Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
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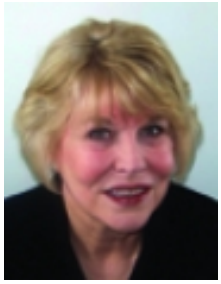

Bummed out. It's a feeling I hadn't been able to shake since the day the monster earthquake and tsunami slammed Japan and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant began melting down, dashing so many lives, hopes and dreams in a deadly domino-effect process.

Gluing myself to countless pieces of news streaming out in the aftermath of this triple whammy had become almost a full-time job. That is, until news accounts of the wildfires raging across my beloved Texas and the killer storms rolling from Oklahoma through much of the South started tearing my heart out anew.

One thing for sure is that amid each of these recent catastrophes, heroes of all types and stripes—*both two-legged and four-legged*—have emerged. Whether protecting their families and friends from nature's wrath or pulling complete strangers out of hazard-filled muck and destruction, they've demonstrated astonishing courage and resilience. I wish I had unlimited pages in which to comment on the many stories that have touched me so deeply… but I don't.

This being an industrial trade journal, though, I'll concentrate on someone who may turn out to be a real hero not just in Japan, but in other parts of the world as well. His name is Hiroto Yokoyama.
I learned of him in a radio report by Scott Tong for an American Public Media Marketplace segment on Monday, April 18. I find his story to be particularly uplifting and think anyone with an interest in manufacturing—*and a passion for keeping supply chains moving*—will too.

Mr. Yokoyama manages an Iwaki Diecast factory that makes carburetors and compressors for automakers like BMW, Fiat and Honda. Even though his plant is approximately 30 miles from the center of the devastation, it had suffered considerable damage—*and at the time of the radio report, was still not completely back on line.*
Furthermore, "out of 250 workers, 45 lost their homes to the tsunami. Twenty-five lost immediate family members." It clearly had been a rough ride for this company, but Mr. Yokoyama wouldn't give up. He was expecting his plant to be at 75% production by the end of

April. Alas, his main supplier's operations weren't so lucky. Located inside the damaged nuclear-plant zone, they had been sitting idle for a while.

No components from his supplier meant Mr. Yokoyama couldn't ship carburetors and compressors to his customers, which would lead to cutbacks in their production schedules. Thus, this industrious manager went out on a limb and took what must have seemed to him the most logical course of action: He sent his own personnel—*dressed in radiation suits*—to bring his supplier's machinery back to the Iwaki Diecast facility so it could continue producing and helping other sites stay up and running.

Mr. Yokoyama acknowledges how critical things are for his company (and without saying, for Japan). "Will we endure this?" he asks. As Scott Tong suggests, quite a lot rides on the answer to that question—*"including Japan's squeaky clean reputation for reliability."*

It's hard for me to stay bummed out when I think of Mr. Yokoyama and others who have stepped up to the plate and begun rebuilding shattered lives, hopes and dreams. You can learn more about this heretofore-unsung hero for yourself by going to the Marketplace Website . **MT**

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