

JAPANORAMA

Japan is one of the world's most seismically active areas. The country accounts for over 20 percent of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6 or greater. There are over ten thousand earthquakes per year. Most are harmless, but about once every two years a quake causes serious damage and loss of life.

One of the most devastating earthquakes happened in 1923, causing 99,331 deaths, injuring over 100,000 and leaving 50,000 missing! In 1995, a magnitude 7.3 tremor hit the city of Kobe and caused massive damage. About 6,400 people were killed and 415,000 people were injured. 100,000 houses were completely destroyed and 185,000 houses were partially destroyed. This quake occurred about 20 km west of one of our properties! We praise the Lord for His protection and that we did not sustain any serious damage.

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. We thank the Lord for the many years that Rev. Kume and his wife worked for the Japan Mission as hospital evangelists and for the many who found the Lord through their ministry. Pray for these converts to follow the example of their spiritual parents.
2. Pray that the doctors would have wisdom to know how to treat Earlene McKean, and that she would continue to be an effective witness for Him.
3. We praise the Lord for the faithful prayers of many and His protection! He has faithfully protected our personnel, ministry and property from attacks of the enemy - the threat of terrorism, SARS, Asian Bird Flu, typhoons, earthquakes and many other threats. Please pray with us for the Lord's continued protection!
4. David and Sue will be taking a number of meetings in the UK during April and May. Please pray for their protection and the ability to be effective in communicating the vision of the work.
5. January is one of the most idolatrous months in Japan. Tens of millions of people go to Shinto and Buddhist temples to pray for prosperity during the New Year. Please pray that people's eyes would be opened to the Truth of the Gospel and that they would put their hope in a risen Savior!

JAPAN MISSION

"Call unto Me, and I will answer thee" - Jer. 33:3

January / February 2008

SERVING GOD UNTIL 108

On the dawn of Sept. 1, 1923, Chiyo Kume did not realize that it would be a life-changing day. That morning she looked out over the vast city of Tokyo and noticed that the sun was brilliant red and the sky was a strange texture.



Rev & Mrs Kume

As Chiyo and her husband, pastor Kume, sat down for lunch, they felt the tremors of an earthquake. The first movements were slight and feeble. They did not know that it was a forerunner to a bigger and much more destructive quake. Within several seconds the vibrations increased and soon their flimsy wooden house swayed, as if an angry giant hand was viciously shaking it. Chunks of plaster tumbled down and grinding timbers caused the walls to bulge, as furniture was tossed from side to side!

Their home totally disintegrated as they fled through the smothering dusty haze! Fleeing to the church next door was a life-threatening experience! Falling debris in the street hindered their flight. They did not know how long the tremors would last. It felt like hours of constant motion, as hundreds of after-shocks shook the earth under their feet.

They were soon joined by church members and neighbors. The severe tremors continued and around 2pm they felt it was unsafe to stay in the sturdier church building any longer. Stumbling over debris, they fled to the mountains. Only later did they realize that this action had probably saved their lives.

More ferocious than the earthquake, was the blazing inferno that followed. When the earthquake struck, charcoal cooking stoves were in use throughout Tokyo in preparation for the noon day meal. Fires sprang up and spread rapidly, due to high winds from a nearby typhoon. About 38,000 people who had fled to an

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open space in downtown Tokyo to escape the firestorm were incinerated! That night the church building burned to the ground!

Even some who had fled to the mountains were not safe. A train with over 100 passengers, along with the entire station structure and the village itself, was plunged into the sea by a collapsing mountainside!

God, in his mercy, led Rev. and Mrs. Kume to a safe mountain. Chiyo said, "After the earthquake our lives were never the same again." During the three months of sorrow and chaos that followed, Chiyo looked after the folk who had fled with them. Her husband also helped and ministered to the growing crowd.

Rev. and Mrs. Kume were not Christians when they were married in 1918. Mr. Kume was a broker of pig iron, but when his business began to fail, he became very depressed. One day, while feeling dejected and contemplating suicide, he was walking in a park in Tokyo and came across an evangelistic open-air meeting. He was deeply impressed and began to attend church. He urged his wife to go with him, but she thought that as Japanese, they ought to be faithful to the local gods. A few months later, Mr. Kume was born again. His life was so utterly changed that Chiyo also yielded to the Savior! They grew spiritually by leaps and bounds, and before long went to Bible school and studied together.

After retiring as minister of one of the largest churches in Osaka, Rev. Kume joined the Japan Mission at Chiyo's urging. Their lives were so utterly devoted to the Lord that they never ate breakfast nor read the newspaper until the afternoon in order to spend unhurried time with the Lord. Years of joy and blessing followed.

When Rev. Kume died in 1994 at 97, Mrs. Kume, who many expected to be a 'weeping widow', took part in the funeral eulogy. We were amazed when she asked the vast number of people in attendance not to shed tears, but rather to make it a time of celebration!

Mrs. Kume carried on the legacy left by Rev. Kume of witnessing for the Lord on every possible occasion. During 2002, when she was 103 years old, her daughter Kyoko, who was herself about 70 years old, felt she could not properly look after her mother any longer. She arranged for her to go into a senior citizens home. There Mrs. Kume promptly started to witness for the Lord.

At 106 years old she was not very active any longer, but the people from the church, who regularly visited her, told us that she was still a bright witness in the place where God had placed her. Chiyo Kume continued to serve the Lord in a remarkable way until she died on July 4, 2007 at the age of 108! □

STAFF UPDATE EARLENE McKEAN

Earlene McKean, Sue's mother, has been working as a missionary with Japan Mission since 1985. Until recently, she was leading Bible studies and working as an English Evangelism worker. Due to a need to receive dialysis treatments, her responsibilities have changed and she finds herself visiting hospital 3 times a week. There she has had some marvelous opportunities to distribute literature, encourage the sick and witness for the Lord. A while ago she was able to befriend and witness to a former mafia boss who was also in the same ward, receiving dialysis treatments.



Earlene & Sue

She was thrilled when a local newspaper recently featured her testimony. They mentioned that she is constantly cheerful and puts her trust in the Lord, while overcoming various physical difficulties.

Due to the faithful prayers and support of many, Earlene McKean continues to have wonderful opportunities to reach out to many needy people.