

Reunion of Old Enemies

In April of 1986, two gray-haired men greeted each other warmly in Tokyo's International Airport. Both men had tears in their eyes.

One man was an American named Ponich; the other was a Japanese named Ishibashi. The last time the two men met was 40 years before, as enemies, in a cave in Okinawa.

At that time, the American, then known as Sgt. Ponich, was holding a 5-year-old Japanese boy in his arms. The child had been shot through both legs. Ishibashi was one of two Japanese snipers hiding in a dark corner of the same cave.

Suddenly, Ishibashi and his comrade leaped from their hiding place, aimed their rifles at Ponich, and prepared to fire point-blank. There wasn't a thing Ponich could do to defend himself.

He simply put the 5-year-old on the ground, took out his canteen, and began to wash the child's wounds. If he had to die, he thought, what better way to die than performing an act of mercy.

The two snipers watched in amazement. Then, slowly, they lowered their rifles.

Minutes later, Ponich did something Ishibashi never forgot. He took the child in his arms, stood up, bowed in gratitude to the two Japanese, and took the child to an American field hospital.



How did the two men happen to meet again after all those years? In 1985, Ponich wrote a letter to a Tokyo newspaper thanking the Japanese people for the two Japanese soldiers who had spared his life 40 years before in that cave in Okinawa.

Ishibashi saw the letter and contacted the newspaper who set up the meeting. The reunion was long and affectionate.

What about you? Do you hold an old grudge against someone that needs to be resolved? Is there someone who needs to experience your mercy? There is joy in forgiveness.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).

– Beecher Hunter