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Rodolphe Kasandji was born in Bandundu Province in 1945. Since boyhood he had been a gatherer of edible grubs (a great delicacy), a weaver of mats, and a carver of walking canes. His father died when he was young, but his mother remarried and her new husband adopted Rodolphe.

In 1962, Rodolphe finished his primary studies at the Mukedi mission station. In the exodus during the Mulele Jeunesse rebellion a few years later, he left his parents and went to live in the city of Kikwit. There he pursued veterinary studies and continued to associate with the Mennonites. He sang for the Lord in a men's choir, Voices of Angels. He married Régine Kakeziko, and they had six children.

Rodolphe Kasandji served for a time as a nurse but left that profession for veterinary service in the Protestant Agriculture Program at Kibolo. In the end, however, he returned to nursing and became an emergency care worker at the Kikwit General Hospital.

On May 6, 1995, the Centers for Disease Control in the United States was notified by health authorities and the US Embassy in (then) Zaire of an outbreak of a deadly viral fever in Kikwit. The World Health Organization and the CDC identified the virus as Ebola, a virus that moves quickly, causes intense suffering, and is fatal to most of its victims. Ebola first appeared in Zaire in 1976.

The quick onset of symptoms from the time the disease becomes contagious in an individual makes it easy to identify sick individuals

and limits the spread of the disease. The outbreaks can be contained, and Ebola disappears from the scene for years at a time. Sadly, however, Ebola outbreaks occur most easily in hospitals where even basic sanitation is often a luxury, so many of the victims are hospital workers.

This was the case for Rodolphe Kasandji. He and two of his close friends caught the virus caring for their patients. Rudolphe passed away in October 1995.

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