

**On ARI Foundation Day: September 17, 2008**

## **Shinko Takami**

Bible: Matthew Chapter 6:33

“But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

I have chosen today's Bible portion, Matthew 6:33, because it is one of my father's favorite passages. It is a personal matter, but this the 100th anniversary of my father's ordination after he graduated from the Chicago Theological Seminary. He ministered for eleven years in the U.S. (Union Church of Los Angeles), twenty-six years in Shanghai, China, and thirteen years in a rural church in Shizuoka, Japan, after returning from China following WWII. This year is also the 50th anniversary of his passing away.

Rev. Ban from Korea asked me to speak about the time when ARI was established on this ARI Foundation Day. I was surprised, and worried whether I could take such an important role. However, I decided to accept it because I wanted to thank God for His guidance and protection by remembering those early days and speaking about it. As you may know, ARI Foundation Day, September 16th, 1972, is the memorable day when the decision was made that led to the establishment of ARI. (and the work to see it through was begun.)

First of all, I would like to talk about the relationship between Rev. Toshihiro Takami and the Tsurukawa Rural Institute. When I was still Shinko Furuya (my maiden name), I was a kindergarten teacher at Seiwa Kindergarten in Nishinomiya City (Hyogo Prefecture). In September 1960, Rev. Takami was an evangelist at Ohgimachi Church in Osaka; it was there I met him for the first time. A friend invited me to a Bible class taught by Rev. Takami. It was a very interesting gathering and I really enjoyed it. I thought that this graduate of Yale Divinity School had led a wonderful gathering. In those days I was deeply involved in preschool education, so an adult Bible study was a wonderful learning experience. I was especially thrilled that I could study both the Bible and English at the same time! I thanked my friend for inviting me to the class for which both of us studied diligently and which we attended regularly.

I had to quit working because my mother became ill and needed to be cared for, so I went back to Tokyo to be with her. I stayed with my brother, who was pastor of the International Christian University Church, and looked for a job while nursing my mother. Fortunately, I heard from a friend that Rev. Alden E. Matthews, Deputy Director of Tsurukawa Rural Institute and the Japan Representative of the United Church Board for World Ministries, was recruiting a secretary. I inquired immediately, applied for the position, was hired and started working as his assistant. The person who was the most pleased about this news was my mother. Because at that time my father was pastor at Inatori Church in rural Izu, my mother was happy that I could serve in a seminary which trained pastors who would work in rural areas.

Soon after I started working for Rev. Alden Matthews, I wrote to Rev. Takami and reported what I was doing. He wrote back quickly, "Please ask Rev. Matthews whether he remembers Tom Takami or Mr. Faurot, a pianist, or Miss Seabury." I showed that letter to Rev. Matthews right away.

He said, "Of course I know him! I have been looking for this man for a long time! Please contact him and ask him to come here." I typed the letter to Rev. Takami and shortly thereafter he came to Tsurukawa Rural Institute.

To tell the truth, Rev. Takami was wishing to enter the seminary as a student, but he was appointed to direct the Southeast Asian Course at the institute! We were very pleased to meet each other again when he came. Mr. and Mrs. Matthews encouraged and supported the deepening of our relationship, and after ten months we were married in Seabury Chapel at the International Christian University in Tokyo.

Neither of us knew much about Southeast Asia, so the following year we visited Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines for three weeks and learned the real situations of those places. I have never forgotten meeting a man in the Philippines whose parents and siblings had been killed by Japanese soldiers. I was both surprised and shocked, and apologized to him many times from the bottom of my heart.

During the ten years we lived at Tsurukawa, we were blessed to have two sons and a daughter and to enjoy life as a happy family.

### A Dream of Establishing ARI

In 1972, when news of terrible cyclones in Bangladesh reached Japan, the seminary received a request for assistance from Mr. Paul Munshi, one of its Bangladeshi graduates. The members of the Southeast Asian Course organized a relief mission to go there. The group went to Bangladesh and worked side by side with farmers to help them recover from the damage done by the cyclones. At that time, a vision of Asian Rural Institute was given to Mr. Takami's mind: that of establishing a school where all created beings could live together.

After returning to Japan, while he continued working with the Southeast Asian Course, Mr. Takami began preparations for establishing ARI. He traveled back and forth between Tokyo and Nishinasuno many times. With the cooperation of the late Rev. Haruo Fukumoto; Mrs. Asa Gunji and her sons; Mr. and Mrs. Shore, missionaries at Nishinasuno church; and the staff of the Southeast Asian Course, the day we are celebrating here today had come. On September 16, 1972, the decision to establish ARI became official.

One night several months later after our children had gone to sleep, Mr. Takami rushed home from the office at Tsurukawa Rural Institute and said, "I will write the words to be carved on a foundation stone of the main building right now!" He sat at the desk, pulled

out an ink slab and started rubbing an ink stick on it. I took over when he got tired. He thought for a while, then dipped a brush in the ink and wrote,

*That We May Live Together*  
1973 April

On April 1, 1973, the five of us, Mr. Takami (the driver), our three children and I left Tsurukawa Rural Institute. When we arrived at ARI, the only buildings standing were the Main Building and the Farm Shop, so we stayed nearby in an inn called Kamoshika So in Shiobara for several days while Mr. Takami commuted to his work at ARI. Finally we received the good news that electricity had come to the Main Building! We left Shiobara right away and began to settle into our new life in staff room A of the Main Building. There was no water supply system yet, so Rev. Fukumoto brought us a big bucket of water from the Nishinasuno kindergarten every day, for which we were very thankful. I cooked on a portable cooking stove. The late Mr. and Mrs. Shore let us use their washing machine, which helped us a lot. I was deeply thankful to them. Our children were excited because they thought it was like camping!

After some time, the electricity and plumbing were installed at the staff houses. We carried the boxes labeled "Takami" from the Farm Shop to our new home, and our life at ARI began. Let me talk about our children. Our eldest son, Shinn, was nine years old and in the fourth grade at the Tsukinokizawa Elementary School. Our second son, Masato, was seven and in the first grade, and our daughter, Kaori, was five and entered the oldest class at a kindergarten.

I had to prepare many things for our sons to enter the elementary school. The school specified certain types of inside shoes, sports uniform and caps, so we walked for an hour to a shop near Nishinasuno Station to buy those things. We also practiced walking to the school together to learn the way. At that time the school, a historic wooden structure, stood near the JR Tohoku Line where the present Karino Community Hall is located. In those days, Mr. Takami's mind was always preoccupied by ARI matters and I could not expect him to help me. However, whenever I needed to buy food, he took the four of us to one of the two food stores, both called "Daiyu," in the area.

By the middle of April, all staff members and families from the former Southeast Asian Course gathered at ARI and we were all pleased to see each other. The children were very happy. We united our hearts and worked together for the opening ceremony. ARI asked the staff members' wives (Mrs. Kikuchi, Mrs. Makino, Mrs. Arisawa and me) to prepare the tea reception after the opening ceremony. Even though we had not finished organizing and cleaning our houses, we discussed it together and decided to prepare sandwiches, cookies, cakes, coffee, tea and juice. We divided our work and prepared these foods. Interestingly, while everyone was enjoying the goodies we had prepared, we heard some of the local people's expressions of surprise that alcohol was not served at our party.

The opening ceremony was scheduled to take place on the second floor of the Main Building. When an organ had been carried into the room two days before, I wondered who would be playing it. Soon I found out that it was I! I tried unsuccessfully to find music scores in the unopened boxes but I could not find any. So at night I went to the church and borrowed some music from Rev. Fukumoto's wife and was able to play some songs the next day. The opening ceremony became possible by virtue of everybody's help.

### “Big Challenge”

Mr. Takami had a tough life at ARI. The day started at 6:30 a.m. with nation-wide radio exercises. Since he had a heavy responsibility as both director and chair of the board, he often had to go to Tokyo. Whenever he went to Tokyo, he ran down the hill to our home from his office at ARI, drove a car to the station, found a place to park, ran inside to buy a ticket and jumped onto a train. He would attend meetings and come back by train arriving at Nishinasuno forty minutes after midnight. He had many such days. I was worried about his health, but since the train took more than three hours each way, I imagined that he was able to sleep well on the train. His health was blessed always.

When I came back alone from trips to Tokyo, I would call Mr. Takami to pick me up at the station and he would answer, “I will come right away.” I was relieved just to be able to talk to him. Most of the time, however, I waited one or two hours – sometimes more -- and he did not appear. He never said, “I cannot come now, so please come by taxi.” He probably knew the inside of my purse. It turned out he was simply unable to leave his work.

So I made a big decision and decided to get a driver's license. I thought that if I could drive, I would be able to take Mr. Takami to and from the station, and also I would not have to depend on him to drive me places anymore. So I enrolled in a driving school and received my license in 1974. My dream came true and I became able to send him off and pick him up at the station. I was glad that I could help him in this way and also have more freedom to get from one place to another myself.

When life became somewhat settled, a request came to me from the late Rev. Fukumoto who had helped so much to establish ARI. He asked me to teach three-year-old children at his kindergarten from September of that year to the next March. Thinking about the mess at home, I felt I had no choice but to say “no” to him.

However, since he had helped us so much, I decided to accept this offer to help him even in a small way. My daughter and I commuted to the kindergarten together by the kindergarten bus. The teaching was a very good experience for me for many reasons, one of which was that I became friends with many parents, some of whom became very enthusiastic, committed and lifelong supporters of ARI. Those people, still dear friends, are helping ARI and recruiting new supporters to this day.

Everybody participated in activities of ARI

At one point early in ARI's existence, wives of the staff members were asked to take turns helping with the meal service. We asked a restaurant in town to cook a main dish and we prepared rice, soup, salad, pickles and dessert.

I wanted to build a good relationship with our neighbors. According to tradition, during the two days surrounding a funeral, men and women in the neighborhood assist the grieving family with immediate needs, men and women having separate responsibilities. Mrs. Kikuchi and I went together and found it gave us a good chance to join a circle of local women and get to know them.

Following the tradition of American Thanksgiving, in late November of ARI's first year we decorated the campus for the harvest and invited farmers and friends in Otawara and Nishinasuno for our Harvest Thanksgiving Celebration ("HTC"). Since there were not many interesting local events going on at that time, more people came than we expected. However, it was too cold, so the next year we changed the date to October and have celebrated it on the second weekend of October ever since.

I learned to understand that Mr. Takami had no time to stay at home since his parish had been extended to Asia and Africa. Since I wanted to prevent him from falling asleep at a staff or any other meeting, I tried to make a good atmosphere at home so that he could rest for even just ten minutes after lunch. His fortunate skill to fall asleep quickly was helpful in this regard. I did not expect him to help me with housework. Rather, whenever he had time, I asked him to play catch ball with our sons. Probably because of this, both of our sons became good baseball players when they were in elementary school.

From very few participants in ARI's first few years, the number of people who could join the rural leaders' training program increased and now each year we are able to invite many participants.

I am very grateful for ARI's being in the world today as a gift of the dedication of all the staff members, the full commitment of volunteers, the cooperation of supporters and friends from all over the world, and all the good work of the graduates. I thank God for His guidance until today and send my blessings and congratulations to you all.

Note 1: Shinko's father = Magojiro Furuya (1880-1958)