

## Dr. Hideko Tamura-Snider

### Chairperson, One Sunny Day Initiatives, Oregon, USA



*Dr. Hideko Tamura-Snider is a retired clinical social worker who was a child in Hiroshima when the city was destroyed in 1945 by an atom bomb explosion. She is the author of One Sunny Day, a story of a daughter and family living through the WWII devastation of Hiroshima and subsequent struggles. She later came to the US, earned a BA from The College of Wooster, an MA from the University of Chicago, SSA, and completed a four-year graduate program at McCormick Theological Seminary. She served in adoption and foster care services for the Chicago Child Care Society, supervised in the Adult Psychiatry Clinic at Northwestern University Medical School and coordinated social work program for the Department of Radiation Oncology for the University of Chicago Hospitals. Additionally, she maintained a private practice in the western suburbs of Chicago in business and therapeutic consultations. She has lectured extensively at universities in the US and in the UK with multi-media appearances. Dr. Hideko has continued her civic services after retirement and relocation to the West Coast, founding a non-profit charity, promoting antinuclear policies, peace education and collective healing for war refugees beyond cultural barriers. She led a 38-member Peace Choir to Japan in 2006, with concerts in Kyoto, Kobe and in Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park.*

*She received an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters from The College of Wooster. She was appointed Peace Ambassador by the City of Hiroshima and was a guest speaker for the 70th bombing anniversary in Hiroshima of Children's Peace Conference in 2015.*

*Her many publications include 'When a Peace Tree Blooms' (2014), translated into Japanese and Chinese and 'One Sunny Day' (1996) by Open Court Publishing among other.*

#### *Please tell us about your life and trajectory.*

I was a child in Hiroshima when the city was destroyed by the nuclear bomb. A safe haven in the country until the day before. Came back on August 5th to Hiroshima with my best friend. The next morning the atom bomb exploded 2,000 feet above the center of the city, a little over a mile from my home. It exploded with the force of 15,000 tons of TNT. The flash of light so intense, scorched stone, set wood on fire, killing thousands instantly. My mother, best friend, relatives and friends were killed. My house was destroyed. I was pinned under its wreckage and crawled out following the light. Thousands died from burns. The entire city was destroyed by fire. Many more died from radiation sickness. I got sick, too, and almost died. All in all, about 150,000 people were killed by the bomb. The Allied Occupation disallowed us to report or talk about our pain and suffering except for the John Hersey's article "Hiroshima", which reported survivors' experiences. When the occupation ended 8 years later, we could finally understand the nature and the effects of radiation more fully. We formed new perspectives that no one else should suffer our experience ever again and began reaching out to share our experiences.

#### *Please share with us the motivation for, and your journey since, founding the One Sunny Day Initiatives.*

Our estate with forests of trees and flowering bushes were also burned down.

My grandfather who headed a multi-national corporation and was a devout Buddhist taught us to extend charity to all. We practiced it much like the Golden Rule of Christianity. Attending the Hiroshima Mission School for Girls enabled me to experience dedicated American missionary's compassion and empathy for the discouraged students. I learned to speak English and eventually received college and graduate degrees in the US. My own struggle with the Hiroshima experience led to spending most of my adult life in the service profession, helping people to heal from the traumas of their lives.

One Sunny Day Initiatives was legally chartered to promote Reconciliation and Peace Education in February, 2007, with the expense reimbursement from the successful concert tour by the Ashland Peace Choir to Japan which I organized. The late Dave Marston and his family singing his song of regrets were taped and shared widely in Japan and kept in the Time Capsule at the Koi Monument.



Dr. Tamura-Snider celebrating Christmas with her American foster family in Greensburg, PA. (1953)



My picture book, "When a Peace Tree Blooms" had been written long before I learned about the Green Legacy activities. It is translated into, English, Japanese, Chinese and Russian. The theme of overcoming destruction, death and dying and healing collectively as a Family of Man summarizes the theme.

***What are your thoughts on Green Legacy Hiroshima's mission of promoting peace through nature, and how important and impactful are programs like Green Legacy Hiroshima and One Sunny Day Initiatives in changing people's attitudes towards nuclear weapons?***

Almost all the trees in Hiroshima were killed by the blast. We were told it would take 75 years before new plants could grow. But we saw a few new buds come back the following spring. It was like a dream, a nature's whispering hope to us. We were sickly but we carried on like the revived trees, one day at a time since. The Green Legacy Hiroshima met our mission in promoting life, resilience and hope in building a peaceful future and is very much what we have tried ourselves. Changing people's attitude about the nuclear war per se might be a long way but this is a gentle way for them to come around.



Dr. Tamura-Snider (left) at a GLH tree planting by One Sunny Day Initiatives in Grants Pass, Oregon.

***What are your thoughts on Hiroshima city's progress towards promoting peace?***

The city of Hiroshima and the Mayors have done much to keep Hiroshima's experience as a top priority through visionary projects, i.e., Mayors for Peace, updating the Peace Museum, exchange student programs, and others. I was appointed by the City Council to act as a Peace Ambassador for the city which I accepted after they assured me I was acting as one already.

***What is your advice and message to both the younger generation and those who still support the use of nuclear weapons?***

I believe the young generations are concerned with their future and those who are taking part in peace movements are commendable. When I visit highschools and colleges virtually and in person, they're very easy to engage, showing interest in receiving revived Hiroshima trees (IN University, OSU and others) afterwards. I am yet to meet after my talk a proponent of the use of nuclear weapons.

***How important has it been to plant atomic bomb survivor trees in Oregon? How has this campaign grown, and what can we all learn from it?***

It took some efforts to find a place to receive/germinate the seeds. Michael Oxendine who headed the SOU Maintenance was persuaded to take it on after a former classmate from Jogakuin Highschool made a preliminary visit to the GLH office for me. He shared the information with his statewide Colleagues, and with Jim Gers-



Dr. Tamura-Snider with Michael Oxendine (left) and Jim Gersbach (Right)

bach of the Department of Agriculture who happened to see the budding seedlings in the SOU Green House. Between the two compassionate arborists the revived Hiroshima saplings were accepted widely. I think in part the thought of public threat to life was counteracted with the theme of resilience and hope symbolized by the revived Hiroshima tree as well as welcoming the friendship and peaceful gesture. There is a complex layer of ambivalences in the U.S. on the Hiroshima experiences but we also prepared QR coded plaque, for the public viewers for background information.

***Oregon State was the second to support the nuclear ban treaty and your own story and work are examples that embody Hiroshima's motto 'forgive but not forget'. What is your advice to those in other parts of the world, or indeed parts of US society, suffering from or just emerging from conflict and violence, in moving forward towards peace?***

I believe this was accomplished with the consorted efforts put forth by various organizations initiated by the Oregon PSR. I participated in submitting my Hiroshima experience and appeal in support also. "Forgive but not Forget" was never

my motto, I was never angry to begin with but struggled with the deepest grief that compelled me to "collectively heal" and help build the Culture of Peace. Warring has been going on since the Stone Age with the survival competitions among us. Unless we can evolve one day to seek common grounds and rely on our higher nature to move forward together, violent means will continue to exist. May the trees we planted in Oregon, California, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Indiana, Georgia, North Carolina and beyond act as a reminder of the possibility of a world free of nuclear weapons.

*Feature edited by Saeeda Razick of GLH*

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