

Japan ex-PM Yoshida's forgotten Pearl Harbor visit recounted

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who visited Pearl Harbor with President Barack Obama last month, wasn't even born when one of Japan's former leaders, Shigeru Yoshida, went there just six years after the country's World War II surrender, by himself and feeling awkward.

Yoshida is best remembered for signing the San Francisco peace treaty with the U.S. and others in 1951, allowing Japan back into international society after its war defeat. His Pearl Harbor visit, which he made on his way home from San Francisco, was largely eclipsed by the historic treaty.

Archival writings and photos unearthed by The Associated Press reconstruct Yoshida's visit, from his aim to win U.S. trust to how he was put at ease by the U.S. Navy commander's dog.

Yoshida arrived at Pearl Harbor on September 12, 1951, shortly after requesting a courtesy visit to the office of Adm. Arthur W.R. Radford, commander of the U.S. Pacific fleet. The office overlooked Pearl Harbor, offering a direct view of the site of the Japanese attack of December 7, 1941.

Radford recalled that he thought Yoshida might feel uncomfortable because of his office's location. "I could almost see the wreck of *Arizona*" out of the window, he wrote in his memoir, *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam*, referring to a battleship that sank in the attack.

Yoshida, westernized and fluent in English, showed up in a white suit, wearing his trademark brimmed hat and carrying a cane, apparently looking a bit stiff.

Then Radford's dog broke the ice. His little Scottish Terrier, which was stretched out in front of Radford's desk, walked slowly to Yoshida to be patted, while sniffing around his shoes and ankles.

"That started a dog conversation that took most of the visit," Radford wrote.

Yoshida was a dog fancier, and had bought terrier puppies just before leaving San Francisco, his grandson Taro Aso, currently Japan's finance minister, has said. Yoshida named the pair "San" and "Fran" after his successful trip.

Years later, Yoshida told Radford's wife how he was embarrassed when he walked into the office after seeing Pearl Harbor, and how happy he was that the dog was able to settle him down.

A Navy archival photo obtained by The AP shows the two men shaking hands, with a smiling Yoshida looking up at the much taller Radford. Yoshida spent about 20 minutes at the office, according to an AP story from September 13, 1951.



HISTORIC VISIT. In this September 12, 1951 photo provided by the U.S. Navy, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, left, shakes hands with Adm. Arthur Radford, commander of the U.S. Pacific fleet, at Radford's headquarters overlooking Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i. Yoshida made the stop in Hawai'i as he was travelling back to Japan from a San Francisco conference that restored Japan's sovereignty. Yoshida is best remembered for signing the San Francisco peace treaty with the U.S. and others in 1951, allowing Japan back into international society after its war defeat. His Pearl Harbor visit, which he made on his way home from San Francisco, was largely eclipsed by the historic treaty. (U.S. Navy via AP)

Yoshida's visit to Pearl Harbor was actually on his second Hawai'i stopover, having travelled there on his way to San Francisco as well.

But he was more relaxed the second time, after completing the important mission in San Francisco, where he also signed the original Japan-U.S. security pact.

On his way to California, Yoshida landed in Honolulu on August 31, 1951, when Japan was still technically an enemy.

During that visit, he laid flowers for the war dead at Honolulu's National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, a military cemetery better known as Punchbowl. Three other Japanese prime ministers have since followed suit. A local Hawai'i newspaper recently reported that two others also had visited Pearl Harbor later in the 1950s.

Yoshida's daughter, Kazuko Aso, who was travelling with him, recalled that security was extremely tight in Hawai'i during his first stopover, before the peace treaty was signed, and that Yoshida, who stayed on the top floor of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, was instructed not to leave the hotel for safety reasons.

"But that old man insisted he wanted to go out ... to pay tribute to the war dead," Aso said in an interview published in the *Bungei Shunju* monthly magazine weeks after the trip.

She said the Japanese delegation unexpectedly received a warm welcome. Photos in the Japanese newspaper

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Empty pyramid hotel a sphinx-like North Korean mystery

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Presumably, they're still waiting.

Simon Cockerell, general manager of Koryo Tours, which operates in North Korea, is one of the few foreigners to have seen the hotel from the inside.

"When I visited the site first, we had a meeting with the project director. He showed us this video of what it was supposed to look like. Wouldn't give us a copy though, or let us film it," he said of his visit in 2012. "It showed the hotel as they imagine it in the future, but he did say some things from the original plans had changed — no more external elevators, no five revolving restaurants, now just three — and he said they didn't have the funding to complete it. Simply a money issue."

Cockerell said he has not heard of any significant activity at the Ryugyong since then.

"I have only heard snippets — various

claims in the media, really, and some guesswork from some of the Koreans I know," he said. "There [are] clearly not a lot of vehicles going onto the site, meaning that major work cannot have been going on. Perhaps some smaller work, but nothing on the scale that would have been needed to get this done properly."

Others who deal regularly with North Korean tourism officials were also cautious.

"As far as we are aware, the situation officially remains, 'They are working on it,'" said Troy Collings, managing director of another North Korea tourism agency, Young Pioneer Tours. "We've not heard any mention of it from our partners and I dare say if the hotel was preparing to open they'd be very excited to inform us and get us trying to attract guests."

In the meantime, the hotel continues to be the world's largest unoccupied building.



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