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ADVENTIST WORLD



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The

HIROSHI

Miracle

ENOLA GAY TAIL GUNNER, S/SGT GEORGE R. (BOB) CARON, VIA WIKIMEDIA

The world's first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. **Far left:** In the bomb's aftermath Dr. Tomiko Kihara worked tirelessly to save many lives. **Left:** Iwa Kuwamoto was within one kilometer from where the bomb landed, and yet survived.

EDITOR'S NOTE: On August 6, 1945, Hiroshima, Japan, became the first city in history to be destroyed by a nuclear bomb. While the devastation and loss of life was horrific, today, on the sixty-sixth anniversary of that fateful event, we are reflecting on the amazing stories of the Hiroshima Seventh-day Adventist Church members—all of whom survived.



ON A MISSION: Asako Furunaka wanted to know the truth.

Asako Furunaka was born on August 12, 1921, the daughter of a successful businessman in Japan. Driven and highly intelligent, she attended night school after graduating as a teacher. At age 32 she became a newspaper reporter, a rare thing for a woman of her day to do. She married a college professor, and though they were not blessed with children, she had a blissful life. However, one day when she was in her early 50s, Asako's life was shattered when her husband confessed that he had a lover and wanted a divorce. Feelings of despair and anger overwhelmed her, sadness and hatred for her husband filled her days and

nights, and she felt she could never believe in anything again. Soon she slipped into a deep depression.

When life was at its lowest ebb, someone invited her to an Adventist church, and she started attending regularly. She learned about forgiveness and found hope in the Bible, and peace returned to her heart. However, she couldn't make the decision to be baptized at that time.

Unbelievable Stories

Because of her abilities and qualifications, she was invited to be the children's Bible teacher at church. She very happily took the position and began teaching the children's Sabbath school lessons from the quarterly.

伊太

By RYOKO SUZUKI

Saved from the atom bomb

One day the lesson was about the story in the book of Daniel of the three young men who were kept safe despite being thrown into a fiery furnace. She taught the lesson earnestly, but when she finished, one of the little boys exclaimed, "I can't believe that!" Then one of the girls said, "I can believe it, because my grandmother always tells me about how not one member of the Hiroshima [Adventist] church was killed when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima."

“Not one member of the Hiroshima Adventist Church was killed when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.”

On hearing this, Asako realized that even though she was teaching the lesson, she didn't really believe it either, nor could she believe what the little girl had said. But at the same time, a thought came into her mind: *I'm a newspaper reporter, aren't I? I should be able to find out if what this girl has said is true or not. I really should check this out!* Thus began her quest to visit every one of the church members who had been in Hiroshima at the time of the atomic bomb.

Fateful Day

When the first atomic bomb in history was dropped on Hiroshima on the morning of August 6, 1945, it destroyed everything within a two-kilometer (1.2-mile) radius: the temperature of the ground reached an unimaginable 6,000° C (10,832° F). Everyone within a four-kilometer (2.5 mile) radius was burned to death. A tremendous wind, at the speed of 4.4 kilometers (2.7 miles) per second, was

generated, causing even cement buildings to collapse and broken glass to fly up to 16 kilometers (9.94 miles) away. The radiation from the bomb was unbelievably strong, causing those exposed to it to lose all bodily functions and their cells to undergo apoptosis, a kind of cellular suicide. Between the blast itself, the resulting fires throughout the city, and the radiation burns, some estimate that 200,000 citizens of Hiroshima lost their lives.

Not One Adventist Harmed

In the midst of all this devastation, was it really possible that not one church member, even the one living within 1 kilometer (.62 miles) of where the bomb hit, was killed, or even hurt? With a doubtful heart Asako began visiting every one of the church members who had been there at the time. What she found was that even amid all the terrible possibilities for death on that day, not one of the church members perished or was even wounded. The little girl who said she could believe that the faithful three were kept safe in the fiery furnace because her grandmother always told her that not one of the Hiroshima Seventh-day Adventist Church members were hurt, spoke the truth.

During her investigation the journalist heard the testimony of church member Mrs. Hiroko Kainou, who, surprised by the sudden fierce wind, fell to her knees and prayed. Though every piece of glass in the house blew out, she came away without a single

scratch. All of the other 20 Adventist church members in Hiroshima were also kept alive and safe. Though six of them have since passed away from old age, Mr. and Mrs. Morita, the Yoshimuras, the Sumis, the Matsutanis, and others are still active.

Iwa Kuwamoto, who is still doing evangelism from her home by telephone and letter at age 83, was within one kilometer (.62 miles) of the bomb site when the bomb fell. When she crawled out from under the fallen buildings, she witnessed the giant mushroom cloud that was obscuring the sun and shrouding the land in darkness. She tried desperately to help her husband, an unbeliever at the time, to get out from under the fallout, but the raging fires were threatening to close in on them. Taking her husband's hand and crying, (Iwa) said, "The fire will be here soon. I can't do anything more, so let's die here together. God knows everything.

Please believe in Jesus Christ. I cannot save you!" But her husband said, "No. I will die here, but you must escape for our children's sake. You must somehow get to safety and find the children. Do it for the children!"

Once again she said, "No, there is no way I can escape from this fire. I will die here with you." But her husband would not listen to her. He said, "No! I'll be OK here. For a long time I rebelled against my mother and you and wouldn't believe in God. But now I do believe in God's salvation, so we can see each other again. Please, please go and find the children. Please, just go!" So, with burning tears and a breaking heart, she left her husband there, and, pouring water over herself along the way, she escaped the flames, and was eventually reunited with her children.

Tomiko Kihara was a doctor with her own clinic at the time. She had been on night duty the evening before and had arrived home at 2:00 a.m.; she

A CURSE Turns Into a Blessing

BY GINA WAHLEN

was sleeping when the bomb fell. Although she was less than one kilometer (.62 miles) from the center, nothing fell on her, and she was not hurt in any way. Shocked by the blast, she ran outside to see what was happening, but all she could see was the burned and blackened ground. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, she ran to a hospital on the edge of town, and there for one week without rest or sleep she worked for the victims as one of the very few doctors still alive in the city after the blast. In the weeks and months following the tragedy, she continued to use everything she had to help the victims, and was able to witness to many in this way.

A True Believer

As a result of listening to these testimonies, Asako came to believe in God fully and was baptized. She received a call to share with others about the Savior's faithfulness, and at the age of 58 she enrolled in the theology program at Saniku Gakuin College in Japan. Upon graduation she became a pastor at the Kashiwa Seventh-day Adventist Church and later worked as a Bible instructor at the Kisarazu Seventh-day Adventist Church. Even after her retirement she has continued to be an active evangelist to those around her. And now, in good health at the age of 88, she says, "I have no earthly family to lean on, but I know God loves me, so I am content." ■



Ryoko Suzuki works as the librarian at the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) located in the republic of Korea. Her husband, Akeri Suzuki, serves as executive secretary for the division. The couple served in local church pastorates in Japan for more than 30 years and have three grown children.



Devastation in the city of Hiroshima. Left: The original Hiroshima Seventh-day Adventist Church, dedicated on February 5, 1917, but dismantled by the Japanese government in 1945

It seemed such a cruel irony—asking the head elder of the Hiroshima Seventh-day Adventist Church to oversee the demolition of his own church. But this was the summer of 1945, and the Japanese government was adamant—because of increased air raids, they said, the building was determined to be a fire hazard, so it had to go.

The attractive structure, built in 1917, had served for many years as the meeting place for the Adventists in Hiroshima. The church was a gift of love from one of its members, S. E. Tatsuguchi, who advanced nearly all the necessary funds for its construction. On February 5, 1917, General Conference president A. G. Daniells and his wife, Mary, attended the dedication of the Hiroshima church, where Daniells gave the dedicatory address.

But less than three decades later the church was demolished and its members scattered. For Morita San, the church's head elder, this act of governmental aggression was not surprising. In 1943 the Greater Japan Wartime Patriotic Association of Religions was formed, and this agency quickly suppressed any religion not in harmony with Shintoism.

In the early morning of September 20, 1943, police broke into the Sans' home, arresting the church elder and throwing him into prison. Although later released, he was then forced to oversee the demolition of his beloved church.

But what at first seemed to be a curse turned into a blessing. Because of the religious persecution, most of the church members in Hiroshima had already left the city by August 6, 1945. Only a few remained, including Morita San and his family—all of whom were present when the bomb was dropped. And they, along with other Adventists still in Hiroshima that day, survived.

Following the war Adventists met in the homes of church members in the vicinity of Hiroshima. By 1951 land was purchased within the city, and a new Adventist church, as well as a parsonage, church school, and later a medical clinic, were built. Through the years its members have been active in missionary work, and the Hiroshima church has been one of the strongest churches in Japan.