

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication
Copyright 2000 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with
the restrictions stated in the B4UCopy.txt file on this CD.

TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY

The Bowman Story

Compiled By Duane V. Maxey
From The Missionary Revivalist

* * * * *

Digital Edition 09/19/2000
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

Although not all of this story of "Triumph over Tragedy" was written by Don Bowman, most of it was from his hand, taken from items published in BMC paper, The Missionary Revivalist, -- and I have entered this publication in our PGD Menu under his name.

"Triumph over Tragedy" consists of 6 parts. I have not endeavored to piece these parts of the story together in a strict chronological sequence of the events, however, after reading them all I think they will still paint for the reader quite clearly the facts surrounding this touching and moving story. -- Duane V. Maxey, September 19, 2000

* * * * *

1

MEET YOUR MISSIONARIES -- DON & GRACE BOWMAN AND CHILDREN

Don Bowman was born on January 31, 1934 in Elk City, Okla. As a child he attended Sunday School only occasionally. He attended a lot of different schools in and around Homedale, Idaho. After graduation from high school he joined the Navy. One time, while home on leave, he attended a holiness church with his older brother, who was a Christian, and that night he went to the altar, prayed through, and was saved. This was in June of 1953. In September of the same year he was sanctified in a holiness church in San Francisco, Calif. On board a ship the following year in Iwakuni, Japan, God called Don to preach the gospel. He began a few days later preaching on the ship, as there was no Protestant chaplain aboard. He also preached in a Japanese home through an interpreter. After the Navy, Don attended a Bible School in Idaho. Shortly after this he married to Grace Watson. Grace was reared in a holiness home and early

came to know the Lord as Saviour. She was born the eighth child in a family of ten on March 1, 1938, After knowing Don for several years, and attending the same church, they fell in love, and with God's approval they were married on April 27, 1956.

While pastoring in Ontario, Oregon, God called Bowmans to Japan, in March of 1964. For some time prior to this call he had been reading different books on missions. He read an article by Sis. Billie Holstein on "Who will go?" This put Don on his knees in prayer, and he told the Lord that if nobody else was willing to go he would go. He prayed some about going to India, but God let him know that it was Japan where he was supposed to go. As he prayed he asked God to defeat every hindering voice, all human desires concerning the matter, and to let him know clearly only God's voice and will. God gave Him assurance that it was He that was calling. Don prayed, "Oh Lord, if you can strengthen this call with a definite verse of scripture, it will hold us steady when every opposing factor arises, every discouraging time, test, disappointment, loneliness and trial!" God gave Romans 10:14-15. God impressed on him that it was not man, not church, not people, but God that was sending him. The next night Sister Bowman spent in prayer. There was no pull back in her. The next Sunday, Easter Sunday, at the time when the missions offering was to be taken, Brother and Sister Bowman and their three little children, Teresa, Garry, and Joel, walked to the front of the church and said, "We don't have very much money to put in this morning, but we do want to dedicate five lives to Him and His service." The next few weeks God moved through Don's testimony and folks began pledging money toward the fares and expenses to Japan. Many, many times during those preparatory months God moved in miraculous ways in providing needs. These times greatly strengthened the Bowmans' faith and prepared them for the days that lay ahead of them. On April 15, 1965 five excited Americans arrived in Tokyo, Japan.

They went on to Iwakuni, where Don had served in the Navy for a short time, and served as missionaries for two and a half years, and then the boat tragedy took place. It was on the evening of December 8th 1967 that the little party left the Iwakuni port for Atatajima, a small island about five miles away, to hold evangelistic services. It was a new boat, but the boat builder had made a mistake, and there was a flaw in it. That night the boat filled up with water, turned over, and seven people lost their lives after fighting bravely all night in the icy water. The Bowman's four children, Teresa-9 1/2 years old, Garry- almost 8, Joel 6 1/2, and Donnie - 6 months old, who was born in Iwakuni. Also Lt. Robert Hatcher, Masaru Fujioka, and Kyoko Hayashi lost their lives in that accident. They were wonderful friends and helpers of the Bowmans. Cpl. Herb Christiansen, and Don & Grace Bowman were the only survivors.

Exactly one year later from the day the others went to be with the Lord, December 9, 1968, Robert Masaru (Bobby) Bowman was born in Iwakuni. [I understand that the Japanese word "Masaru" means "Victory"! and thus Bobby Masaru became to them a Divine token of their Triumph over the Tragedy that had robbed them of all of their children exactly one year earlier. -- DVM] On July 5, 1970, Grace Kyoko Bowman was born in Nampa, Idaho. These two little ones have brought much comfort and joy to their parents, but they are still looking forward to the great homecoming in heaven, when all will be re-united.

As a result of the accident, Don became very sick, and they were forced to return to the U.S. for rest. It looked almost impossible for them to ever return to Japan, but after a year and a

half in the homeland, God miraculously touched Don, and they were able to return to Japan on Sept. 21, 1971.

At the present they are living in Iwakuni, and supervising the churches in Iwakuni and Hirose. They are in the midst of the battle, but doing their best to be faithful to God and lost souls.

[1. To view a picture taken in 1972 of Don and Grace Bowman with Bobby and Kyoko, open Graphics\hdm1838.jpg. 2. To view a picture of Bobby and Kyoko in Japanese attire, open Graphics\hdm1838b.jpg. To view a picture of Don and Grace Bowman with their children, taken during a prayermeeting perhaps close to May, 1977, open Graphics\hdm1838c.jpg.]

[Years later, after their return to Japan in 1971 and after their Divinely appointed work in Japan was completed, Don and Grace Bowman returned to the US with their son, Bobby, (Robert Masaru) and daughters Grace Kyoko and Annette. Some time after their return, Don Bowman was elected as General Foreign Missions Secretary of the Bible Missionary Church, a position he still holds today in the year 2000. Their son, Robert Masaru is pastoring a Bible Missionary Church, and their daughter, Kyoko -- now Mrs. John Aaron Miller -- and her husband are serving as Missionaries to Okinawa Japan. At the time of this writing, those wishing to contact Don and Grace Bowman can email them at: gfms@juno.com = the initial letters in lower case standing for G-eneral F-oreign M-issions S-ecretary.]

* * * * *

2

A TRIBUTE TO LT. ROBERT HATCHER -- A CHRISTIAN HERO

By Rev. Don Bowman

[To view a picture of Bob Hatcher open Graphics\hdm1838d.jpg]

We only had the privilege of knowing "Bob" Hatcher for a few months, but he had become a close friend of ours. Several times we had Bible studies together. Bob was eager to learn all he could about the Bible. He attended church for years, but he told me he had only known the Lord as a personal Saviour for a year or so.

When Bob found out we were having a boat built for island evangelism, he told us he wanted to go with us to the islands when it was ready. He also found out that I had sold my motorbike to help on the expenses of the boat, and so he wanted to help me get another one so I could do my calling on it, and so Kyoko San could also use it for her calling. The day of the accident Bob and I had checked on different ones, and then he gave me money to buy a Little Honda, which would be a good size for Kyoko San to use too.

Bob's help during the time of the accident was priceless. When the boat started to leak badly, Bob, along with Herb's help, gave an S.O.S. signal to a Japanese boat that was passing by. He directed the light that was on the top of the boat, and Herb gave the signal with the light switch. Bob, because of his military training, was able to give us valuable advice while we were in the water. He had had much training in swimming, and while we were in the water, he told me how

thankful he was for the training. He rescued our six year old boy (Joel) from the capsized boat and gave him to Herb who then gave him artificial respiration. Bob said to us several times "God has a lesson for us in this."

He worked himself to the state of complete exhaustion helping to take the group clinging to the life preserver to the island. He was so exhausted that he didn't even know when we arrived at the island. My wife helped him to shore, and he seemed to come out of his shock, but later collapsed and, even though my wife gave him mouth to mouth respiration, he did not make it. We can truly say from our heart, "He did his best." We feel we owe our lives to Bob, and the strength the Lord gave him. Without Bob and Herb we wouldn't be alive today. We will cherish the memories we have of our acquaintance with Bob.

His commanding officer, Paul J. Tetreault, Commander, U.S. Navy, said of him in writing to his parents a letter of consolation, "you have every right to be proud of Bob, not only for his meritorious actions yesterday, but particularly for the manner in which he conducted his daily life. In every respect he was a credit to you and himself, his wife, Barbara, this command and his country. Of especial note was his moral character which was above reproach at all times. By his actions and his innate ability to lead his men by precept and example, he commanded the respect of his contemporaries, his subordinates and his seniors alike. I am extremely proud to have served with him."

Bob's wife, Mrs. Robert Hatcher, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hatcher, though broken hearted over his death, have shown a wonderful spirit, and God is giving them sustaining grace. They started a Hatcher Memorial Fund and sent it to us to use for the work here. From the depths of our hearts we appreciate this magnanimous spirit and this wonderful act of kindness. Let us daily remember them in prayer!

Brother Dodd adds these words: "The Bible Missionary Church throughout the entire movement is praying for Bob's wife, Mrs. Robert Hatcher, and his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hatcher of 6400 Woodland Drive, Dallas, Texas. No doubt Bob has heard the Commander-in Chief, Jesus, say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant', and today Bob is at home with The Hero of the Ages."

* * *

3

A TRIBUTE TO CPL. HERBERT CHRISTIANSEN

We met Herb, or "Chris" as he is better known by, through Bob Hatcher. Bob brought him to our house one night so we could study the Bible together. Prior to the time of the accident we had some good times together in prayer and Bible study.

Herb was born in Germany and went to America when he was about eight years old. He is also a young Christian, as he has been saved only a short while, but he is hungry for more of God.

Herb's help during the time of the accident was also priceless. He helped Bob rescue Joel from the capsized boat, and then he gave him artificial respiration. He stayed by Joel's side and took care of him for the two hours we stayed by the boat. He helped to pull the life preserver toward shore for four or five hours, and when we saw we were no longer making any headway, he volunteered to swim to the island to try to get help. At first we said no, but then we all agreed and he left the group and began to swim toward the island. Several times he became completely exhausted and he didn't think he could go on, but he prayed and God gave him the strength to keep going. When he finally reached the island he collapsed for a short while, and he thought he had come to the end and that he would just die there, but he remembered again the group still clinging to the life preserver that were depending upon him. He struggled to his feet and started trying to find help. It was still dark, and he could hardly see, but finally he saw a motorbike, and he figured someone must live nearby. He spotted a light a short distance away and he went there and woke up the Japanese family. He couldn't speak Japanese, and it was difficult for him to convey the message to the Japanese people. Finally, they partially understood him and the Japanese man went to call the Maritime Service. They went down to the beach and they heard my wife, screaming for help. Herb and the Japanese people helped us to the house.

We feel we owe our lives to Herb also, and we praise God for helping him in such a wonderful way! Continue to pray for him that the Lord will use him for His glory! -- Rev. Don Bowman

* * *

4

IN MEMORY OF MISS KYOKO HAYASHI AND MR. MASARU FUJIOKA

Miss Kyoko Hayashi and Mr. Masaru Fujioka lost their lives, along with Lt. Robert Hatcher, in the Bowman tragedy this past December.

Miss Hayashi was an ardent Christian and worker with the Bowmans in Japan and will always be remembered for her part in helping to get the work started there. Her assistance was invaluable. She lived in the home with the Bowmans and assisted them in so many ways. She died in the faith. May God bless her memory and raise up many people in her place to help carry on the work. So much did she love the Bowmans and their children that her people requested that part of her cremated remains be buried with the Bowman baby (Donnie Lauren) in America. May God bring comfort to the loved ones she has left behind is the prayer of Bible Missionary people around the world.

Brother Fujioka perished in the sea in an effort to reach shore and bring assistance to the others. He was a zealous Christian and Brother Bowman's right-hand man, and the one who Brother Bowman hoped would soon be the pastor of the home base church. He left behind his wife and two children. Brother and Sister Bowman are making a home for this bereaved wife and children. Words cannot express our sorrow over the loss this dear woman and her children have sustained. We do not doubt God's providence, but pledge ourselves to hold these sorrowing ones up in prayer. May the memory of this man who loved God and holiness be the means of stirring up others to take the way and make it finally to the City of God.

* * * * *

5

JAPAN

DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our wonderful Lord and Saviour! He is more precious to us now than ever before in our lives: We love Him supremely today. We want to thank each one of you for your prayers in our behalf, and we want to urge you to continue your intercession for us. We are so thankful for the many letters, sympathy cards, telegrams, love offerings, and all the many ways you have shown your love and concern.

As you probably know, we were only in the States just long enough to take care of the funeral of our four precious children, (Teresa, Garry, Joel, and Donnie) and also a little more needed business, and then we returned to Japan. We have really been busy since we have returned. We are not back to normal strength yet, but we are so thankful for the strength the Lord is giving us. At times the loneliness has hit us like a great wave, and it seems like it would be much easier to die than to live, but praise the Lord for His sustaining grace at such times as this. One of the hardest times was when we had to clean out the children's and Kyoko San's dresser drawers, and pack their things away. It was a difficult time, but thanks to your prayers, and the grace of God, He pulled us through.

Mrs. Fujioka and her two children live with us now. Maki, the girl, is eight years old, and Toru, the boy, is six years old. They seem to be adjusting real well. I try to play with them quite a bit, so they won't miss their father so much. Mrs. Fujioka is growing much stronger in the Lord. When she opened a letter from the States and found a sympathy card and a dollar, she was really thrilled. She cried as she testified about it in church, for she realized that the church in America cared about them.

We have been receiving quite a few letters from different places here in Japan. Some of them are from people who had had a life of suffering and misery; and they have read about us, and they feel that maybe we can help them. Two lady school teachers were among this group, and they have already come to our house and become Christians. Another lady schoolteacher has been saved, and a fifteen year old girl with a heavy burden has been saved too. All of these have been saved since we returned to Japan. Our testimony has been printed in some of the Japanese Christian magazines, so pray that God will use this for His glory.

In Christ,
The Bowmans

* * * * *

6

THE BOWMAN CHILDREN

By Mrs. Tracy Knapp
Written, Feb. 21, 1969

Four little voices are silent
In the home where once they were heard
Eight little feet are resting
From the paths where they have trod.
But they are walking beside the Master
On the streets of the city so fair;
Their voices sweetly blending
As they sing with the heavenly choir.
Their tasks on earth are all finished;
They have laid their armour down
And gone to dwell with Jesus
To receive their robe and crown.
Seems we see their happy faces
Among the flowers there
As they pluck from the Master's garden
Rosebuds, Oh! so fair.
One they Chose for Mommy and Daddy
Was the choicest one they could find
To fill their home with fragrance
Of heaven's love divine.
He's just a tiny rosebud
Sent from heaven above
To fill your hearts with blessing
And prove God's eternal love.
Day by day as this bud opens
To a beautiful full bloomed rose
May his life have a sweet aroma
And his voice proclaim God's love.
Until all who learn to know him
Will know from heaven he's come
That they might know of Jesus
And His salvation plan.

* * * * *

THE END