

The Story Of Sadako Sasaki



Sadako at age 12

Sadako was two years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. She was two kilometers away from where the bomb exploded. Most of Sadako's neighbors died, but Sadako wasn't injured at all, at least not in any way people could see.

Up until the time Sadako was in the seventh grade (1955) she was a normal, happy girl. However, one day after an important relay race that she helped her team win, she felt extremely tired and dizzy. After a while the dizziness went away leaving Sadako to think that it was only the exertion from running the race that made her tired and dizzy. But her tranquillity did not last. Soon after her first encounter with extreme fatigue and dizziness, she experienced more incidents of the same.

One day Sadako became so dizzy that she fell down and couldn't get up. Her school-mates informed the teacher. Later Sadako's parents took her to the Red Cross Hospital to see what was wrong with her. Sadako found out that she had leukemia, a kind of blood cancer. Nobody could believe it.

At that time they called leukemia the "A-bomb disease". Almost everyone who got this disease died, and Sadako was very scared. She wanted to go back to school, but she had to stay in the hospital where she cried and cried.

Shortly thereafter, her best friend, Chizuko, came to visit her. Chizuko brought some origami (folding paper). She told Sadako of a legend. She explained that the crane, a sacred bird in Japan, lives for a hundred years, and if a sick person folds 1,000 paper cranes, then that person would soon get well. After hearing the legend, Sadako decided to fold 1,000 cranes in the hope that she would get well again.

Sadako's family worried about her a lot. They often came to visit her in hospital to talk to her and to help her fold cranes. After she folded 500 cranes she felt better and the doctors said she could go home for a short time, but by the end of the first week back home the dizziness and fatigue returned and she had to go back to the hospital.

Sadako kept folding cranes even though she was in great pain. Even during these

times of great pain she tried to be cheerful and hopeful. Not long afterwards, with her family standing by her bed, Sadako went to sleep peacefully, never to wake up again. She had folded a total of 644 paper cranes.

Everyone was very sad. Thirty-nine of Sadako's classmates felt saddened by the loss of their close friend and decided to form a paper crane club to honor her. Word spread quickly. Students from 3,100 schools and from 9 foreign countries gave money to the cause. On May 5, 1958, almost 3 years after Sadako had died, enough money was collected to build a monument in her honor. It is now known as the Children's Peace Monument, and is located in the center of Hiroshima Peace Park, close to the spot where the atomic bomb was dropped.

Opening Ceremony, May 1958

Many of the children who helped make the monument a reality participated in the Three students, including Sadako's younger brother Sasaki pulled the red and white tape off the symbolize its completion, while Beethoven's Symphony was played. The little bell, by Dr. Yukawa, inscribed with "A Thousand Cranes" on the front and "Peace on Earth Heaven" on the back, rang out and the sound far as the A-bomb Dome and the Memorial Cenotaph. Adults who supported the group later formed the "Paper Crane Club" in June. (The original Paper Crane Club disbanded in 1997).



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Children from all over the world still send folded paper cranes to be placed beneath Sadako's statue. In so doing, they make the same wish which is engraved on the base of the statue:

This is our cry, This is our prayer, Peace in the world".

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Sadako Sasaki was two years old when the bomb was dropped on her home city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Sadako seemed to escape any ill effects after her exposure to the bomb, until, ten years later, she developed leukemia, "the atom bomb disease."

When she was in the hospital, her friend Chizuko brought her a folded paper crane and told her the story about it. According to Japanese legend, the crane lives for a thousand years, and a sick person who folds a thousand cranes will become well again.

Sadako folded cranes throughout her illness. The flock hung above her bed on strings. When she died at the age of twelve, Sadako had folded six hundred and forty-four cranes. Classmates folded the remaining three hundred and fifty-six cranes, so that one thousand were buried with Sadako.

In 1958, with contributions from school children, a statue was erected in Hiroshima Peace Park, dedicated to Sadako and to all children who were killed by the atom bomb.

Each year on August 6, Peace Day, thousands of paper cranes are placed beneath Sadako's statue by people who wish to remember Hiroshima and express their hopes for a peaceful world. Their prayer is engraved on the base of the statue:



*This is our cry,
this is our prayer;
peace in the world.*

"Peace Crane, I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world." Sadako Sasaki, age 12



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