression on President Trump. And I think that impression is evident from the fact that when President Trump became president, the first summit that he held with a foreign leader was with Prime Minister Abe of Japan.

This alliance – this relationship – has never been closer in our lifetime. I'm very gratified and very honored to be here at this time. I thought it might help if I could share my priorities – the priorities that the president has given me for my mission in Japan. First I'd like to say I've been blessed to have a wonderful staff. My deputy here, Joe Young, and the team that he manages here are exceptional government servants, and all of them have their heart, I think, in the right place in terms of building our relationship.

Our No. 1 priority is the security alliance with Japan. Every day we wake up, we understand that that is our most critical objective. And I must say that the situation in North Korea has only served to make that more clear. While it's always been so, the alliance between our two countries today is more important not only for the region, but for the world at large. The provocations coming from North Korea have been met with steadfast, solid, and resolute support of ourselves and one another as we stand up against this regime. We continue to advance, whether it be through diplomatic actions and sanctions, whether it be through economic actions, we continue to advance our goal – the denuclearization of the peninsula in Korea. And I'm very pleased to see our two countries working so closely together.

I just left Ichigaya today, having met with the chief of staff of each of the military services. Yesterday I was with Admiral Kawano, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. What I've seen here is a tremendous amount of support from the Japan side of our efforts. I think we often consider the fact that our relationship has been in place for many years – 100 years for this organization, 70 years since World War II. The alliance that has been built, it struck me, is different from any other in the world. And I am so pleased to see our two nations working so closely together in this arrangement.

The second priority is economic cooperation. Our economies have been close for many years. As I mentioned, I was privileged to work here more than two decades ago with Japanese companies and American companies in the mergers and acquisitions and expansions in this area. More recently, from 2011 to 2015, working very closely with Japanese companies coming to America to expand. And what I have seen is a great increase in the cross-border activity that leads to a stronger partnership and a stronger alliance on every front. I hope while I'm here to work together with my Japanese colleagues to find more areas of economic opportunity, areas where our companies can work together, grow together, create jobs both here in Japan and in America, and also create a stronger friendship and stronger bonds that will serve us well in the future.

And the third area, which I think underlies the other two, are the strong people-to-people bonds that we hope to further advance. This is something that I think everybody in this room shares a responsibility for, soft diplomacy as it's called. Friendship. Every one of you has the ability to reach out and touch your friends and constituents, in your own cities, in your own towns and neighborhoods. You appreciate the relationship that our two countries have, and I thank you for your willingness to reach out and convey our desire – our strong desire – to strengthen the bonds, the “kizuna,” between our two countries.

I was fortunate this past weekend to be at a college fair. We had about 2,000 students and 93 U.S. universities trying to attract Japanese students to come to America. At the high point in 1997 we had 55,000 Japanese students studying in America. Today, that number has dropped to just 19,000. I hope you'll join me in trying to encourage more Japanese students to consider studying abroad in the United States. I think it can make a great difference.

And please note that we want to encourage more American students to come to Japan. The JET program has been a great success. I'd like to see more students studying here too at that level. We would like to have more young people begin to engage earlier in their lives to build the types of

bonds and friendship that we all enjoy. And I hope no criticism is taken by this, but I'd love to see the average age of this group come down a little bit. So let's work together to bring more young people here.

For over 100 years, the U.S.-Japan Society has been the caretaker of this great relationship. I couldn't be more honored to be here with you today to share this unique history. What other two countries have been through such a unique history? To have been foes at one point in time, and to be the very best of friends today. Think about it. It is a true honor, and it's due in large part to the efforts that each of you make. So I want to thank you for all that you have accomplished together and let you know that I have the utmost ambition for what we can accomplish in the next 100 years.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION 1: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador, for sharing your precious time with us today. My question is very simple. You talked about priorities, but what are your personal aspirations and ambitions that you would like to achieve during your tenure?

QUESTION 2: Mr. Ambassador, welcome back to Japan. Given your view of things in Japan today compared to your earlier tenure here, what do you think has happened?

AMBASSADOR HAGERTY: These are good questions to combine because I have the benefit of some perspective from more than two decades since I was last here. And what I've seen is a relationship that is evolved in a very positive way. If I think back, our economic relationship was one characterized more by friction than cooperation then. Today my sense is that there is a great desire on the Japan side and the U.S. side to find ways to work together. The extent of foreign direct investment that's occurred between our two countries has increased significantly since I was here last, and I think that we have much stronger economic ties that will lead to a more cooperative approach, as we look for ways that we can not only do business between our two countries, but that our two countries can do business in a very strategic way in this region. So I'm very optimistic about that, and certainly that is one of my goals, which is to let the world know that there is no stronger economic and security alliance than the one that exists between the United States and Japan.

In another way, I've seen elements of the economy change, and I think in a very positive way too. When I worked here before with the Boston Consulting Group, we often worked with Western companies. Western companies had a hard time competing for talent compared to some of the more established Japanese companies that were here. And we early on learned that a focused approach on female candidates would yield a higher result for Western firms. It was easier to recruit female candidates, frankly, at that point in time to an international company than it was to recruit a male candidate. Today I've seen the advent of what's called "womanomics." Prime Minister Abe, I think very wisely, has realized that given the demographic challenges of a shrinking population, engaging more women in the work force broadly is a great idea. I applaud that. I think there is plenty of room to go, and I hope that we can give a good example from America in terms of our incorporation of women leaders in the work force in a way that will be broadly beneficial to Japan. So I'm very

excited about that.

And the last thing I'd like to touch on, which is very personal, and that's sports. I think sports can be a wonderful means of diplomacy. This past week we had the PGA tour champions in Tokyo. Chrissy and I invited them to our home, and I commented to them that my colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sugiyama-san and I, have a lot of hard things that we have to do sometimes, but soft diplomacy through sports is a way that we hope to help the Japanese public appreciate the strong bonds through sports that we love together, whether it be golf or in my case soccer. But as I look forward to 2020 and the Olympics, I think that presents a wonderful opportunity for our two countries to really do some great things from a soft diplomacy standpoint. I have a feeling that everybody in this room is going to have a big impact on the success of the 2020 Olympics.

And I want to thank you all for having me here today to kick that off. Thank you.

*Correction: Vice Foreign Minister