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I was one of the people saved by Chiune Sugihara from the horrors of the Holocaust. After World War II began, after the bombing of Warsaw had started, my parents and I left our home in Warsaw to escape the bombs. We were trapped in Lithuania as the Nazis advanced. We, along with the other refugees, had nowhere to go. Consul Sugihara provided us, and about 2000 other families, with transit visas to Japan, allowing us to escape to Japan, and eventually to America.

Sugihara did this courageous act of issuing the visas against his government's orders. He did it because his conscience dictated that he help people in a desperate situation. He wanted to do the right thing. And so, he is a model for the "Do the Right Thing" contest.



Mother, Sylvia and Father

This contest grew out of a small incident. I was a



Passport donated to Town of Yaotsu in 1993

guest of the Governor of Gifu in Japan to give a talk at the First Annual Bioscience Conference and to donate my father's passport with Sugihara's signature to Yaotsu town of Gifu. In the audience for this event there was a young Japanese woman, an English teacher with her 10-year-old son.

After my talk she came up to speak to me and to introduce her son. I said, "How nice that you brought your little boy to this event, but he must have been very bored by all these speeches." She said, "Oh no, I want him to learn about Consul Sugihara and to have a hero to look up to. He needs a role model so he can grow up to be a just and decent man."

This made a deep impression on me and when I came back to America I wanted to do something that would bring her idea to other young people and so I started this contest for high school students in New York, with help from Eugene and Rose

Kleiner Family Foundation and the New York City Board of Education. The New York students had to write an essay about some moral choice they had made in their own lives – how they had chosen to “do the right thing”. And then that contest expanded to San Francisco, Boston and Kenya/Burundi.

Look at the thread that connects that little boy in Japan to your own school and your own lives. Isn't it amazing how an act that happened long ago and far away in Japan has effects many years later in Kibera? That is known as The Butterfly Effect. The Butterfly Effect is a metaphorical example in which a butterfly flapping its wings in China, can result in a tornado in America. The small air currents generated by the butterfly's wings are amplified over time and space to result in a gale-force wind far away. Sugihara's good deed in 1940 resulted not only in saving my own life, but also the life of my son who would otherwise never have been born, of his daughter, and in the future, of her children. There are more than 40,000 descendants of the original group to whom these visas were issued, and many of them have made and are making contributions to improve the world. Consider how many teachers, doctors, artists, musicians, carpenters, came to be because of Sugihara's moral choice. That is the Butterfly Effect: good deeds multiply and have an impact in the future.

The stories you wrote are inspiring. You speak of hardships and of difficult decisions made with courage. You speak of people who can guide your way in life in a good direction. I am so happy that this contest is here in your country and that you will continue to use as role models those in your community who inspire you to be the best you can. I wish you all good things.



Sylvia's family with other refugees
Kiyomizu Temple, Kyoto in 1941



Sylvia, her son and daughter in law and grandchild
Kiyomizu Temple, Kyoto in 2017