

The A-bomb

That I Experienced

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We earnestly hope that the tragedy of Hiroshima should never be repeated in any country in the world, and the nuclear-free world should become a reality definitely.

This is a brief report on my experiences about the A Bomb in Hiroshima. I hope that this one could help you to have better understanding about that bombing. I also hope that you will tell your family, friends, and neighbors what you have learned here in Hiroshima and what we all the citizens of Hiroshima want to appeal to the world. Thank you very much for visiting Hiroshima.

How we were those days

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

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 and at war. Most of big cities were being bombed, burnt, and destroyed one by one. Dad had been ill since the preceding year 1944. Doctors not having good medicine any more, his illness was getting worse and was 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. When Father arrived at the old house in the country, his condition was already the worst. He died on April 16, 1945 in his old house not knowing that the war was coming to the end soon four months after that, and his two sons could come home safely again.

Though I can't remember that Mom was complaining anything those days, she must have had terrible time about the family. She just believed in Amidah Buddha's salvation and said prayers to Amidah Buddha over and over in a small voice. She had understood the world like --- that we are in the world where there is nothing we can really rely upon. 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.

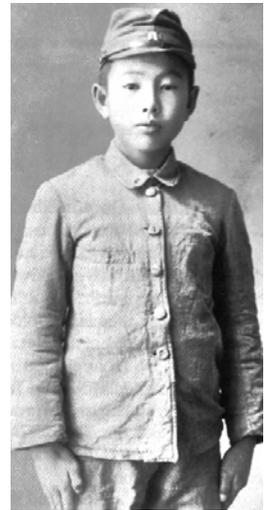
Anyway each of these five of my family was in his or her own place being controlled by fate. Dad wasn't alive any more, Mom was in the country, and two

brothers were in the war, and I was at school in Hiroshima.

Fright of Death

It was a quiet morning of August 6th in the campus.

Regular classes at school had started on the 1st of August, and we the first grade students of Hiroshima National Technical College were enjoying the brief campus life, which ordinary students 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 of the city and commuting to school by streetcar those days. The life at the dorm was not easy. Food was so little and we were always hungry. However, we young boys were not bothered so much though we had been in a real poor conditions,



It was such a sunny beautiful morning, 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, was felt fresh that morning, and I was studying hard. The class had started at 8:00 sharp. (If school was to start 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 about a difficult question on differential and integral calculus. I happened to look up out of the window, and saw two B-29 bombers flying very high above in the sky. They were shining silver-white and were just as beautiful as ice candies. "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 real orange red world like the sunset. At the same time, I had jumped in under my desk, pressing my ears with both thumbs and my eyes with the other fingers unconsciously because we had been taught to do so in the case of bombing those days.

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

I am not sure how many seconds had passed by, but gradually dim light came in

among the debris. Very fortunately, the staircase of this old-fashioned strong wooden building was all right, and my desk was the nearest to it. 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 little pieces of glass of smashed panes. 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 town had been destroyed, etc. When we were bombed in the classroom, I was sure that one bomb was dropped just beside me, beside the window. How should I have known anything about such a monstrous bomb those days? Everyone felt like that later, I learned that.

When I could sneak out of the building going down the staircase somehow, 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 could one bomb give us such a heavy damage in a moment?

My nerve might have been a little seared soon, and I wasn't shocked to see those 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 the 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

Out of the school gate, when we started to walk slowly, again I was shocked to see all those severely destroyed houses and a great many injured people mostly burnt people like smoked and broiled pigs. I cannot remember them crying or sobbing, because 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 obviously must have been dead a few days after that day. 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 district, and he 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 7th 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 6th, 1945.

What a Weapon?

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

Though we the students in better conditions were told to work for restoration, I had been 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 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 a luck that the water supply was still all 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, roof-tiles in order to make space to prevent fire by bombings. Most of them were smoked, burnt, bare-footed, with messy hair. We were so thirsty and the water was very good!

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.



**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

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All the handrail stones of the 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 straight in 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 at a time.

Then I remembered a piece of simple information concerning 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 warship 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.

Thinking 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.

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

The Way Out of the City

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, 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. Even today, I still cannot understand why he had been left there without being covered even with a blanket or some other things in such a miserable way. Might the people have been too busy in his or her own business to pay attention on others? I feel so ashamed of ourselves including myself --- - who had lost some human sense or consideration to others.

When I passed by another half-broken police station near TAISHO-BASHI bridge, a bulletin announced by Hiroshima Army Headquarter was on the board of the wall, which said something like --- - “The cowardly enemy bombed the city with a certain new bomb, and we got some damage. You all 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 which 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 the enemy that possessed such a mighty strong weapon. Still I never thought of surrender, either. We had been educated like that.

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 many citizens dying by a great bombing. Mother felt the strong flash, saw the huge mushroom cloud above the mountains, and heard the big noise while she was working in the rice patch. She believed that I also 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 no-place-to-sleep sufferers, I just went to fast asleep that night. Yes, 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 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 less radiation, and we students were inside the building not being burned, and I myself walked 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 of the other side of

the city. Just gray ash desert!

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

For these several days after August 6th, I was sick and feverish in bed. I was bothered by diarrhea letting out a little blood-mixed-feces, 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 they asked and asked for water, as you 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 burnt people vomited yellowish liquid, and they could recover somehow. 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 very fortunately to me. Now I understand in this way.

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 heavy damage of Hiroshima.

Wounded and burned people died one after another around us after that. People who were all right seemingly after the bombing became ill suddenly and died without the reason being known. Some say that approximately 140,000 people died by that bombing until 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?

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

Two brothers in the navy also survived and could come home safely, and we were very fortunate.

It was in April 1949, when I became a teacher of a junior high school in Hiroshima, and our lives were not so easy yet those days. 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 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 use to 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 very familiar to them.

Time has passed, however, and even parents and the family people 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

Long time has passed after that, and it is very peaceful without a war here in Japan. People of younger generations would not pay much attention on 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 62 years after that day, what a happy person I am! I often remember of 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 some chronic diseases, they are 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 the white blood cell has always been far less than normal. Also I have constantly 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 those horrible facts happened here, and to co-operate to stop another use of it on the earth again.

END