

**The A-bomb  
That  
I Experienced**

**2008**

## PREFACE

Over 60 years have passed since the A-bomb was dropped here in Hiroshima, and the tragedy of that day has still left its sad aftereffects in many ways on the survivors and citizens.

We earnestly hope that the tragedy of Hiroshima should never be repeated in any place in the world, and that a nuclear-free world might become a reality as soon as possible. This is a brief report on my experiences during and after the A Bomb in Hiroshima.

I believe that those numerous victims who were sacrificed by the inhuman cruel weapon earnestly want to appeal to the world that we eliminate and abolish nuclear weapons forever. The people who kindly listen to my speech should be able to understand my thoughts better, so I decided to make a printed brochure available for each of you. Fortunately, many visitors have generously donated money to help me offset some of the printing cost, and I am so pleased to be able to make more copies for more people from abroad. I hope that we can work together to help obtain world peace.

I also hope that you will tell your family, friends, and neighbors what you have learned here and what the citizens of Hiroshima appeal to the world. Thank you very much for hearing my story and my plea for a nuclear-free world.

April 18, 2008

## How we were in those days

My family numbered five; my parents and three sons. I was the youngest of the three brothers and was born in 1929, and was 16 years old at the time of bombing. We ran a small stationary and tobacco store at the east-side of Hiroshima City, but we didn't have anything to sell any more except for some rationed tobacco because of the war those days.

My father was a salaried man and used to work in an insurance company and mother was at home.

The New Year of 1945 was not a happy one for us three, Dad, Mom, and me. My brothers were navy officers away at war. Most of the big cities had already been bombed, burnt, and destroyed one by one. Dad had been ill since the preceding year, 1944. As the doctors had run out of medicine, his illness was getting worse, and was becoming weaker and weaker. In March, we decided to evacuate to Father's home village in the country, about 40 kilometers north-east of the city. Father's condition was already at its worst when we arrived at the old house in the country, and he died on April 16, 1945 not knowing that the war was coming to the end soon, only four months after that, and his two sons would come home safely again.

I graduated from the middle school in March, passed the entrance exam to the Hiroshima Technical College, and entered the college in April. But we new students still had to continue to work in a factory being mobilized until the end of July.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, however, we were told to come to school for brief schooling, and we began to commute to school from our dorm near Hiroshima Station by street-car. We were bombed 6 days after that.

Though I can't remember Mom complaining anything in those days, she must have had terrible time about the family. She just believed in Amida Buddha's salvation and used to say prayers to Amida Buddha over and over in a small voice. She had understood the world to be a place in which there is nothing we can really rely upon really. Now I can imagine how sad and helpless she must have been, but I was too young to sense her distress. She cultivated small fields around the house and was waiting for me, the only son who had been left in Hiroshima.

Anyway each of these five of my family was in his or her own place being controlled by fate. Dad wasn't alive any more, Mom was in the country, and two brothers were in the war, and I was at school in Hiroshima.



## Fright of Death

August 6<sup>th</sup> was a quiet morning on the campus. Regular classes at school had started from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, and we the first grade students of Hiroshima National Technical College were enjoying the brief campus life, which any student in peace time would experience as a matter of course. We were to be mobilized to work in a factory again soon after the brief schooling — probably from the middle of August.

All the first-grade students were staying at the dormitory of the factory in the east side of the city, and used to commute to school by streetcar in those days. The life at the dorm was not easy. Food was so scarce and we were always hungry. We young boys, however, were not bothered so much by the poor conditions,

In the morning of August 6<sup>th</sup>, it was such a sunny beautiful weather, which predicted another hot summer day. "Was the warning of alert announced? I am not sure if we heard the siren," I said to myself. Even the math lecture, which had usually been a boring class to me, felt fresh that morning, and I was studying hard. The class had started at 8:00 sharp. (If school had started at 8:30, I might have been in the street-car and broiled.) My seat was at the extreme front row beside the window facing to the south. The teacher was explaining a difficult question on differential and integral calculus. I happened to look out of the window, and saw two B-29 bombers flying very high above in the sky. They were shining silver-white brightly and were just as beautiful as ice cakes. "What? We didn't hear the air-raid alarm? Is it that only two B-29 bombers aren't a big problem any more? It is true that they have already bombed so many cities in Japan and they are so familiar to us these days, isn't it?" I said to myself.

It was at the next moment that an orange red flash jumped into my eyes and a kind of hot searing heat shock wave blew into my face. I can remember a pine tree beside the window silhouetted against the orange red world like the sunset. At the same time, I had jumped under my desk, pressing my ears with both thumbs and my eyes with the other fingers unconsciously because we had been told to do so in the case of bombing those days.

Then I heard the huge noise of the blast ; I still have no idea if it was the sound of the bomb explosion or of the collapsing buildings. Perhaps it was both. Real dark, pitch black world! Crawling around on the floor in the darkness like a blind, I found of my both hands, head, shirt and trousers all stained with blood. Chanting Buddhist prayers, 'Amida Buddha,' honestly I thought of death and Mom, and I was so frightened to death.

I was not sure how much time had passed by — one or two minutes or more? , but gradually dim light came in among the debris. Very fortunately, my seat was very close to the door, and the staircase of this old-fashioned strong wooden building was still all right. Small cuts on my head and several spots of my body were still bleeding a little, but they were not serious. I noticed that they were all small cuts caused by tiny pieces of the broken windowpanes. I didn't feel much pain any more. Was I so frustrated and tense? Maybe. Anyway how lucky I

was! Then I felt that I could survive.

The situation just after the bombing has already been told a lot by many people ——— how the casualties were and how the whole city had been destroyed, etc. When we were bombed in the classroom, I was sure that one bomb must have been dropped just beside me, beside the window. How should I have known anything about such a monstrous bomb those days? Everyone felt like that, ——— I later learned.

When I could sneak out of the building, somehow going down the staircase, however, I was horrified to see so many wounded students sitting and lying on the grass or the ground, and all the buildings had been smashed so badly. I was bewildered how only one bomb could give us such a heavy damage in a moment. My nerve might have been a little paralyzed then, and I wasn't shocked to see those numerous wounded people any more.

One of my friends leaned on my shoulder for help. He also had several cuts, which I cannot remember exactly now, but one deep cut above the right eye is still in my memory. I bandaged his head with towel and thought of taking him to the Red Cross Hospital near our school, say, about 300 meters up to north. Later I knew that our school had been just 2 kilo-meters to the south of the hypocenter

, When we started to walk out of the school gate slowly, again I was shocked to see all those severely destroyed houses and a great many injured people ——— mostly burnt people who looked like smoked and broiled pigs. I cannot remember them crying or sobbing. Their faces were all damaged, swollen up, and disfigured so badly. Without exceptions, they had thrust out their both hands. Perhaps so that the wound won't touch the bodies. Their smoked bodies had swollen and the skin was nearly peeling off. All of them were marching along the street-car railroad from the center of the city toward the south where fires had not come yet. Such processions of ghosts toward the suburbs were seen everywhere in the city all day long. Among them I can never forget a girl-conductor of the street-car, whose clothes were almost burned off leaving some small pieces of singed pants and her ticket-bag hanging from her fore-waist. She was also heavily burned as others, and was walking slowly. She must have been one of the mobilized schoolgirls ——— about 15 or 16 years old ———, and might have been dead in a few days after that. Even for me, who was such a young and thoughtless boy, it was such a painful incident to see those helpless children wandering about in the dead street. The Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital, which became well-known as one of the few remaining buildings later, was also in real chaos. Doors and windows had been blown off leaving twisted frames only, wounded soldiers who had once been sent back from the front were heavily injured again, and a few doctors and nurses, who had also been injured, were trying to treat hundreds of people coming into the hospital with little ambulance medicine. I thought that we would have to wait for a long time. Not being sure if they could give sufficient treatment for my friend, I decided to take him back to school. When we came back near the school, an army rescue truck came across Miyuki-bashi Bridge. This one might have been the first rescue vehicle from the

army transportation corps stationing in Ujina harbor district, and my friend was really lucky to get on this car then. Later I learned that he was sent to Ninoshima Island, which is about 2 kilometers from the harbor, and could survive



## Young Lives

That morning  
School children had just started  
working  
In the central district of the city

I saw many of them coming back  
Burned and inflamed

Some of them were being  
Picked up onto the rescue truck

Many of them must have been dead  
Soon after that, I imagine

They should have had happy dreams  
And bright futures of their own

All those young lives

I am sure to tell your words  
Longing for peace and  
No more A Bombs  
To the world, boys and girls

I hope that you all sleep  
In peace

By: Keijiro Matsushima

\* Unfortunately all the 7<sup>th</sup> graders and more students had been mobilized to demolish houses, put aside the debris, and make the empty zone to prevent big fire caused by bombings that day, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

## What a Weapon?

When I came into the school gate, I found that the situation there was getting worse with a great number of miserable people everywhere.

Though we students in better conditions were told to work for restoration, I was very weary of the happenings that morning, and decided to escape.

With some books, notebooks, and the valuable lunch under my arms, I went out of the gate. I still can't remember where and when I ate lunch that day.

When I crossed the bridge named Miyuki-bashi, there were a lot of people crowding around the faucet near a police station and drinking water in line. It was quite lucky that the water supply was still all for a while right there.

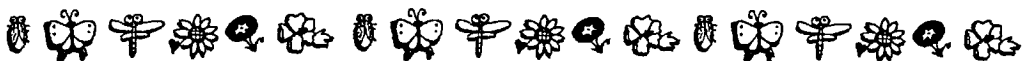
At that time, most of the wounded people there were young schoolboys and girls who had made narrow escape from the center of the city. They had been mobilized to work demolishing houses and setting aside logs, beams, and roof-tiles in order to make space to prevent fire by bombings. Most of them were smoked, burnt, bare-footed, with messy hair. When I remember these young boys and girls —— 12 or 13 years old, 7<sup>th</sup> grade equivalent kids —— these days, I cannot stop to draw tears. If they had been born today, they could have had better future. Why were they to be tortured in a brutal way like that?

Now I can understand how those burned people wanted fresh water. It was not just because it was a very hot summer day but because they were heavily burned.

Crossing the bridge, I gazed at both sides of the river, which were burning violently like burning weed of the fields in early spring. Great fires were flaring up and up! Hiroshima, the whole city was burning fiercely in flames.

All the handrail stones of that bridge had fallen toward one direction --- those of the northern side were lying in line on the side-walk of the bridge, and those of the southern side had fallen straight to the bottom of the river. This phenomenon told that the shock wave must have come from one direction, from the center of the city, —— which meant that it was not brought by numerous bombs but by a single huge one. A gigantic explosion in a moment, from one direction! My eyes were attacked by just one strong dizzy flash, and I heard just one big blast. One regular bomb can never give such a terrible damage.

Then I remembered a piece of simple information about an atomic bomb that I had once read in a magazine for boys a couple of years before that day. The article had said something like —— a small bomb of a match-box size could destroy even a mammoth battleship some day in the future, and its material was from atomic energy. So I understood that the U.S. invented an atomic bomb, and I thought it was very hard for us to win the war. However, even if I had some knowledge then, it did not make any sense.





**At MIYUKI Bridge  
Hiroshima Is Dying**

**Painted by: K. Matsushima**

Hiroshima was bombed  
By the A Bomb  
It was in a really horrible state

Near the Miyuki-Bridge  
I had to see  
Hundreds of heavily burned people  
Walking slowly

The straight line of hand-rail stones  
Were lying on the bridge

Those of the south side of the bridge  
Had fallen in the bottom of the river

I happened to stop in the middle  
Of the bridge

I watched the great flames  
Burning both sides of the river  
Like a violent prairie fire

Houses were burning fiercely  
Gigantic smoke clouds were rising  
High up into the sky

Even I, a pre-mature young boy  
Felt that Hiroshima, my old town,  
Where I was born and grew up,  
Was dying

I was sad

**By: Keijiro Matsushima**

Thinking of this and that, I was looking at the burning city where I was born and brought up, the river where I used to swim in, and the small mountain HIJIYAMA where I used to play, in gray huge smoke. I think that I was a little sentimental



then, and I murmured, "Hiroshima is dying."

When I started to walk across the bridge, it was supposedly almost high noon.

## The Way Out of the City

The buildings of the Hiroshima Tobacco Monopoly Corporation at the east side of the river were burning and the street-car road had been full of smoke when I walked through. Taking the course to the south-east district of the city, I walked around the east foot of a small hilly mountain named HIJIYAMA, and finally to our dorm near Hiroshima Railway Station. In these districts, some of the wooden houses had been completely destroyed while others had been half wrecked.

I had to see another sad scene near DAMBARA district where my family used to live. Among the debris, there was a dusty naked body of a baby boy abandoned carelessly beside the street. Even today, I still cannot understand why he had been left there in such a miserable way without being covered even with a blanket or some other things. Might the people have been too busy in their own business to pay attention on others? I feel so ashamed of us — including myself — who had lost some human sense or consideration to others.

When I passed by another half-destroyed police station near TAISHO-BASHI bridge, a bulletin announced by Hiroshima Army Headquarter was on the board of the wall. It said something like --- "The cowardly enemy bombed the city with a certain new bomb, and we sustained some damage. You the citizens, however, should never be scared of such attacks. Final victory is in our hands. Make your resolution to fight this holy war until the last day. Japan, our country of God shall never be conquered. You must do your best for reconstruction and continue the war."

I don't know how many adults believed in this announcement, but I did. In a country that is fighting a big war, young people are always taught to be courageous and to be ready to die for their country. Surely I saw the terrible damages in my eyes there, and felt it very difficult to beat an enemy that possessed such a mighty strong weapon. Still I never thought of surrender, either. We had been educated like that.

The buildings of our dorm were mostly heavily damaged, and again in our room, all the ceiling and floor were broken, and FUTON beddings and most of my belongings were unusable. Then I took the way to KAITAICHI located about 4 kilometers east of the city, two railway stations apart from Hiroshima Station. Again the road was full of the wounded people walking slowly like ghosts, sitting on a hand-cart pulled by another person, and some people lying or sitting helplessly on the sidewalks.

I can tell that many of those heavily burnt or bandaged people, whom I saw that day, could not live long afterward.

A small pack of dried bread, which was given for emergency food at another police station, was such a delicacy to my empty stomach. I cannot remember where

and when I took lunch that day.

At KAITAICHI Station of the SANYO Main Line, I had to wait in a coach for a while until the first rescue train left the station in the evening. Strange to say, I don't remember that the coach was full of refugees. It might have been because many of the wounded people could not reach the station so soon walking many miles.

The nearest station to our house was three stations away from KAITAICHI, and I had to walk through the mountain path in the dark for a couple of miles after I got off the train.

You can understand how overjoyed Mother was to see me alive! The villagers and she saw a lot of miserable wounded and burnt people walking all the way into the village late that afternoon. People said that Hiroshima disappeared, with many citizens dying by the great bombing. Mother felt the strong flash, saw the huge mushroom cloud rising above the mountains, and heard the big noise while she was working in the rice paddy. She believed that I too must have been killed, and she thought that she would have to go to Hiroshima to look for my bones the next day.

Having had my body washed in the tub, not knowing of tens thousands of those with no place to sleep, I fell fast asleep that night. How happy I was to have a home to go back while there were a lot of people who had no places to go that night! But I didn't care about others then. I regret that I was such an inconsiderate and selfish youngster at that time.

## Fever and Diarrhea

I did not see the most horrible scenes of the hell in the central area of the city — like piles and piles of bodies, floating bodies according to the tide of the rivers, cremation of bodies day after day, people who were almost dead asking for water on the floors of gyms or classrooms of the schools...etc. Fortunately our school was just a little outside of the worst area being showered by radiation, and we students were inside the building not being burned, and I myself could walk away out of the city immediately after the bombing.

I went back to the city to pick up some of my possessions and to visit some of our relatives in the city a few days after that. Then there had remained nothing in the city any more. Getting off the train at Hiroshima Station in the east side of the city, I could see some houses at the foot of the mountains on the other side of the city. Just gray ash desert!

Looking to the south, I could see the islands clearly in the Seto Inland Sea. You can understand how I was shocked then.

For several days after August 6<sup>th</sup>, I was sick and feverish in bed. I was bothered by bloody diarrhea, which might have been good for me to let out the radioactive poison.

Though it was such a ridiculous story, people said, "Don't let the burned people drink water. If you do, they will die very soon. Water isn't good for burned

people.” But those wounded or burned people asked and asked for water, as you can see. There were some people who could not keep rejecting their strong desire for water and gave water as much as they want for the ‘last water.’

Later I heard that some of the burned people vomited yellowish liquid, and they were able somehow to recover. It is very strange.

My conditions ——— that I was an energetic young boy, that I was inside the building which was a little away from direct ray of radiation, and above all, that I left the city tainted with radiation immediately after the bombing, ——— all these worked in my favor. Now I understand as follows:

As you realize, I did not see the worst situation in the central area of the city, because the location of our school was about 2 kilo-meters from the center, and I was in bed for several days after I left the city. Still I could easily understand what horrible things really happened there, having seen those numerous victims and the heavy damage to Hiroshima.

Wounded and burned people died one after another around us after that. People who were seemingly all right after the bombing became ill suddenly and died without the reason being known. Some say that approximately 140,000 people were dead from that bombing by the end of that year. Doctors could not tell how to treat the patients. I don’t think that they had enough knowledge about diseases caused by radiation.

Again I say that such an in-human bomb must never be used on any people in the world.

## **What life did I live after that?**

Being a student of the technical college, I was going to be an engineer. After the war, however, I changed my course and became a student of another normal college in another city because of some reasons.

My two brothers in the navy also survived and returned home safely, and we were very fortunate.

It was in April 1949 that I became a teacher of a junior high school in Hiroshima. Our lives were not so easy yet. I used to teach English as a foreign language because I liked English. After all, I worked at several junior high schools in Hiroshima for 40 years, and retired from being the principal of a school in the south-side of the city. Though I worked at a private senior high school for more 6 years, I retired again and am living my days now.

Did I talk to students about the A-bomb when I was working at schools? No, not much. A lot of families in Hiroshima used to have A-bomb stories in their homes, and such topics did not seem to be so urgent to our students at school. The problems of the A-bomb or World Peace were already very familiar to them.

Time has passed, however, and even the parents and relatives do not know about it any more. Peace education is becoming necessary for younger generations

today. Survivors become older and pass away, though they still have a lot to do.

## How I have been these days

A long time has passed since the bombing, and it is very peaceful without a war here in Japan. People of younger generations do not pay much attention to such disgusting memories of the past any more, and are just enjoying momentary pleasure and make-believe happy days. It is like a cat which is taking a nap, forgetting to catch a mouse, and enjoying a warm and comfortable spring day afternoon.

Sure, peace is very good. Being able to live 63 years after that day, what a happy person I am! I often remember those burned young boys and girls, who were all walking slowly helplessly, and I feel that I still have a lot to do for them. Each of them must have wanted to live long and enjoy his or her happy life. It is my mission to tell more people of the world what those children wanted to say.

Although I have a chronic disease --- hepatitis, it is not so serious right now. One symptom that I can imagine to be an after-effect of the A Bomb is that the number of my white blood cells has always been far less than normal. Also I am often bothered by stomatitis. When I said to a doctor that such a phenomenon must be caused by the A Bomb, he just laughed at my amateur diagnosis. However, he said neither yes or no. Perhaps he is not sure, either.

Amida Buddha still tells me to work hard, to talk to more people of the world about the horrible event happened here, and to ask them co-operation to stop another use of the bomb on earth again.

## Questions that I am often asked by guests:

Q.: What do the citizens of Hiroshima feel about Americans? We hear that the citizens do not show persistent hostility toward Americans, who are the people of the country which dropped the A-bomb. Aren't you angry?

A.: We have deep anger and resentment against the A-bomb itself, but I don't think there are many citizens who have violent anger or hostility toward American people because of the A-bomb. Why?

As a matter of fact, I don't remember if I have heard someone argue about this kind of problem—asking, for instance, “Do you have deep anger or hostility toward Americans?”

There may be many reasons, I think. First, I don't think that we have enough reasons to have deep anger toward American people. Certainly we had determined hostility against the American enemies during the war. However, once the war was over and a lot of American soldiers came in, we noticed that they were never the “monsters” as we had been told, but that they often seemed more

like us. Their manner was not bad, and they were mostly moderate, friendly, and pleasant people. Poor and hungry soldiers are usually very dangerous, but they were never like that, while we Japanese were absolutely poor and hungry during those times. I am not certain that it was always the case, but they certainly made many good impressions. (Later, I once heard that cautious American Occupation Forces did not send the combatants who had experienced the bloody actions against Japanese forces on the islands in the Pacific Ocean.)

Also, we cannot forget about a few kind Americans who dedicated themselves so much to help the reconstruction of Hiroshima and to heal the pain of the citizens of Hiroshima. Ms. Barbara Reynolds, for instance, lived much of the latter half of her life in this city and offered her entire savings for peace activities. Her respectable ideal is still embodied in the peace organization, World Friendship Center, based in Hiroshima. I think that all the citizens should keep her decent and generous goodwill deep in our mind, and that there is no reasons necessary for us to hate the American people.

We know that there are many Americans who believe that the A-bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki accelerated the end of the war and saved countless lives of not only American soldiers but also lives of the Japanese people. They are convinced that the decision to use the A-bombs was the only choice and was the right decision. How do we respond to this explanation? Again, I have not heard this kind of discussion among us. Usually we Japanese consider it immature or of poor taste to express our feelings so openly. This may be a national character of Japanese people. But some citizens— those who lost their loved ones and still have been living sad days might say that the reasons, which Americans state, are somewhat “self-centered” and convenient excuses. We cannot accept the use of such inhuman cruelty, while others may reluctantly admit that they accept such explanations.

When I think of the extreme situation of WWII from either side, I myself feel that I will have to admit some acceptance of their explanation. The Japanese government and some leaders had stubbornly insisted to continue the war. The U.S. was growing weary of the war, which had continued for such a long time and caused very heavy casualties. President Truman could not hesitate to take a short cut; once the U.S. had obtained that horrible, but effective weapon. I never think that he paid any attention to Japanese casualties.

It is also said that the U.S. aimed to have a better position in Asia than U.S.S.R. by demonstrating the huge power of the A-bomb. It may be true. And because of such reasons, the U.S. took the leadership role with occupation policies after the war. Many say that it was so fortunate for Japan that Hokkaido was not divided into two parts — North and South, like Korea as Russia wanted to. That is true. However, I cannot feel even to say “thank you” to the U.S. because of that historical outcome. There are many citizens who have already learned about such explanations and try to accept the mainstream historical conclusions.

We, the human race invented this devil’s weapon, wanted to use it, used it in

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and learned what it was like with an enormous sacrifice — hundreds of thousands of lives of men and women, young and old including children and babies.

Now, we can never again allow the next use of nuclear weapons for any reason. The human race has learned the horrible reality of the A-bomb's inhumanity.

There have been many differing opinions about the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as stated earlier. But I can say that most of the citizens are not so interested in such controversy now. Whatsoever the truth may be, our loved ones who were killed in brutal ways cannot come back to us anymore. We just want to mourn the victims, pray that their spirits may sleep in peace, and pledge to work for world peace. And all the citizens can agree together one belief — that such a bomb must never be used on any people in the world again. We should work to bring about complete agreement in world-wide public opinion to oppose the use of nuclear weapons.

I don't feel that there are many citizens who have a deep hatred toward Americans. Does it sound strange if I say that we Japanese are usually friendly and moderate to others? Even so, I don't feel it is appropriate if some Americans proudly say, "We were right!" Then I would say, "Can you say that you were right to your God? We cannot be perfectly right every time." If Americans say, "We want to mourn the spirits of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But we thought at that time it was necessary to use those bombs to end the war sooner. Let's co-operate to stop any further use of the A-bomb in this world," we can perfectly understand them and be good friends. I know that there are a lot of American friends who have such an opinion and express those sentiments. .

I met two American veterans on the Island of Tinian on August 6<sup>th</sup> in 2005, during the Peace Memorial Ceremony in remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They represented the contrasts of two distinct personalities. One was a member of the crew of B-29 bombers, which attacked Hiroshima. The other was a sailor of the USS cruiser "Indianapolis" which carried the bombs to Tinian, where they were unloaded on the island. Later, the Indianapolis was torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine while the crew was headed back toward Frisco. The sailor I met had to swim in the sea for hours before he was rescued. It was a dramatic meeting of the people who were connected to the A-bombing, and I shook hands with them to express our feelings of reconciliation. One of the B-29 bomber members told me the stereotypical words of the bombing, say, "It was necessary to end the war sooner, to save more lives. We did our duty because we were soldiers. We had to carry on the operation. If I am told to do so - I will do the same thing again at any time." I did not hear even a single word to mourn the victims of ours who were under the mushroom cloud which they made. He also referred to the Hiroshima A-bomb Memorial Peace Museum, which he has once visited, and said that the exhibitions of the museum were so one-sided, exaggerated, and kind of disgusting. He also pointed out angrily that the museum did not tell anything about Japanese crimes of Nanjing or Pearl Harbor. I just responded with that mysterious Japanese smile, "Ah, so. Yes, you were a faithful soldier, and it was

quite natural that you obeyed orders. I see.” The shaking of hands was just a formality.

Later another veteran sailor said to me that he felt so sorry about the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who perished in such a brutal way, and we have to do our best to stop any further use of A-bombs — the same ideal as ours. He hugged me and said those words in tears. I said to him, “That is all right. You just did your job as a soldier of the U.S. and had a hard time swimming in the ocean. We can understand each other, and we can be good friends. Let’s co-operate for the same purpose from now on.” The shaking of hands was truly a sincere and meaningful friendly one and came naturally.

I learned a lot from those two brave American veterans. Which one was a real warrior or SAMURAI?

I know that there are many different attitudes of people in any country. We cannot comprehend whatsoever he or she thinks in their minds. For the peaceful future of the world, however, we should learn from the past and co-operate to abolish such outrageous and destructive weapons

I hope that you can understand my answers and opinions regarding these commonly asked questions.

**Q:** How did the citizens learn that the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was an atomic bomb?

**A:** The radio announced the report from our government saying that the enemy dropped a new type of bomb in Hiroshima and that some damage had occurred. We were not told about an atomic bomb. Three days after Hiroshima, Nagasaki was bombed and the radio said that Nagasaki was bombed by another new type of bomb and again damage occurred. We were told to rise up again and do our effort to continue the war.

On August 15<sup>th</sup> one week after the second A-bomb, Japan surrendered and we learned about atomic bombs soon after that

**Q:** What about the impact of radiation and the reconstruction of the city? And how were the people affected by radiation after the bombing?

**A:** We heard that we would not be able to live in Hiroshima for at least 70 years and that even weeds would not be able to grow. People, however, did not have enough composure to care about that news nor had any other choice -they came back to the city very soon, and started to resettle by building tiny shacks. People were tough in a sense, I think. We were so poor and had the will to survive. There was no choice. People could not really be concerned about possible radioactive damage. Soon, even weeds started to grow.

I really don’t know fully about the radioactive influence over the health of people.

There must have been many negative effects, but we cannot estimate fully without any convincing data. The Hiroshima type bomb exploded at 500 meters altitude - the radioactive influence may have dissipated fairly quickly after exploding (?) We do know, however, that people have been continually tortured by many strange lingering symptoms induced by persistent illnesses believed to be caused by radioactive exposure.

People worked hard for the reconstruction of the city. It is well-known that the street-cars started to run in a certain section only a couple of days after the bombing.

I sense that it took at least 10 years until a certain acceptable level of reconstruction in the city had taken shape.

**END**

By: Keijiro Matsushima  
1-13-27, Satsukiga-oka, Saiki-ku  
Hiroshima 731-5101 JAPAN  
TEL & fax: 082-941-0236  
e-mail : [matsukei@ms8.megaegg.ne.jp](mailto:matsukei@ms8.megaegg.ne.jp)