

8 Japanese Brothers



Sister Haru Kina with her eight sons in 1962. Right: Sister Kina and her husband, Gen-ei, with six of their children.

BY TADASHI KINA

My parents had nine children—eight sons and a daughter. The only girl died as a small child in World War II during the battle of Okinawa. Following the war, my father established a successful automotive repair shop in Nago, located in the northern part of the main island of Okinawa. In 1954, when my youngest brother was 2 and my oldest brother was 17, our father died, and my mother became a widow at the age of 40. Mother could not accept Father's death. Sometimes, in her sorrow, she wanted to follow after him, but she had eight boys she could not leave behind.

Up until that time, my mother, Haru, had relied upon our father to be the breadwinner; but having lost him, she was now forced to work. She tried to forget her sorrow by working and then coming home and caring for her children. She struggled to raise her eight rowdy boys alone. When I was old enough to understand, I realized I never knew when my mother got up or when she went to sleep.

Teach My Children about God

Ten years after the death of my father, as if guided by the Spirit, Mother left Nago amid the opposition of friends and relatives and moved to Naha, the capital of Okinawa. A few years later, about 1967, the missionaries knocked on our door. At that time our house was isolated and surrounded by sugarcane

fields and a graveyard. The road to the house was in poor condition, and few people ever called on us. The missionaries were Elder Jackson and Elder Fuchigami, a second-generation Japanese-American from Hawaii. The missionaries asked, "May we speak with you about God?" Mother had been concerned about her sons' education and thought we might learn something good from the missionaries, so she invited the elders in and said, "Please teach my children about God."

Mother found peace as she learned about the gospel. She was impressed that the missionaries paid their own way and that Elder Jackson was serving a mission, even though he had lost his parents in an automobile accident when he was younger and had struggled along with an older sister. As she listened to the missionaries, Mother shed tears for the first time since my father's death. She felt the Lord's love and the Spirit through the discussions. She knew that this was the church our family had been searching for.

To set an example for her sons, Mother was baptized first. She was touched by the missionaries' message and by their loving, kind behavior. She began to think that the greatest education she could give her children would be for us to learn



Because of our mother's faith in the missionaries' message, the gospel is blessing our family and many others throughout Japan.

Below, left to right: Elder Fuchigami, one of the missionaries who taught Sister Kina the gospel. Sister Kina at age 85. Sister Kina with her son Toshimitsu and her grandson at the Laie Hawaii Temple in 1970.





This monument in Mabuni, Okinawa, lists the names of victims of the battle of Okinawa. Tadashi Kina points to the name of his sister, Fumiko, who died at age two. Below: Missionary Tadashi Kina (right) at a baptism. Below right: The youngest Kina son, Akira, on his mission in 1972.

the gospel and become missionaries. Mother always told the missionaries, “There are eight boys in our family. Please come to our house and teach the gospel to them. When they are all converted, there will be eight more priesthood holders at church. And they may be missionaries in the future.”

Serving Missions

Most of my brothers and I were influenced by our mother and joined the Church one after another. As we attended church, our lives changed through the gospel and the help extended to us from the brothers and sisters at church. We became better sons and brothers. We started helping one another more and found life to be enjoyable. Four of us later preached the gospel as missionaries in various parts of Japan. When one of my older brothers, who had moved away from Okinawa, saw the fine stature of one of his younger brothers who was serving a mission, he said, “I can’t believe this is my younger brother

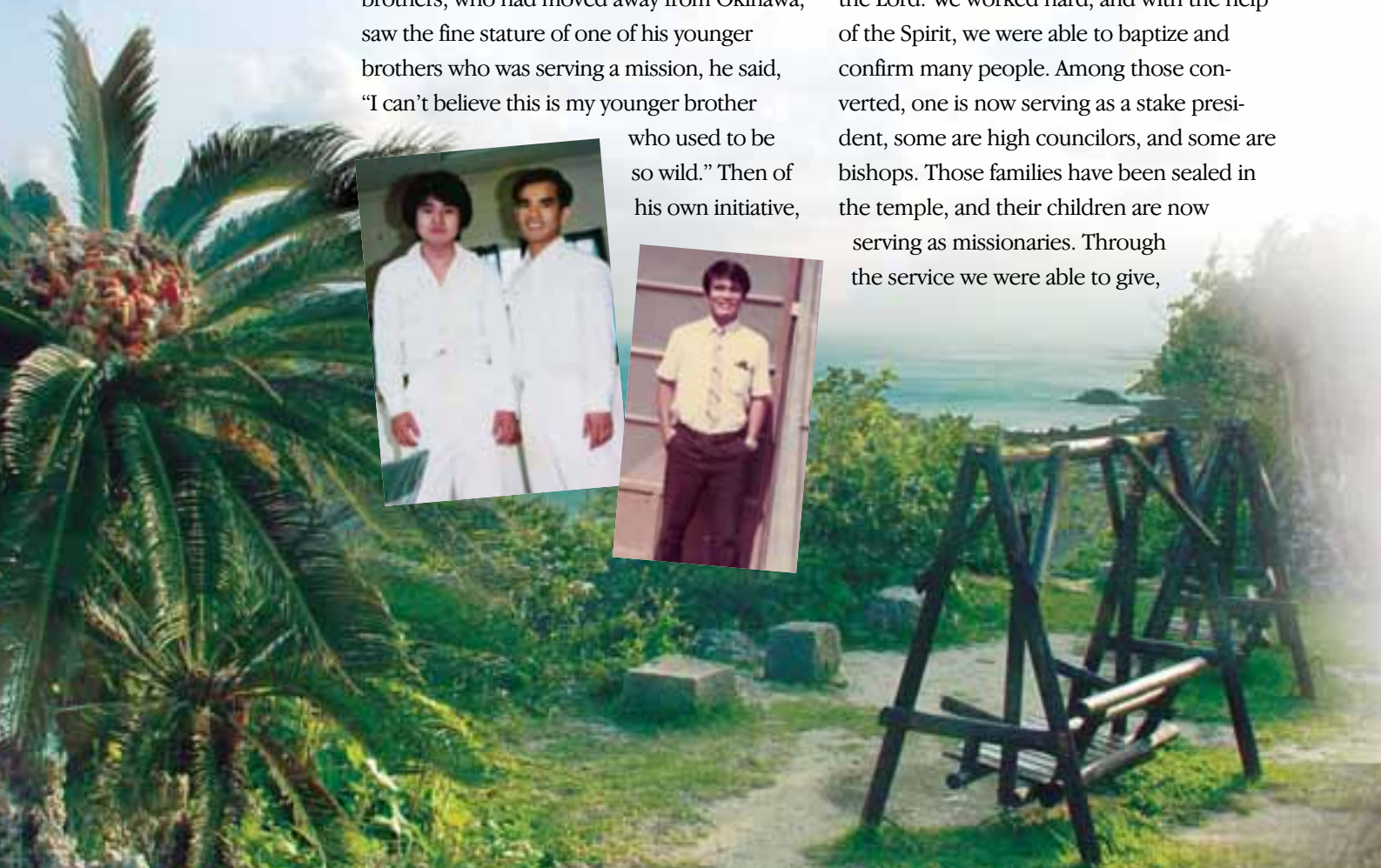
who used to be so wild.” Then of his own initiative,



he sought out the Church and was soon baptized and confirmed.

Before another of my older brothers was baptized at the age of 27, he had no idea how to live. He was troubled and would drink and party. He caused his family and the people around him much grief. When this brother learned about the purpose of life through the gospel, he was baptized and confirmed and eventually married a wonderful woman in the Church. He found joy in life and began feeling a purpose in being alive. He shared the gospel with friends and was a good influence to many. My brothers who were on missions could hardly believe it when they heard that this brother had joined the Church.

As missionaries, my brothers and I received assistance from our mission presidents and companions as well as Church members and the Lord. We worked hard, and with the help of the Spirit, we were able to baptize and confirm many people. Among those converted, one is now serving as a stake president, some are high councilors, and some are bishops. Those families have been sealed in the temple, and their children are now serving as missionaries. Through the service we were able to give,





Sister Kina (center) sits surrounded by family members at a family reunion in 2002.

gospel seeds have been planted all around Japan and are starting to bloom. Mother's dream to have her children be missionaries came true.

Building the Kingdom

Through serving in callings, my brothers and I have grown spiritually. Each brother who has joined the Church has been sealed in the temple and is now raising a happy family. Mother was sealed in the Laie Hawaii Temple to our father and sister and those of us who have been converted. She was able to realize the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ as she received the blessings of the temple. She later visited relatives, diligently seeking for information that would help her with her family history work. My mother has served in the Relief Society and Young Women programs and as a seminary teacher.

The Kina family now includes daughters-in-law, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren: a total of 66 family members. Of these, 51 are members of the Church and 10 are returned missionaries. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren will continue going out on missions as they become of age. We feel that it is the duty of those who have received the blessings of the gospel to do so.

Kina family members have served or are serving in the following callings: two in the stake presidency (or district presidency), three as high councilors, seven in bishoprics (or branch presidencies), four as high priests group leaders,

eight in elders quorum presidencies, six as mission leaders, and seven in Relief Society presidencies. We feel blessed that we have had these opportunities to serve others.

Mother's Testimony

Mother received a strong testimony as she watched her children's lives change for the better through the gospel of Jesus Christ. She had a desire to share the gospel with those she loved. She introduced friends and relatives to the missionaries and often held family meetings at home. Through this she was instrumental in bringing many into the Church, including 50 of her relatives.

Mother, now 90, once bore the following testimony: "As a mother, I would gladly sacrifice myself so that my children could return to their Heavenly Father. How can one leave any child he or she loves so much and still go to Heavenly Father? My most important mission here upon the earth as a mother is to return the children I received from Heavenly Father back to Him."

We sons are now of the age that we have children and grandchildren and can understand and appreciate our mother's testimony.

The gospel is true, and truth changes people. Through the gospel we have come to know God's love and mercy. We have made many friends with the wonderful brothers and sisters in the Church and are grateful for the changes we have experienced through their examples. We will go forward as instruments in God's hand here in Okinawa and preach the restored gospel, build churches and temples, and help to establish Zion. ■