

Shirayuri Times



Sister Watanabe and Sister Aoki

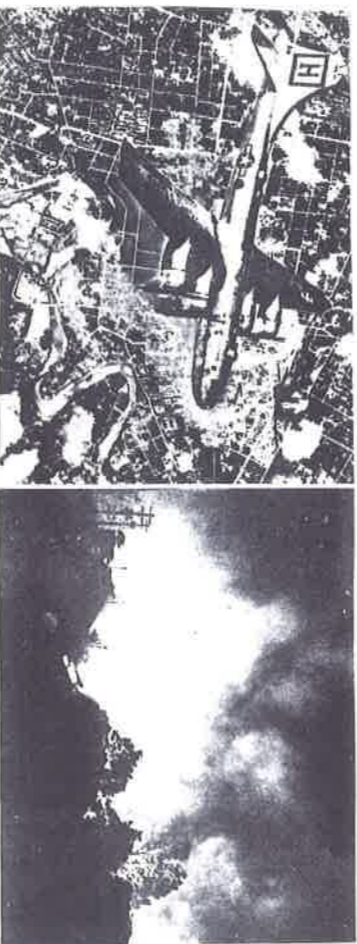
Interview

We interviewed Sr. Chieko Aoki and Sr. Kyoko Watanabe, Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, about life in Sendai Girls School during World War II. They went through World War II when they were elementary school students. They had been bombed by the U.S. Air Force on August 10, 1945, during the Sendai Air Raids mentioned above. They ran away from many incendiary bombs by covering themselves with wet comforters. Guided by two ladies, they defended themselves from the bombs in this way. Innocent citizens were shot at close range by B29 bombers. A girl's father objected to fighting in the war, so he was killed by a military policeman in front of her. For two hours we listened as the Sisters told us stories such as these. We asked them if they had been able to pray during the war. They told us that they couldn't pray openly, but they kept praying silently.

We will do research on Reiko Ogishima who supported our school during the war. We want to understand the truth about the past, and consider a peaceful future. And they said, "During WWII, there were people at the church in Nagasaki, Japan. They confessed their sins there. At the time, bombs were dropped on the church by American military personnel. They dropped them by mistake. People in the church died. When we heard that, we thought "Why didn't God save such good people?" A Catholic priest told us "God took them for penance. Maybe they could compensate for everyone's sins." We were impressed by it."

SENDAI AIR RAID

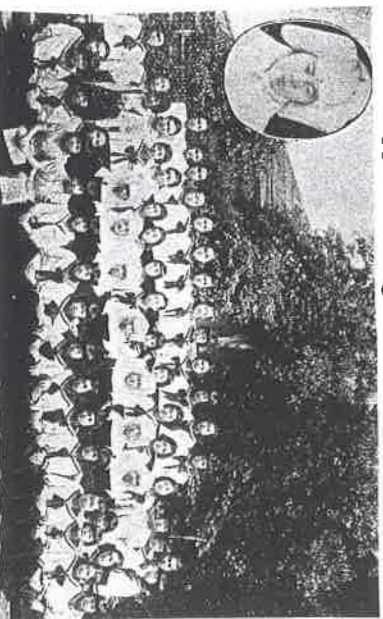
July 10. In US military records, it is written that the air raids happened on July 13 and August 14. The center of Sendai city was destroyed on July 10. Generally, this is called the "Sendai air raid." The US military destroyed six main Japanese cities and then they aimed at Sendai. There were munitions factories and railways in Sendai. The attack started at 12:03 a.m. on July 10. There were 123 B29 bombers and they dropped 10,961 bombs. An area of about five million square meters was damaged in those attacks. 50,321 people were victims of the disaster. This figure shows that 26% of the people who lived in Sendai were affected by it. The dead numbered 1281. The main cause of death was burning by incendiary bombs and suffocation in their own house or air raid shelter.



Sayuri Association was launched

There were no religion classes in the then high school around 1937. Catholic catechism classes were held for those who wanted them after school. The government requested that citizens send pens or needles to the battlefields as part of the war effort. Catholic catechism classes wrote messages of condolence to soldiers for salvation, at that time, the name was changed to the Sayuri Association. Messages of consolation were sent in colorful envelopes and replies came from the battlefield. "Thank you for paying for our fortunes of war." "My mother has the same belief as you." Their words of appreciation were expressed in vague terms because of the strict censorship. However, communication was cut off after the Pacific War broke out. In 1943, there was very little communication between the sisters and the soldiers since foreign clergy members were forcibly repatriated. The sisters stopped wearing their habits and dressed in black.

This circle picture is Sr.Riko Ogishima.



Shirayuri Association after WWII

The Sayuri Association was suspended after The Great Sendai Air Raids. But graduates and sisters worked to resume it. In those days, They learned the love of God through the Bible. Moreover, they visited hospitals to comfort the sick and wounded, cleaned the Church and sang sacred songs at Sunday mass in churches of armies bases.

Now, the Sayuri Association does various activities with a volunteer spirit. Some examples of volunteer work are found-raising campaigns and visiting children's after school activity centers to play with them. In 2018, there are 13 people in the Sayuri Association. They work sincerely too.

Sr.Ogishima Dies in the Line of

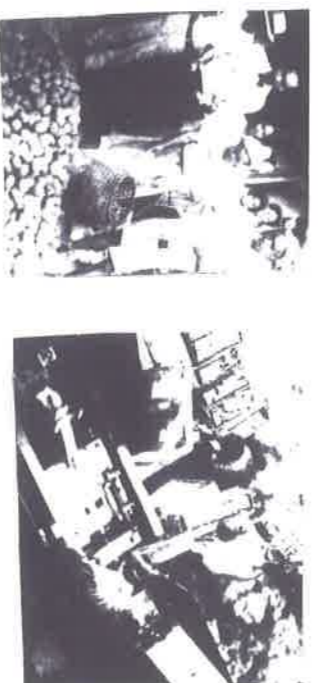
The Greater East Asia War intensified in 1943. then, the government requested religious organizations to persuade local residents in Japanese occupied territories to cooperate. Sr.Ogishima was dispatched to Manila. The next January, as her ship approached Hong Kong on the way to Manila, the ship hit a mine and she disappeared. She was 27 years old. There was a lifeboat on the ship but she and the elderly sister and a priest gave it to others. They remained on the deck. They disappeared into the sea while praying loudly. Sister Ogishima wrote a letter to Sendai Girls High School. She wrote, "I don't think that I will arrive safely. I have prepared. I have been praying that you will do the things I have left, please."

"Sr.Ogishima was young. She was well-educated person, honest and religious. I respected her," Sr.Koto Saito wrote a special issue in the school newspaper. Sr. Ogishima was loved by many people.

LIFE IN THAT TIME

Drought in 1939 was the cause of the rationing of soybeans were the main items.

It dropped incendiary bombs on Sendai city schools. Sendai Girl's High School students were dispatched to various factories, too.



These women worked to make ammunition. Potatoes were rationed.

The Chronicle of Sendai Shirayuri	
1892	3.25 Sisters from Chartres St Paul convent came to Sendai.
1892	12.27 The ministry of Education permitted them to start up a school as "Sendai Private Girl's school".
1893	4.1 The school opened
1919	The school was renamed "Sendai Girl's High School".
1945	The school building was burned in the Sendai air raid.
1948	The school was renamed "Sendai Shirayuri Gakuen High School" and the school badge was changed Japanese apricot blossom to a fleur de lis.
1949	Reconstruction of the school building was finished.
1998	10.4 The new building was built in Murasakiyama.
2018	125 years anniversary.

The editor's postscript

Thank you for reading our newspaper. What do you think? We realized the preciousness of peace in their lives and the terror of war. But there was kindness in that time. We want you to notice that, too. And now, there are tragic incidents all over the world. What should we do? What can we do? We will be glad to change your consciousness.

Thank you. Maki Hayasaka Nao Yoshida Sai Mirokuji



Religion and Women in WWII
We consider peace from this point of view. Japan was badly damaged by World War II, and Sendai too. We heard that there were women who supported people in Sendai then. They were students of Sendai Girls School. This became Sendai Shirayuri Gakuen later. It is said that they served and worked for other people, though they lived a hard life. In Japan, it was difficult to accept foreign religion such as Christianity then, so they couldn't pray freely. However, they accepted other people. How did they feel then?

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