

Translator's Note.

Kazuo Ohno's eventual move to Yokohama after the war was fortuitous, for not only could he once again take up a teaching post as a physical education teacher at Soshin Baptist Mission School, one of the city's most reputable establishments, but he was also able to set up family in a city that holds a unique position in Japanese history. During the Meiji restoration this erstwhile backwater burgeoned into the most outward looking of all Japanese ports. Though born and reared in Hokkaido-- which could be considered as Japan's northern frontier - Ohno's family background was one in which the 'outside' world was no stranger. His mother was a fine cook, preparing French dishes for her children, and also introduced them to a wide variety of music she sang while accompanying herself on the harmonium. His uncle, Yoshida Ikeda was a well-known cello player.

In 1929, Ohno took up a teaching position at Yokohama's Kanto Gakuin, affiliated to the Baptist Missionary Church. Soon thereafter he converted to Christianity and moved to Soshin Baptist Girl's School in 1934.

Soshin's origins can be directly linked with the opening up of Japan following centuries of seclusion. One of the first two American Baptist missionaries to set foot on Japanese soil in 1863, Jonathan Goble, was originally a sailor on Perry's Black Ships, which moored off present day Yokosuka, south of Yokohama in 1853. It was in Yokohama that they established the First Baptist Church in Japan. Succeeding churches were planted while girls' and boys' schools (notably Soshin and Kanto Gakuin) became a major force in society at that time, and whose importance in Yokohama life continues to this very day. One should, however, bear in mind the historical context of Ohno's personal and

career choices. The prevalent zeitgeist in the early 1930s was one of nationalistic fervour; its accompanying distrust was anything but embracing of perceived 'alien' influences. As preparations for war got underway, Christian churches and their respective educational institutions were increasingly brought under government supervision and control. Despite the initial American plans not to drop incendiary bombs on Yokohama - due to the fact they intended to make the city and its port facilities their command base after occupying the mainland - Soshin Baptist's School was severely damaged while the city itself was destroyed during thirty odd air raids. After his return to his teaching post at Soshin in 1946, Ohno was literally to return to ruins and rubble. And, out this devastation Kazuo Ohno created a most inspiring legacy, a legacy that continues to stretch beyond borders and time zones.

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