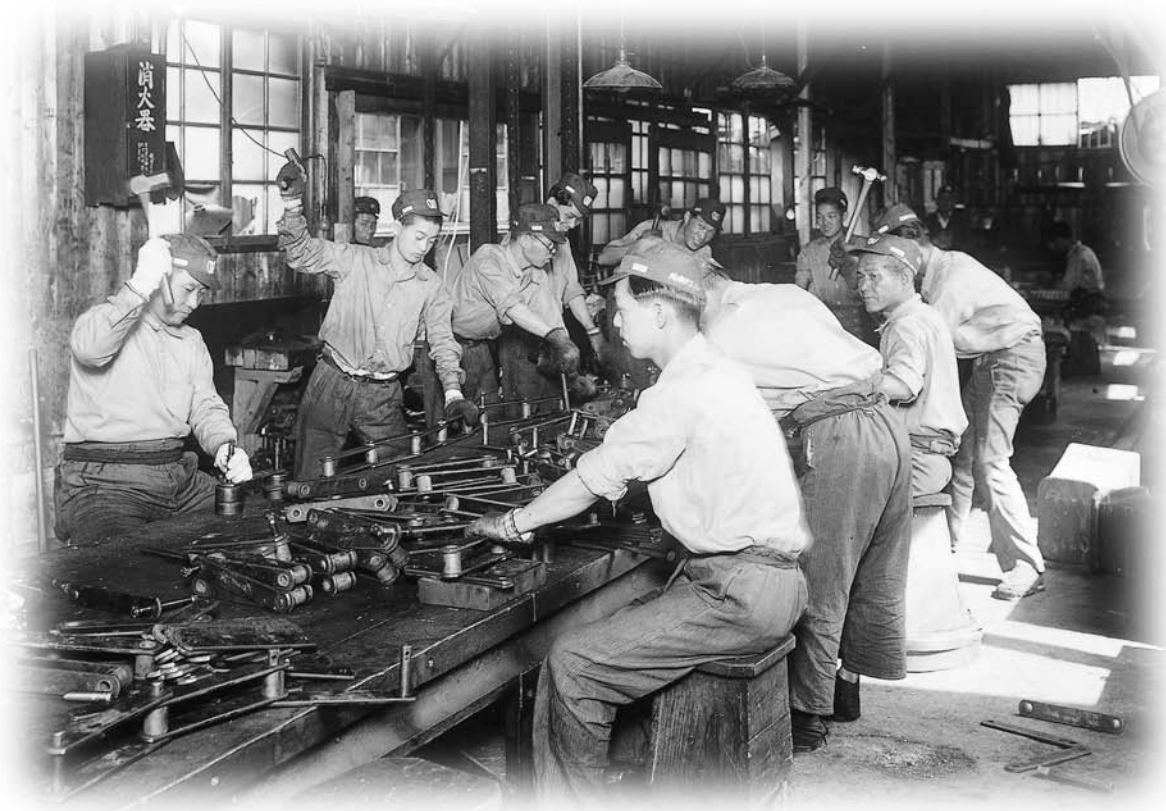


Learn from a footprint of 90 years of Tsubakimoto Chain

Tsubakimoto history in manga form

- Part 1 | The Genesis of Tsubakimoto Chain
- Part 2 | Leading the way through the Post-War recovery period
- Part 3 | Aiming to become a global company,
Tsubakimoto Chain turns its eyes overseas
- Part 4 | Surviving the periods of high growth and difficulties,
and making further progress



The Genesis of Tsubakimoto Chain



- 1890** Setsuzo Tsubakimoto is born in Osaka city. Nine days later, his father passes away and the family moves in with his mother's relatives. Setsuzo and his older brother Sanshichiro are raised by their mother.
- 1912** Setsuzo graduates from Kobe Commercial School and joins the Naigaimen Company
- 1915** Setsuzo is transferred to Naigaimen Company's Shanghai branch office
- 1917** Setsuzo founds the Tsubakimoto Industrial Works in Minamihama, Toyosaki-cho, Nishinari-gun, Osaka by taking over the Tamura Ironworks. Retains plant manager, machinery, equipment and all staff, and starts to manufacture bicycle chains.
- 1919** Tsubakimoto Industrial Works is renamed Tsubakimoto Shoten. Brother Sanshichiro becomes the new plant manager. Setsuzo himself takes on the role of general manager.
- 1921** Bicycle chain market crashes due to depression following First World War
- 1923** Setsuzo decides to make machine chains taking inspiration from overseas catalogs
- 1924** Receives orders for chains for use in the sugar production industry from Taiwan
- 1928** Ceases production of bicycle chains and switches to manufacturing industrial-use chains
- 1929** Releases Roller Chain Catalog (No 291)
- 1931** Sends Ichiro Yamanaka to Korea and Manchuria to open up sales routes. Tsubakimoto Shoten recognized as a designated supplier to the Department of the Navy
- 1936** Receives first order for large-scale conveyor plant
- 1937** Construction starts on new Tsubakimoto Chain plant in Tsurumi-cho, Asahi-ku, Osaka
- 1938** Tsubakimoto Private Tutorial School opened
- 1941** Creation of a new stockholding company with capital of ¥3 million. First agents meeting held ("Tsubaki no kai" Distributor's Association Meeting)
- 1942** Minamihama Plant shut down
- 1945** End of World War Two. Second Plant requisitioned by US occupation forces.

Tsubakimoto Shoten had been prospering as a manufacturer of bicycle chains since its foundation in 1917. However, the depression following the First World War was beginning to take its toll on the company.

Things can't go on like this...

We'll find ourselves going out of business unless we can diversify our product lineup. We can't get by on just bicycle chains any more.

Manager
Setsuzo Tsubakimoto (32)

Now that I think of it, when I went to sell textile machine parts the other day...

Right!
I'll order in some overseas chain catalogs.

...they were using all kinds of foreign-made chains on their coal feeders.

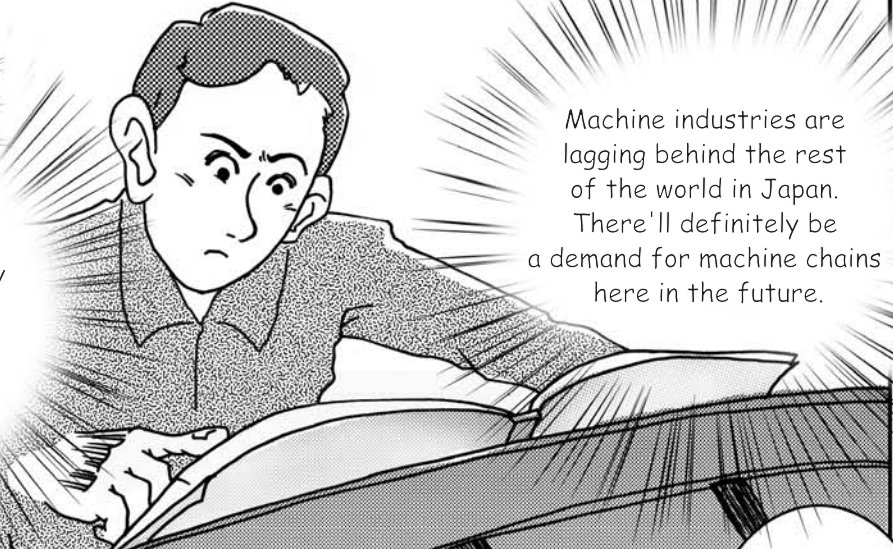
Mr. Tsubakimoto!
There's a parcel for you!

Great.
They've finally arrived.

Wow!

I never realized there were so many different types of chains... and so many uses for them!

Machine industries are lagging behind the rest of the world in Japan. There'll definitely be a demand for machine chains here in the future.



We're going to make machine chains!

OK.

The best way to let people know about all the different kinds of chains and how they can be used...

...is to show them a catalog.



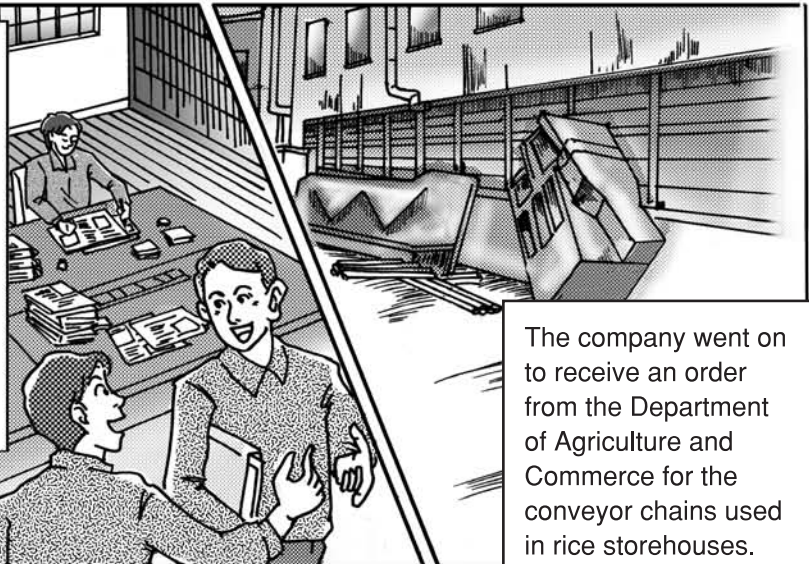
Tsubakimoto stayed up well into the night, cutting and pasting photographs in order to make his own catalog.



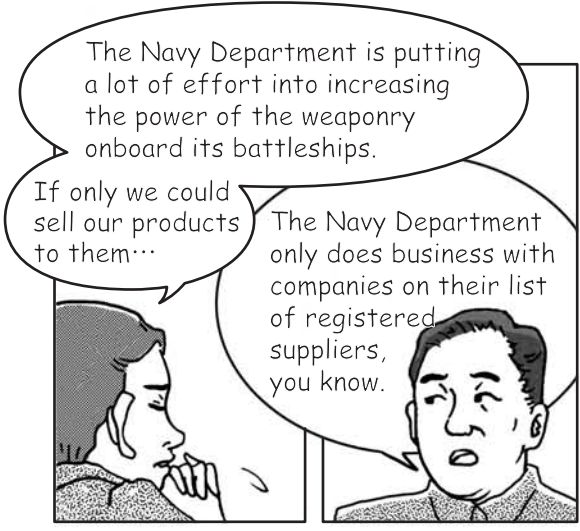
His aim was not only to let his clients know about the products, but also to raise awareness about the diverse range of chain applications.

In 1924,

Tsubakimoto Shoten received an order for the large chains that are used to transport sugar cane to sugar making machinery (cane carrier chains) from a Taiwanese sugar producer.



The company went on to receive an order from the Department of Agriculture and Commerce for the conveyor chains used in rice storehouses.



The Navy Department is putting a lot of effort into increasing the power of the weaponry onboard its battleships.

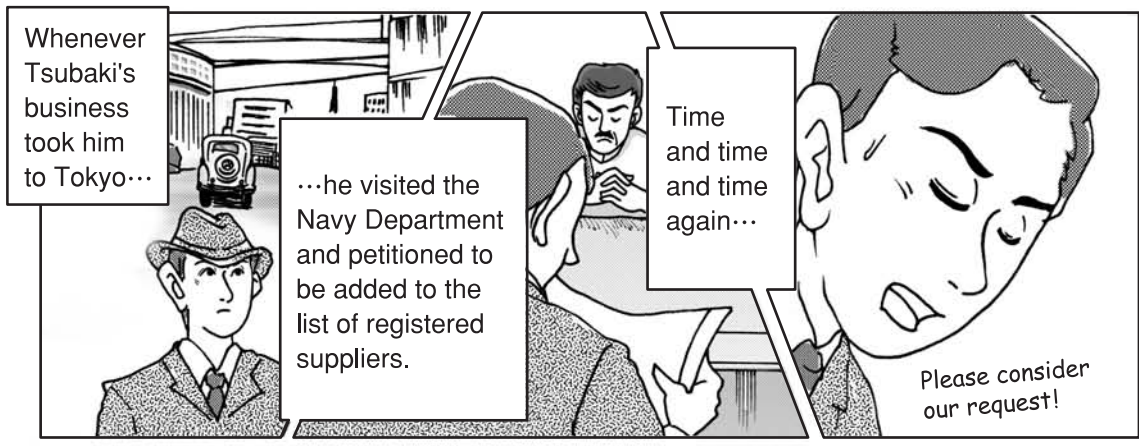
If only we could sell our products to them...

The Navy Department only does business with companies on their list of registered suppliers, you know.



Well, let's just request that they add our name to that list!

We need to take every chance we can get!



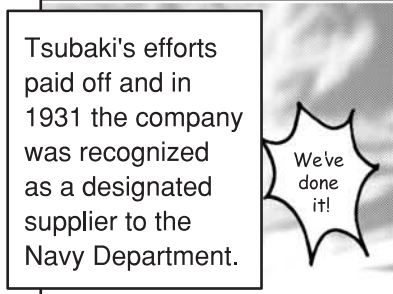
Whenever Tsubaki's business took him to Tokyo...

...he visited the Navy Department and petitioned to be added to the list of registered suppliers.

Time and time and time again...



Please consider our request!



Tsubaki's efforts paid off and in 1931 the company was recognized as a designated supplier to the Navy Department.

We've done it!



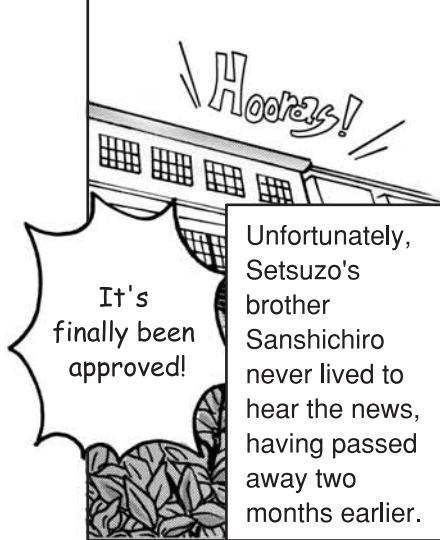
We did it Sanshichiro! We did it...



We really have to work hard now and make the most of this opportunity.

We're not just going to supply the Navy...

We'll use this chance to make a name for ourselves nationwide as a specialist machine chain manufacturer!



It's finally been approved!

Unfortunately, Setsuzo's brother Sanshichiro never lived to hear the news, having passed away two months earlier.

Among other things...
...the company went on to produce conveyor chains for coal moving bucket elevators, chains for raising sluice gates, and roller chains for diesel powered locomotives.



Sales increased.
Business improved.

Ahh...



It looks like we're on track as far as machine chain production goes...

...now would be a good time to reorganize the company.



The company ceased production of bicycle chains and instead concentrated on machine chains. At the same time the name was changed to "Tsubakimoto Chain Works".

In 1928, the factory separated from Tsubakimoto Shoten and the two took on different roles.

Tsubakimoto Shoten

Production of machine chains

Sales and orders for chains and other products.

Tsubakimoto Chain Works
(Minamihama Plant.)

Tsubakimoto Shoten
(Now Tsubakimoto Kogyo Co., Ltd.)



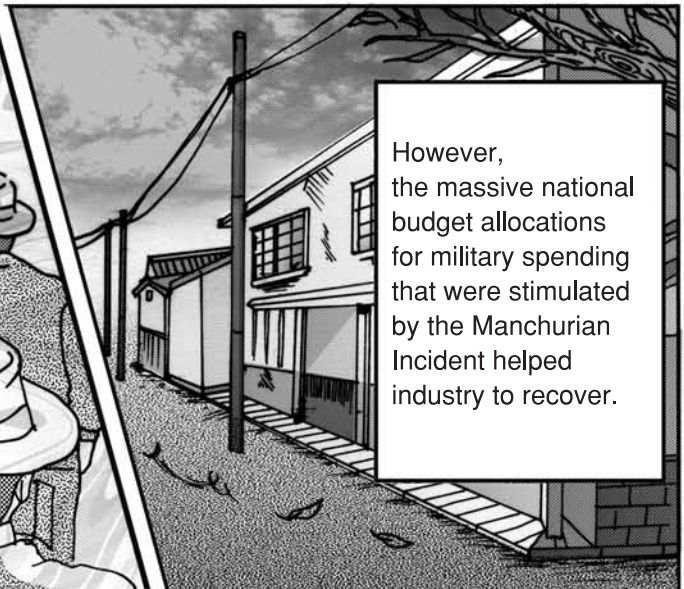
Factory Manager
Setsuzo Tsubakimoto



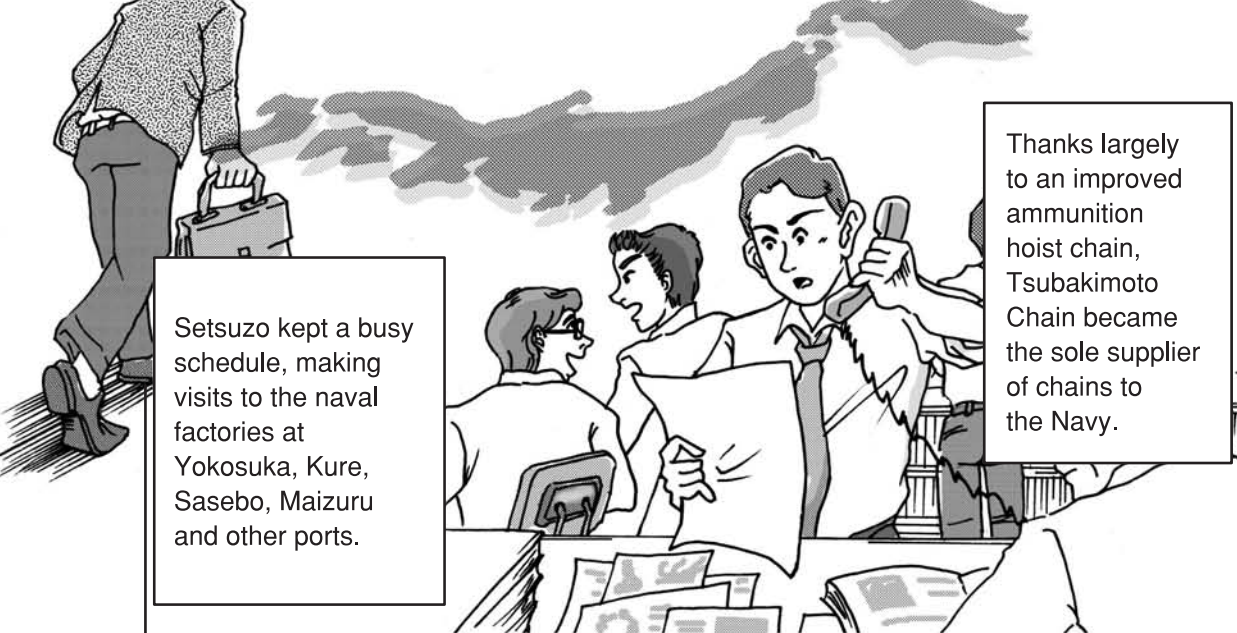
Manager
Sanshichiro Tsubakimoto

Older brother of Setsuzo Tsubakimoto

The company underwent another name change to "Tsubakimoto Chain Manufacturing Company". This was in 1929, the year in which the Great Depression pushed the industrial world into a financial crisis...

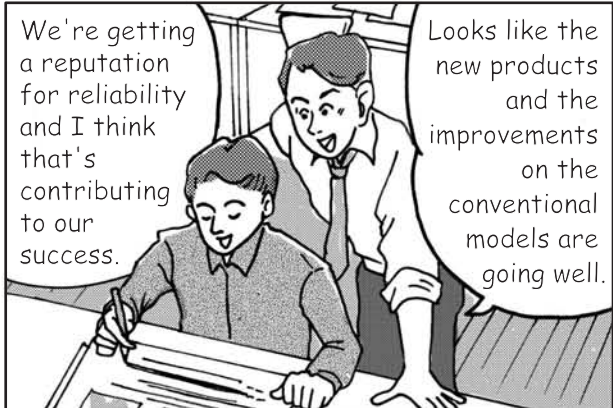


However, the massive national budget allocations for military spending that were stimulated by the Manchurian Incident helped industry to recover.



Setsuzo kept a busy schedule, making visits to the naval factories at Yokosuka, Kure, Sasebo, Maizuru and other ports.

Thanks largely to an improved ammunition hoist chain, Tsubakimoto Chain became the sole supplier of chains to the Navy.



We're getting a reputation for reliability and I think that's contributing to our success.

Looks like the new products and the improvements on the conventional models are going well.



We need to firmly establish ourselves as a domestic manufacturer that can stand up to the overseas producers.



These factories are still using foreign-made machinery.

Visit all of them and ask them to consider a domestic brand the next time they replace their chains.



New sales were pursued enthusiastically. Salesmen were told that

“Where there's a chimney, there's a factory. Where there's a factory there's demand for chains”

Aw. It's only a bathhouse chimney.

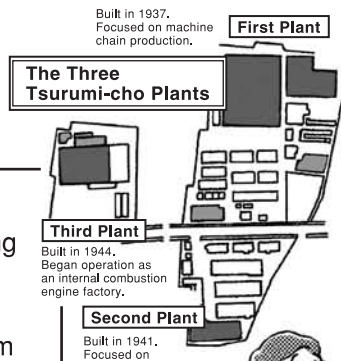


From 1931 onwards, sales activities spread to Korea, Manchuria, and Taiwan.

In 1938, the Minamihama Plant caught fire and the company was pressed to expand its facilities.



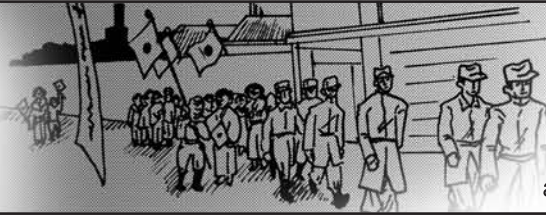
After recovering from the fire, the company looked for room to expand at Tsurumi-cho.



The year 1938 marked the beginning of a new era at the Tsurumi Plant.

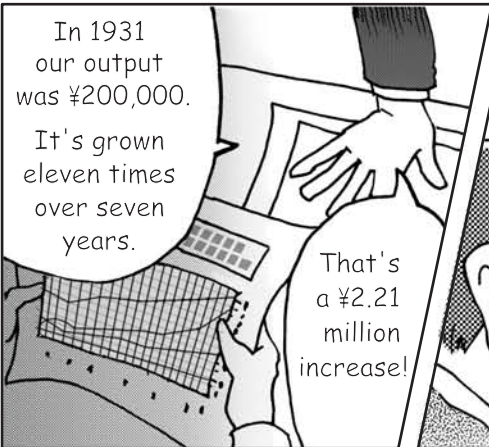


At around this time, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident sparked off the Second Sino-Japanese War...



...which later spread to become the Pacific War. The nation was enveloped in a wartime atmosphere.

In 1931 our output was ¥200,000. It's grown eleven times over seven years.



That's a ¥2.21 million increase!

We're not a small player any more.



We've grown into a large modern company.



Riichi Omura
(Later to be the third president)

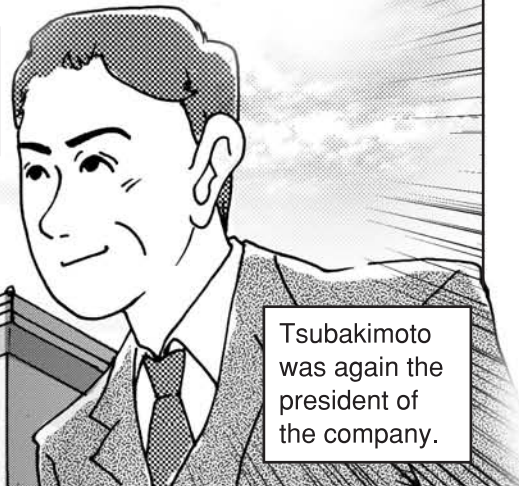
We certainly have.

To reflect these changes the company was reorganized and reborn as "Tsubakimoto Chain Manufacturing Company."

Sales operations were gradually expanded, with offices or branch offices opening up in Taiwan, Tokyo, Osaka, Kyushu, and Sapporo.

In 1944 branch offices were established in Hikari (Hiroshima Prefecture), Kure, Yokosuka, Sasebo, and Oita.

By 1941 the company boasted over thirty agents.



Tsubakimoto was again the president of the company.

The war spread to encompass the entire Pacific region and the company struggled to keep up with demand.

We've just received even more orders for silent chains.

They're for Army truck engines. We've also gotten a lot of orders for aircraft.

How're we going to find all the materials for these?

On top of all this the Navy's asked us to come up with gasoline-powered tractor engines. We don't even know anything about tractor engines! It's not one of our specialties.

Our current production capacity simply can't cope with the extra workload.

Hmm...

We'll find a way to get around it. In the meantime, let's do all that we can to meet their demands.

Amidst these pressing circumstances, the Tokyo offices burned to the ground in the air raids of March 1945.

Three months later, the Osaka offices suffered the same fate.

The B-29's took out the air raid shelter at the Second Plant!

What!?

Yes. They said the mobilized students and the Tsubakimoto Private Tutorial School students who were working at the plant were in the shelter at the time.



If the bombing keeps on getting heavier like this...

...we'll have to evacuate all the factories.



What can we do...?



But the unconditional surrender that Japan agreed to upon accepting the Potsdam Declaration put an end to these concerns.



The entire country was forced to start from scratch amidst the devastation and confusion left by the war.

We're faced with a new challenge: To rebuild Tsubakimoto Chain!



History through pictures (Part 1)



1929

■ Catalog issued

Setsuzo Tsubakimoto emphasized the role of catalogs. Using foreign catalogs as inspiration, he created an 80 page, cloth-bound general catalog. The catalog covered new American and European products, and drew orders from the industry.

Photo: The 1929 edition of the General Catalog.

1931

■ Tsubakimoto Chain becomes a designated supplier of the Department of the Navy

It was necessary to be listed as a registered supplier in order to be able to supply the Navy. In order to be listed, Tsubakimoto earnestly petitioned the Navy Department. His efforts paid off and the company was officially recognized as a designated supplier to the Navy.

Photo: Garden party celebrating the successful listing of the company.



1938

■ Headquarters moved to Tsurumi

The company outgrew the Minamihama Plant and built a new plant and company headquarters at a 10,000m² site that it had purchased in what was then Asahi-ku in Osaka city. Work on the new facility took five years to complete.

Photo: Assembly floor in the First Factory at the Tsurumi Plant.

1945

■ Production during the war years

As the fighting intensified, the demand grew for chains for aviation use. By the time the war finished, the company was producing 7,000 — 8,000 ft. per month in response to the military's request to increase production to 10,000 ft. per month.

Photo: Chain for use in aircraft.

