Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Ryan Geertsma. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. In Tokyo, Japan, there is a small but famous restaurant. This restaurant is in the busy shopping area of Ginza. To find the restaurant, you must walk down dark and narrow steps. It is underground, near the Ginza train station. When you arrive, you see a simple wooden door. The restaurant does not look important. Inside, only ten people can sit and eat. You enter the restaurant. It is calm and peaceful. You smell warm rice. And an old man stands behind a shiny black serving table. The man is wearing a white cook’s uniform and glasses. He is preparing a special kind of Japanese food called sushi. This man’s name is Jiro Ono. He is an expert sushi maker or chef. His restaurant is called Sukiyabashi Jiro. People from all over the world come to eat here. And they pay $350 for a meal. Many people believe Jiro Ono is the world’s best sushi chef. But Ono’s success did not happen quickly. He has been making sushi for over 60 years. Today’s Spotlight is on Jiro Ono and his life of sushi making. Sushi is a traditional Japanese food. It is made with a special, cooked rice. Chefs combine the sushi rice with other foods or ingredients. Often, the rice is served with fish or other kinds of seafood. Usually, the fish in sushi is not cooked. Sushi chefs also combine sushi rice with other ingredients - like egg or vegetables. Some sushi chefs also make sushi rolls. They roll rice and other ingredients together, and cover it with dried seaweed. Many people like sushi because it combines different tastes and textures, from salty and smooth to rough and sweet. Jiro Ono has been working in the sushi business nearly all of his life. Ono was born in 1925. His family was very poor. Ono’s father gave people boat rides. But his business failed. Ono’s family could not pay to take care of him. So, when he was just 9 years old, Ono left home. There is a film about Jiro Ono’s life called Jiro Dreams of Sushi. In it, he explains, “I was in my first year of school. My father told me ‘You have no home to come back to. That is why you have to work hard.’ I knew that I was on my own. I did not want to have to sleep at a temple or under a bridge. So, I had to work hard just to survive.” At age nine, Ono began working to support himself. Over time, he discovered the business of sushi making. As a child, he began working in sushi restaurants - doing small jobs. In his 20s, Ono became a sushi making apprentice. An expert sushi chef trained Ono. As an apprentice, Ono learned many skills and ideas about sushi. Sushi making in Japan is often taught through this apprentice-teacher model. This way, the traditions of making sushi are not lost. Ono was an apprentice for many years. During this time, he married and had two sons. But he did not make very much money as an apprentice. So, he had to work very hard to support his family. In the 1960s, Ono’s many years of hard work brought success. He became the manager of his own restaurant. As manager and chef, Ono continued to work hard. He worked every day except on national holidays or funerals. For many years, Ono did the exact same thing every day. He woke up early. He left his house at 5 in the morning. He took the train to work. He went to the fish market to buy fresh fish for the day. Then, he returned to his restaurant and made sushi all day. Ono would not return home until after dark. Ono only plans and serves one meal each day. He bases the meal on what is fresh at the fish market. People must eat what Ono plans. Each meal is made of 20 pieces of sushi. He serves them in a particular order, from lighter tasting to heavier tasting sushi. Ono’s process and hard work have made him one of the most important sushi chefs in Japan. But even now, he desires to continue learning and improving. In “Jiro Dreams of Sushi,” Ono said, “Even at my age, in my work, I have not reached perfection.” Ono used to be the apprentice. But over time he became the expert teacher. Ono trained both of his sons in sushi making. And today, they are also expert sushi chefs. His oldest son, Yoshikazu, works at Ono’s restaurant. His younger son, Takashi, has his own restaurant in a different part of Tokyo. Many other people also want to be Ono’s apprentice. To do this, a person must agree to work with Ono for 10 years. Apprentices at Ono’s restaurant do not start by making sushi. First, they must learn about all the different kinds of sushi, fish and rice. Then they learn how to cook the rice so it is right. The rice must be sticky, but not too soft. Then the apprentices learn how to prepare the fish. It is only after several years of work that they can begin to make the sushi. Ono has a long and careful process for making sushi. However, it has made him the best in the world. Michelin is an international organization that rates restaurants. Michelin gave Ono’s sushi restaurant their highest rating - three stars. This rating is a rare honor. In fact, it is the highest honor a restaurant can receive. And Ono’s restaurant was the first sushi restaurant to ever receive the honor. The price for the meal at Ono’s restaurant is very high. But that does not stop people from coming. People travel from all over the world to eat Ono’s food. Often, people must call and make plans months before they are able to eat at the restaurant. Dan Shapiro is a food expert. He writes for the CNN news organization. He ate at Ono’s restaurant and wrote about the experience. He said “Jiro Ono’s restaurant deserves its honor as the world’s greatest sushi restaurant. The price was high, but the food was worth it.” The writer and producer of this program was Dianna Anderson. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again and read it on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called “Jiro Ono: A Life of Making Food.” We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.