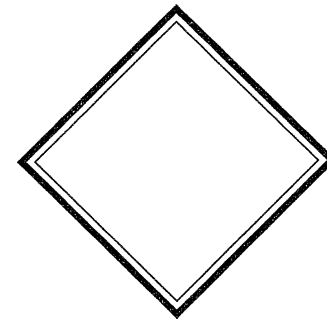


# Remembering Japanese Baseball

AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE GAME



Robert K. Fitts  
With a Foreword by Robert Whiting

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## 1 Tsuneo "Cappy" Harada



Born: October 16, 1921, in Santa Maria, California  
Baseball executive

Tsuneo "Cappy" Harada has spent his life promoting ties between American and Japanese baseball. As a U.S. Army officer and member of the occupation force, Harada was in charge of reestablishing Japanese athletics. He focused on baseball and quickly restarted the National High School Baseball Tournament at Koshien and the professional league. To help boost morale, Harada arranged for the San Francisco Seals to tour Japan in 1949. The tour was so successful that Harada helped arrange Major League teams to visit Japan in 1951 and 1953. He also worked closely with Japanese baseball officials to create the current two-league format and establish the Japan Series. In the early 1950s, Harada became a special adviser to the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants. In that position, he helped recruit *nisei* players and arrange the Giants' foreign tours. After leaving the Yomiuri Giants, Harada became an adviser and scout for the New York/San Francisco Giants. In 1966, while serving as the general manager of the Lodi Crushers of the California League, he was named Executive of the Year by the *Sporting News* and the National Association of Professional Baseball. Since the 1970s, Harada has been an adviser for Major League Baseball and the United States Olympic Committee. He currently lives in southern California.

BEFORE THE WAR [World War II], a couple of American All-Star teams visited Japan and were very popular. That's the reason professional baseball was started in Japan back in 1936. Lefty O'Doul, who was very fond of the Japanese people, was on the 1931 and 1934 All-Star teams. Lefty became very friendly with Matsutaro Shoriki, the father of professional baseball in

Japan. They ended up starting the Tokyo Giants, the first professional baseball team in Japan, and Lefty arranged for them to barnstorm in the States in 1935 and 1936.

When I was a young fellow, I played against the Tokyo Giants in my hometown of Santa Maria, California, during the tour they made in 1936. They had a doubleheader scheduled. They played the local Japanese-American team first, and the Japanese-American team won that game. The second game was against the Santa Maria merchants, who didn't have anybody who could speak Japanese. I was just a young punk but they asked me if I would get in uniform, play a couple of innings, and be an interpreter. I was a pretty good hitter. I had a lifetime .323 average in high school. But unfortunately, I didn't get up to bat. Although I was only fifteen years old, I made a lot of friends because I could speak Japanese. It was a lot of fun and a good experience. I became well-acquainted with all of them but especially with Sotaro Suzuki. He had lived in New York for awhile and had become a real baseball nut. He was very instrumental in getting professional baseball started in Japan.

The Tokyo Giants had a great team. They had two great pitchers, Eiji Sawamura and Victor Starffin. Both could have made the Major Leagues at its present standard very easily. Sawamura threw a fastball that hopped all over the place. I would compare him to Roger Clemens. Sawamura was a very smart ballplayer who knew how to pitch. It was unfortunate that he was killed during the War. Had he come to the States, he really would have made a good impression. Starffin was a fellow who could pitch every day. He could pitch five or six days in a row! One time, the story goes, he pitched forty innings right in a row! He was a good pitcher and a great competitor.

They also had a shortstop named Hisanori Karita, who was a wonderful fielder and a good clutch hitter. His keystone partner was Takeo Tabe. He was also a great fielder and a good hit-and-run man. He had speed just like Ichiro Suzuki and would've been a sensation here. Their third baseman was Shigeru Mizuhara. He was just like Stan Hack; when a line drive came at him, he let his body stop it. In right field, they had Haruyasu Nakajima, the first triple-crown winner in Japan. He could hit anything. All of these players are in the Japanese Hall of Fame.

When I got older, I played semipro baseball and was scouted by the St. Louis Cardinals. But then the War broke out, and that was the end of my

career. During the War, I was with military intelligence and worked with the Navajo Ghost Takers in Australia and New Guinea. I was wounded twice. The Ghost Takers were invaluable, because they would send messages in Navajo, and the Japanese couldn't decode them. They were great soldiers.

I went to Japan at the start of the occupation in 1946 and was appointed aide-de-camp to Gen. William Marquat, who also was crazy about baseball. Well, I was very fortunate that I had a great boss named Gen. [Douglas] MacArthur. I was assigned to rehabilitate sports in Japan. Although I revived the Olympic committee and other things like that, since baseball was my favorite, I worked on it first.

At the end of the War, Japan had some really good ballplayers, but Japanese baseball as an organization was in shambles. The stadiums were being used by the occupation forces as motor pools. I went right to work and got the stadiums returned to the ball clubs. I had to tell the commanders that General MacArthur needed the stadiums to get sports started again. It was very easy since I was using the general's name. At first, the baseball was about class C level. But even back then, a few of the ballplayers could've played in the Majors.

One of my tasks was to negotiate the return of prisoners of war from the Soviet Union. Mr. Sataro Suzuki asked me look up a prisoner named Shigeru Mizuhara. "Hey, I know him!" I said. "Well, he's a prisoner over there. Try to get him back." I was fortunate enough to get him back and brought him to a relocation camp. The Giants wanted to get him back as soon as possible, so I got him a special privilege to leave the camp and go to Tokyo. When he came back, he made a speech in front of forty-five thousand people. That was a very emotional moment.

In the late 1940s, the morale of the Japanese was really low. During a staff meeting, General MacArthur asked, "What can we do to get the morale of the Japanese people back?"

I was only a first lieutenant, but I just popped up and said, "I think baseball would be a wonderful thing."

"Why do you think baseball's important?" he responded.

"Well, the Japanese people love baseball, and I think if we brought an American baseball team here, the Japanese people would love that, and it would really help bring the morale up."

"So what are you waiting for?" he said.

I thought of Lefty O'Doul first because he was so popular in Japan. So I went to San Francisco, where Lefty was managing the Seals of the Pacific Coast League. Lefty thought it was a fine idea, and Paul Fagen, the Seal's owner, agreed. We set up a joint committee made up of Japanese and Americans to handle the tour. I was the head of the American portion of the committee, and the Japanese had Sotaro Suzuki and two others.

The tour was built around Lefty O'Doul. When he arrived in Tokyo, we had a parade through Ginza. It was amazing! There were so many people! The driver didn't even have to push on the gas. The people were just pushing the cars. I was in the same open car as Lefty. He yelled, "*Banzai! Banzai!*", but nothing happened. He commented, "Usually before the War, when you yelled *banzai*, they would yell *banzai* back. How come they don't yell *banzai*?" And I said, "That's the reason you're here, Lefty. To build up the morale so that they will yell *banzai* again." He understood. By the time he left, people were yelling *banzai* again.

The Seals drew full-capacity crowds every place they went. One of the highlights was at the opening ceremonies when I had General MacArthur's permission to raise the Japanese flag and play the anthem at the same time. It was the first time after the War that the Japanese flag had been raised together with the Stars and Stripes, so it was a very historical moment. The Japanese people were very surprised, and a lot of them were moved to tears. That was very emotional. Being in the military, I automatically saluted the flag. Of course, that drew a lot of criticism. One of the senior aides to General MacArthur thought that I had gone too far, but the General said that he gave me permission to do it. In each city we went during that tour, the occupational commander would send a lieutenant to ask, "Is Harada going to salute the Japanese flag this time?" And I said, yes, I would. So in all the cities on the tour, the commanders also saluted the flag except in Osaka where the commander refused. In the 1970s, Ryuji Suzuki, the president of the Central League, threw a party to celebrate a book they wrote about me called *A Bridge Across the Pacific*. At the party, he mentioned that the most significant thing that I contributed to the Japanese morale was arranging to have the Japanese flag raised and anthem played at the same time. And that I saluted it.

After the Seals tour, Lefty O'Doul was really appreciative of what I did for him, so he invited me to Hawaii. At one of the cocktail parties, Dr. Kat-

sumi Kometani said to me, "Cappy, there's a wonderful young man and a really good ballplayer who would like to get a chance to play professionally in the States. Would you do something for him?" I said, "Well, I'll talk to Lefty." So Lefty invited him to spring training, and in 1950, Wally Yonamine was invited to the Seals camp. He made a great impression, but he didn't make the Seals at that time. Instead, he played for the farm club in Utah, where he did well. At the same time, Mr. Shoriki told me that he would like to bring a foreign ballplayer to the Tokyo Giants. I told him that we should try to get a good *nisei* ballplayer. Well, the first fellow who came to my mind was Wally Yonamine. So I went immediately to Lefty O'Doul and asked his permission to sign Wally. Lefty, of course, being very cooperative, gave permission. Wally was such a cooperative, wonderful person and was very ready. His hustling revolutionized Japanese baseball.

Like Jackie Robinson, who broke the color line here, Wally is the one who started everything in Japan for foreign players. Because of Wally, Mr. Shoriki asked me if I could get some other foreign ballplayers. I said maybe it would be better to get some more *nisei* players. So I went to the owner of the Hawaii Asahi, Angel Maehara, and signed their catcher Jun Hirota. Right away, he made a big contribution and became the first-string catcher. Then, a fellow named Dick Kashiwaeda came, followed by Bill Nishita, the pitcher. Of course, the guy who became really popular was Andy Miyamoto because he hit a home run his first time up. Andy is a real nice person. He married Hirofumi Naito's, the second baseman's, sister. Those five *nisei* ballplayers helped define the post-war Tokyo Giants. They were very popular, and they were all good.

In the late 1940s, Mr. Shoriki asked me, "How come our baseball isn't getting stronger like the Major Leagues?" I said, "Mr. Shoriki, there's a simple answer. You have to form two leagues and have a Japanese World Series. Then, everybody will be fighting for something, and that will foster competition. Then, Japanese baseball will get stronger." Mr. Shoriki said, "Let's have a meeting on it." The meeting took place at a restaurant in Osaka. At the meeting were Mr. Shoriki, Ryuji Suzuki [the president of the league], Mr. Nagata [the movie magnate], and Prince [Naruhiko] Higashikuni. We discussed it and decided that it was a good idea. I hate to take credit for it but I think I was responsible for creating the two leagues. In 1950, the first year of the new leagues, they invited Lefty O'Doul and Joe DiMaggio for open-

ing day. At the opening ceremony, Lefty threw out the first pitch, General Marquat, my immediate boss, was the catcher, and Joe was the hitter.

In 1951, I became an adviser to the Tokyo Giants. I was also the team's general manager during our overseas tours of Australia, South America, and the United States. That same year, Mr. Shoriki wanted to bring a Major League team to Japan not only to boost morale but also to sell subscriptions to his newspaper. So I negotiated with Lefty O'Doul to bring an All-Star team. I told Lefty, "Bring guys like Joe and Dominic DiMaggio." He said, "Well, I'll try." And he came up with a heck of the team: the DiMaggio brothers, Eddie Lopat, Billy Martin, Bobby Shantz, Ferris Fain, and Mel Parnell. It was a wonderful tour. They made a lot of friends and won all the games. We saw DiMaggio hit the last home run of his career during the tour. I gave a film of the home run to Joe to keep, but I don't know if his family still has it.

One of my highlights was escorting Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe on their honeymoon to Japan in 1954. I have a funny story about that. After Joe got married, he and Marilyn were driving through Santa Maria. He knew that I was from Santa Maria, and he thought that I might be there. Well, as all the other ballplayers knew, Joe rarely had a penny in his pocket. So he called me collect in Santa Maria and got a hold of my sister, who told him that I was in Japan. So he called me in Japan—collect! He said, "I got married, and I'd like to take my wife to Japan for a honeymoon."

"Who did you get married to?"

"You know her—she's a blond."

"Well, if it's Marilyn Monroe, you can bring her now without getting a sponsor."

But I asked the *Yomiuri Shimbun* anyway if they would sponsor them, and they were very happy to do it because she was a sensation. She was so popular, we had trouble getting her off the airplane! People would come to the hotel and wouldn't go home until she went out to say hello to them. It was a wonderful honeymoon trip for them. But they had some disagreements. Down in Hiroshima, we were staying in a Japanese hotel, and early in the morning I looked out in the garden, and I saw a shadow. I looked again and saw that it was a lady. So I went out there and found Marilyn, and she was sobbing. They must have had a disagreement. Joe was very possessive and very jealous. I remember at the time telling one of my friends at *Yomiuri* that the marriage will be just like a baseball game—nine innings.

Sure enough, nine months later, they were split up. Joe and I remained very good friends until the day he passed away. He was a real gentleman. He had his faults, but he had his good points, too.

In 1952, Mr. Shoriki came to me and said, "I want to get our ballplayers to play at the same level as they do in the States. How can we do that?" I suggested, "The best thing to do is to send them to spring training in the United States. We should open up a spring camp for the Tokyo Giants, and I'll arrange with Lefty O'Doul to play games against Pacific Coast League teams and perhaps even a Major League team." I figured that the best thing was to bring them to my hometown of Santa Maria, California, where there were a lot of bilingual Japanese Americans and also a ball park. We went over in 1953.

Right after the War when I returned to Santa Maria, I was still wearing my uniform. I hadn't seen my father for several years so I figured I would send him a picture of me in uniform. So I went to a photography studio and asked to have my picture taken. The fellow refused me. He said, "I don't take any pictures of Japs!" Well, when I brought the Giants to Santa Maria, I was the first to get off the bus. And there was *that* photographer trying to take my picture, so I gave him my finger! Fortunately, the *Santa Maria Times* didn't print it!

The camp was really successful. Horace Stoneham, who was the owner of the New York Giants, really helped us. He and I became very good friends. When I told him that I was bringing the Tokyo Giants to spring training in my hometown, he said, "Well, why don't we bring the Giants and have an exhibition game?" Boy, I thought that was just wonderful! Leo Durocher was the manager, and they had some great ballplayers on that team, including Willie Mays and Monte Irvin. Their shortstop, Daryl Spencer, ended up having some great years in Japan. After that, Mr. Shoriki said he would like to invite the New York Giants to Japan for an exhibition tour that fall.

In Tokyo, the New York Giants stayed at the Imperial Hotel. At that time, Durocher was married to Laraine Day. One morning, he called me up and said, "Cappy, let's have breakfast together, and let's meet in the lobby." I went to the lobby, and he was there with Laraine. Then all of a sudden, he saw Dusty Rhodes coming into the hotel, and he said, "Cappy, do me a favor? Take Laraine in there, get a nice table, and I'll be right with you." He went up to Dusty and said, "Are you coming in, or are you going out?"

"I can't lie to you, Skip. I'm coming in."

"What were you doing out there like that?"

"Well, I was visiting my cousin."

Leo just burst out laughing and said, "I've never run into a person that has so many cousins all over the world!"

So he played Dusty all nine innings that day. But Dusty got even with him. He hit three home runs! But Leo was still mad at him. He said, "Cappy, come with me. We're going to get rid of that guy." So we went up to Mr. Stoneham's suite and knocked on the door. And guess who should open the door but Dusty Rhodes with a drink in his hand!

After that tour, I started working for the New York Giants and stayed for twenty-three years.

During the tour, the Tokyo Giants pitcher Takumi Otomo was very impressive, and the New York Giants wanted to get him. So I talked with Mr. Yasuda, the [Tokyo] Giants president, and he said, "I will give you Otomo for ten thousand dollars plus we want to get two or three good ballplayers from the States." In those days, ten thousand dollars was a lot of money. But Mr. Stoneham said that was too much. So Otomo's dream of playing in the Major Leagues ended there. He was an underhanded pitcher, and I'm sure he could've done very well here.

After the 1954 season, the Tokyo Giants made a goodwill tour of Australia, and I went along as the general manager. We landed in the northern part of Australia, and there were a lot of anti-Japanese demonstrations. Since I was the leader of the tour, I told everybody, "We had a lot of trouble getting here, so you guys stay in the airplane, and I'll go down and meet with the people."

One of the leaders of the veterans association came up to me and said, "You have a lot of nerve bringing Japanese ballplayers here after what they did to us!" He knew that I was an American. I guess he was already briefed.

"Wait a minute," I said. "We have five American citizens on our team."

"What do you mean by American citizens? They're all Japanese."

I said, "No. They're Japanese-American." And I gave him the names: Wally, Dick, Jyun Hirota, Doug Matsuoka, and Bill Nishida. "They are all from Hawaii and were born in the United States but are officially members of the Tokyo Giants. So what's wrong with that?"

I slowly convinced him. But they did everything possible during the tour to make it difficult. For example, at Sydney, before the game, the veterans association started a movement to stop all the streetcars so people couldn't come to the ball park.

Next we went to Canberra, where Prime Minister Robert Menzies threw a reception for us, and the Japanese ambassador attended. The tour ended in Brisbane. Brisbane brought back a lot of fond memories because that's where MacArthur's headquarters was before we moved up to New Guinea. We were supposed to go to Adelaide, but that never happened because the people of Adelaide didn't want us to come there, and the promoter ran out of money.

On the way home, we stopped in Manila. There was still a lot of anti-Japanese feelings there as well. At that time, the future dictator [Ferdinand] Marcos was a policeman. He might have been the chief of police but I'm not sure. Well, he arranged for all of our players to have an escort. We played two games there, and the stadium was packed full.

After I left the Tokyo Giants, I stayed in Japan as a representative of the San Francisco Giants. In 1963, I scouted Masanori Murakami before he joined the Nankai Hawks. He was a good left-handed pitcher, and I figured that he might one day be a good pitcher for the States. He joined the Hawks but didn't make the big club in Japan. I still thought that he had the potential to pitch in the States. So I asked the Hawks' permission to bring him and a couple of other guys to spring training with the San Francisco Giants. At camp, Murakami was a big hit. Charlie Fox, who was a catcher and also a coach, caught for Murakami during batting practice. After a few warm-up pitches, he came up to me and said, "You tell the boss that this guy can pitch in the States. We'd better sign him!" Right away, we signed him and sent him to Fresno, the class C team. He did really well, so after September 1st, we brought him up to the Big Leagues where he was a great sensation. He was a great relief pitcher, and he was well-liked by everybody in the Giants organization.

Murakami became very friendly with Jack Hiatt, who is now head of player development for the Giants. Hiatt taught Murakami a few English phrases. So one day, Murakami was called in to pitch in relief. He walked up to the mound, and Herman Franks, who was the manager at that time,

started talking, and Murakami didn't understand anything he was saying. So Murakami said, "What do you want, strikes?" "Yeah," Franks responded, "I want strikes!" And Murakami said, "Well, take a hike!"

In 1964, I had a cancer operation, and I wasn't feeling too well. So I decided to go back to the States for treatment. That's when I decided to pull out of Japan. I was still with the San Francisco Giants as a scout. So I went back and helped Mr. Stoneham with the Giants for one year, and then he told me that the Chicago Cubs were looking for a general manager for their minor league team in Lodi, California. So I went over there in 1966. That year, baseball gave me the honor of giving me the Executive of the Year Award.

There has been some talk about being elected to the Japanese Hall of Fame, but that's not my dream. My dream was to bring Japanese baseball to the level of American baseball. So I'm very happy that Japanese ball-players are finally over here playing in the States.