

Hiroshima

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I moved to Hiroshima city from an island in the Seto Inland Sea, when I was 5 years old. That was because my father was transferred to an elementary school in Hiroshima city, and then worked for a middle school the following year.

It was 1943 when I graduated from elementary school and entered middle school. In those days there was no entrance examination “battle” like today. Instead, all that was required was submitting the record of my school life, an interview, and simple performance of physical exercise.



Our school was notorious for its strict Spartan education. If you forgot homework, or talked out of turn during class, you would be beaten by teachers, or put on duty for a penalty in the early morning. Even so, I enjoyed the usual classes, seaweed collecting on the beach, and the school trip for swimming training. It was fun. I might have had a more fun time than middle school students today. However, that was during the somber wartime.

In the beginning of Showa Era when I was born, the worldwide economic slump was flowing into Japan. Worry about economics and anxiety were spreading among Japanese. Some people in power, led by military officials, sought the way out by invading mainland China continent and other Asian countries, instead of collaborating with other countries. They also oppressed Japanese citizens inside of Japan. Only the military industry was active.

The military troops had been located in Hiroshima since an early stage. It was an important military hub for transportation due to the port of Ujina. Our every day life was also affected by these circumstances. On my way to and from school, I would see soldiers training on the drill ground. Many homes provided a few days accommodation to soldiers who were assigned to the battlefield in China before departure. These things were everyday matters and our pleasures too. However, we didn't know the real situation of the war. We believed we would win the war. The fact was that the battle in China continent was bogged down and we had been losing the Pacific War, after the Battle of Midway Sea Fight in the second year. In fact, our living conditions had become worse and worse, and the attacks on the Japanese mainland had begun. Our mother, who was making a hard effort to give us as much food as possible, sometimes mumbled, “Japan will lose, since our life is this hard.” At that time, we even tried to dissuade her, saying, “Mum, you should not say that Japan will lose.” We had been miseducated.

Mobilization of Students

In the meantime, my school life had been changing. We had more military drills with guns, went to farming villages for rice harvesting, or worked at arms depots. It was a dream for many students to go to the Army Academy or the Naval Academy. However teachers often recommended some students to become a Navy trainee pilot or an Army's tank soldier. Because those positions were open to the 2nd and 3rd year students so that the military could send more young students to the battlefield.

When I became a 2nd year student in 1944, senior students were mobilized to work in the ammunition factories and other facilities around the city. The law setting educational measures in preparation for the “decisive battle” came into effect, which suspended all academic activities at middle schools and higher schools for the next year. Next spring, even in the local city of Hiroshima, school children, except for the lower grades of elementary school, started to be evacuated to avoid air-raid attacks.

Toward the end of my second year at middle school, I myself was mobilized to work for Toyo Kogyo Co. Ltd in the suburb. I attended the entrance ceremony at the auditorium. I felt very honored, when I entered the factory wearing a hair-band with the printed letters of Hinomaru (Rising Sun) and Kamikaze (Divine Wind). My mind was full of pride, thinking that I could contribute to decide Japan’s fate.

Now, the Toyo Kogyo is known as a carmaker. In those days, this factory made guns and pistons for zero-bombers. Near this factory, there was Nihonseiko (Japan Steel Industry). At the reclaimed land of the estuary of the Hiroshima’s seven rivers, there were Mitsubishi shipbuilding and machine factory and the Army’s Airport at Yoshijima. Surrounded by these factories in preparation for the battle for the mainland at the center of the Military City, Hiroshima, was located the Second General Military Headquarters which was equivalent to the First General Military Headquarters in Tokyo.

Since the end of 1944, the air-raids by B-29 bombers on the mainland became harder and harder. Nagoya was attacked in December, Tokyo in next year, and “Naval Base City” in Kure next to Hiroshima was devastated. Furthermore, Osaka, Fukuoka, and Iwakuni suffered air-raids, in sequence. Therefore, it was taken for granted that Hiroshima would be attacked soon, due to its importance as a military foothold.

The Toyo Kogyo where I was working was not an exception. As the war intensified, there was a scarcity of materials to make guns at the factory. We started to carry the materials to the air-raid shelter in the mountain behind the factory preparing for air-raids which we thought would come soon, so that all materials we had would be safe.

As the summer came closer, Japan’s position in the war was getting worse. Preparing for the coming air-raids, the demolition to make the fire breaks started in the city. Instead of going to the factory, we worked on the streets all day long. We demolished houses by pulling them down with ropes.

I was wondering. Hiroshima had not yet been attacked, even though, I heard puzzling information from the speaker many times at night. It said, “An announcement from the West Military Information Office! Some enemy’s B-29 bombers are flying over Iyo Sound, heading north toward Hiroshima.” Yet after these warnings, Matsuyama, Oita, or Tokuyama were attacked, instead of Hiroshima.

One time, when I was watching an American Gruman fighter while I was standing on the heap of lumber at the back of the factory, I was attacked by machine guns from the front. I turned pale and toppled to the ground. Later I heard that a middle school girl, who was standing on the rooftop of the nearby Yasuda Women’s High School on sentry duty, was shot. There was no attack by large groups of B-29 bombers.

Hiroshima is a city of rivers, therefore we suspected that American had the strategy to flood Hiroshima by destroying the dams of the upper river, and we put bamboo-woven rafts by the fire prevention cisterns.

However, we had not yet been attacked. It was unsettling and a little weird not to have the attack which was supposed to come.

The moment of A-bombing – thrown into a gigantic blast furnace.

On the sixth of August in 1945 I was supposed to go to Hiroshima City for demolishing buildings. But I was absent-mindedly heading for Toyo Kogyo Co.,Ltd. as usual.

The doctor diagnosed me with beriberi owing to vitamin B shortage, and gave me a medical certificate that I should be absent from school for one week. (In those days many students were in bad nutritive condition on account of food shortages.)

My father, however, said to me, “Why don’t you go to the factory today and take the day off tomorrow?” So I reluctantly left home. My mother saw me off, watching for a long time through the lattice with piteous and depressed expression on her face. Not knowing this was the last time to see my mother, I also turned to look at her again and again.

I took the train at Yokogawa Station. When the train made a temporary stop due to the alert, I remembered that I should go to Hiroshima City on the day and hurriedly got off at the next Hiroshima Station. Walking side by side with friends I headed for the work place at the end of Tsurumi Bridge under the scorching sun. The work place was located at the east end of what is now the 100m wide street (the remains of fire lane), to the south of the current Peace Park, where it runs into the river at the foot of Hijiyama Hill. It was about 1.5km away from the hypocenter.

We seventy students, gathering on the work site and standing in line facing the north, were being given instructions about work by the director of the weapon department. We were wearing clothes of the same khaki color as a combat uniform, a field service cap, a gaiter, military shoes and an air-raid hood, carrying a backpack holding food and medicine for emergency on our back, and wearing a bag holding the Emperor’s written commands for soldiers around our waist. Many other junior high school students were also mobilized for the same kind of work in the city on that day.

At 8:15 in the morning, what we hadn’t expected happened. In a moment the rain of fire surrounded us. I was completely wrapped up in it. No. I should say that I was thrown into a gigantic blast furnace. I dropped to the ground instantly. But I already got severely burnt on my face and my limbs by heat rays. (I didn’t feel any pain at that time.) The clothes and the cap I was wearing were utterly burnt into shreds.

One student thought that a fire bomb had made a direct hit. One thought electricity sparked with bluish-white flash. One thought a gas tank exploded. Seventy students each imagined what had happened in different ways.

Classmates around me also got severely burnt. One felt as if the skin of his face was stripped off at the burst. One was blown away and got his leg caught by a railing of the bridge. One was crushed by other classmates falling over. One got his backpack blown off. At the moment, and even after that, I didn’t know what became of the seventy classmates or where they went. I heard these stories later.

Following people around me, I unconsciously went into the river. While I was dazed in the river, wooden fragments of broken roofs and dust were falling down and the river began to be muddy. Some friend said that just after the explosion something like black dust or a cloud skimmed over his head and went toward the other river bank. After a few minutes' eerie silence, out of the quiet under the dark, heavy, oppressing sky, I heard far, muffled shouts or cries, like gathering mosquitoes, of women and children.

A different world

One friend turned his face to me, saying "What is my face like? Does it look terrible?" His skin was peeling off like slippery wax. My face must have been the same, but I couldn't think of myself and was just looking at him in a daze. I just felt as if I were thrown into a different world.

Coming out of the river, I joined people around me and began to labor up Hijiyama Hill near the river like a sleepwalker. Now on this hill is the Radiation Effects Research Foundation.

An elementary school student failed to climb the cliff and rolled down the hill side, shouting "Help me!", as if he were dragged into the bottom of a hell. I couldn't help feeling pity for him.

When I looked over the city from the hill top, houses in Hiroshima, where there used to be a lot of wooden houses, were all pushed over. Fires sprang up here and there in the collapsed city like pieces of scrap paper catch fire, and many black smoking pillars were rising in the air. I heard a siren somewhere in the distance.

If I had been thinking normally, I would have questioned what on earth happened to destroy or delete this big city in a moment. But at that time I was just seeing the sight without thinking anything.

Then I saw many groups of soldiers trooping by, lifting their burnt arms like mantises. Except the parts where they wore their caps their hair fell out and their skin was peeled off. For the first time since the explosion, I thought that something terrible had happened and recognized the abnormality of the situation. The naked men and women, whose skins were badly burnt, torn and red, were passing beside us, chanting a prayer.

When I came down the hill, I saw houses destroyed, roof tiles scattered and plaster heaped. I got my legs caught by wires of fallen electric poles. My burnt face and limbs began to hurt. So, using dirty water for fire prevention to cool down, I ran away north toward Hiroshima Station. My house was in Hakushima, the north-western part of Hiroshima City. I determined to go back to my house.

Hell surrounded by raging flames

There seemed to be no one inside the station. They might have kept themselves away from the station, for fear of being attacked by enemy planes. I tried to cross the Tokiwa Bridge toward Hakushima, but the house at the end of the bridge was furiously burning and the fierce heat from the house prevented me from crossing it. One fire caused another fire, which created the roaring flames. With nothing to do, I went down to the riverbank, and there I saw a horrible sight of a great number of corpses; some with their skin peeling off and hanging down, some with their eyeballs popping out, and others with

black bubbles from their swollen mouths. I went up again and then saw a woman pull out her dead husband from rubble and cry together with her children, clinging to him. A woman station attendant, with her head covered with blood, was approaching on the stretcher. An officer was roaring, leaning on his saber. A fallen big pine tree blocked the road. A charred boy lay under the railroad bridge like an earthworm. It was nothing but a shambles.

Because I was afraid of being raked by enemy planes, I fled to the hill behind the mountains and waited until the fire was put out. Meanwhile, the oil and coal stored at the station probably caught fire and burst into blaze in great force. Then a mass of black smoke, covering over the sky and creeping over the ground, flooded into the spacious East Drill Ground located between the station and the hill. The smoke flood swallowed swarms of people one after another, who were trying to flee in all directions.

The only treatment the victims received was application of Mercurochrome at relief stations, temporarily erected with tents. I was asked at a station if I could flee with a boy because my injuries were limited to my face. Giving a look at the boy, I saw burns all over his back. He said he was a seventh grader.

On that evening, since we heard the fire was put out, the boy and I started trudging along the railroad, whose ties were still smoldering. I had to walk avoiding charred ties with one eye because the other eye was covered with hanging skin of my swollen face.

My house was burned down

Getting to my house, I saw nothing except the tall stone basin. My house had been totally burned down. How could I know that my mother had been burned to death under the debris? I was standing dazed at the sight for a while, without any emotions. With no place to go, we just walked toward the west.

We heard the bank building in Yokogawa was used as a relief station. We got there, looked in from behind the entrance pillar and found the place was filled with dying and dead people, whose bodies were swollen and skins were peeling down. It stank awfully. The place was anything but a relief station. The boy and I hastily got out of the place.

The oil tank at Yokogawa Station was destroyed and leveled to the ground. The platforms and trains at the station were burned, leaving only their iron frameworks. We heard that we would not be able to catch a train unless we walked as far as Furuichi Station(6 kilometers north from there). We had no choice but to keep walking. When blistered burns on my hand touched my hip, the blisters were torn and water came out. Because touching my clothes caused terrible pain on my hands, I walked like a ghost, holding my arms up in front. On the way, women came out of their houses one after another, saying, "Who are you? Are you my boy? I wouldn't care how he looked if only he was alive." Then, knowing we were not their boys, they sighed with despair.

We finally got on a train at Furuichi Station. Inside the train silent, filthy and worn-out people were lying down like potatoes all over the floor. I don't remember when, but one house came up to my mind, which was my father's acquaintance's and we had our belongings evacuated there. I said good-bye to the boy and looked for the house, which I had never visited before. However, my strength was drained and I fell down on the roadside. A neighbor carried me to the house I had been looking for. Later on that night, my father visited the house, wondering whether by any chance I was there. When

he found me, I was just talking in delirium unconsciously, with a high fever of over 40 degrees.

On the next day, August 7, I regained consciousness, but I still was stupefied. Seeing my recovery of consciousness, my father left for the city to look for my mother and sisters. But our house was too hot to approach.

Pain of the injuries

Three days later, my father finally dug out the brittle bones of my mother, which looked as if she had been vertically crushed. He said, "She was probably crushed to death immediately by a falling beam. The thought that she wasn't burned alive in agony gave solace to me." I had no emotions or no tears when I heard this, because my nerves were numbed with the pain that had lasted day and night from my burns.

I had burns on the left face, the backs of my hands and both knees. My face was severely distorted from the neck to the mouth, and my mouth was swollen, which made it impossible to open. My neck didn't turn. My limbs hurt terribly whenever I tried to move them. So I kept lying on my back with my hands on my chest and with my knees drawn up for days. Since it was summer, the wounds festered sloppily, and the pus was dripping along my neck. My father and sister were attending to me all the time, changing bandages many times a day, but that was not enough. Besides, changing bandages caused unbearable pain. Because the blood and pus dried solid and stuck to the bandage, I felt as if my skin was plucked away every time I had bandages changed. My skin surfaces were destroyed and red flesh was exposed. "It hurts. It hurts." I groaned day and night.

Meanwhile, many people around me died one after another. On the riverbank, the smoke from the cremation of the dead continued rising. I was overwhelmed with the feelings of anxiety and fear; when would I be added to those?

Hearing that I had burns, my aunt visited me. She died soon after that, foaming black bubbles from her mouth, although she had not had any wounds. That was due to the radiation.

There was a hospital across the river. Since most hospitals in the city were destroyed, that was one of the few which survived. Although there were a tremendous number of the wounded, I heard that they would be only applied Mercurochrome after waiting in line half a day together with hundreds of the wounded. I gave up trying to see a doctor. One of the acquaintances of my father, who had been a medical officer, sterilized the wounds with hydrogen peroxide and occasionally gave me a shot against blood poisoning. I was lucky enough to be able to get such treatment. Who knew how to treat those diseases caused by the A-bomb, which no one had ever experienced before nor have experienced since then? My father tried everything he heard was good for burns like a mixture of oil and powdered burned paulownia, moxibustion and so on. Likewise everyone else did.

About two months later, at last, my wounds closed up and I was able to sit up. Then, puckers of keloid developed from my face along my neck. My left ear lobe disappeared after shriveling and rotting sloppily. My family hid all the mirrors at the house to keep me from seeing myself.

Feeling like screaming at the top of my voice

Although my wounds were cured, in order to let me recover my declined health, my father left me in my uncle's charge in Yamagata-gun, where my grandmother had been evacuated. He was a farmer, so he could afford to provide some food.

About half a year after the A-bomb was dropped, schools were resumed. Although we hadn't been studying for a while under such chaotic circumstances, we were promoted to the fourth year under the old middle school system which had up to the fifth year. Our school had been burned down, so the barracks of the military hospital were used as a makeshift school. The surviving classmates started to come to school. Out of five classes all the students in one class were killed. About half of the students of three of the remaining classes were burned. Some teachers were also killed in the bombing. At the other schools, such as Hiroshima First Middle School and Yamanaka Girls' Upper School, 2,000 students were mobilized to demolish buildings in Zakoba-cho near the hypocenter, and 1,600 of them perished. At Dobashi-cho, 1,800 students at municipal middle schools were mobilized to work, and 1,300 of them were killed. A lot of students were victims at various places.

We may say we were lucky to be alive because we narrowly survived after such a calamity. However, at that time, the fact that I survived made me feel unbearably guilty and I madly felt like screaming at the top of my voice.

Along with me, my friend, Mr. T, was waiting on the hill behind the Hiroshima Station until the fire died down. I heard that he suddenly had felt pain of his burns after he arrived at home, maybe from relief of being at home. From the following day on, he suffered from vomiting and bloody diarrhea for one week. His parents were so worried every day wondering if he might die that day or the next day because he had no appetite. He himself thought he was dying. Everyone went through the threat of death.

My friend, Mr. M, after he lost his parents, helped his uncle with his black-market broker business evading the police.

Another friend had a severe pain in his wounds when the cold wind blew. Another friend walked hiding his scars, being afraid to be seen by girls. Life was hard for all of us and we felt agony for a long time.

On August 15, Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and surrendered unconditionally. On that day, my friend, Mr. T, in spite of his weak body, was going to grandfather's house in the country. Though it usually takes only twenty minutes, it took him three hours on foot to go to Hiroshima Station because he was out of breath due to severe debility. When he heard the news of Japan's surrender on the way, he was completely indifferent because of the terrible pain of his wounds. I was sick in bed when I heard from my father that the Emperor declared Japan's defeat on the radio. I was, like Mr. T, paralyzed emotionally as I was being overwhelmed by the pain of my wounds. After a while, I gradually began to realize that I no longer had to worry about the attack of B-29s with bodies glittering in the sky.

Since eight families who had lost their houses moved into M's house, we didn't want to cause them trouble any longer. Shortly before school started, my father returned to his

job as a teacher to support me, who was injured, and my motherless sisters. Our family of four started a new life in one six-tatami-mat room at the dormitory of his school. In the next room, there was a family who had repatriated from China with nothing but their clothes. As food was very scarce, we grew vegetables using one corner of the schoolyard as we had done during the war. I carried buckets of human waste to the garden over my shoulder. After breakfast, I would go to school hanging on to the door of the packed tram. In my lunch box, there were only one or two pieces of steamed sweet potatoes. I usually ate lunch during the break between classes as I couldn't wait for the lunchtime. I must have been so starved. I had a dream that children were run over by a roller and killed, because shortage of food made it necessary to reduce the number of mouths.

The year 1946 saw severe inflation. In May of that year, "Food May Day" was held. About 250,000 people gathered in the square in front of the Imperial Palace holding up placards saying "We want rice."

We couldn't feel that peace had really returned. In the wake of the defeat in the war, life of the nation was poverty-stricken. Above all, Hiroshima was instantly reduced to ashes by the A-bomb. I was filled with a grudge, "If only the A-bomb had not been dropped, we would have better lives... My gentle mother would not have been burned to death. Our house and fortunes wouldn't have been lost. My face and body would not have been injured and burned. And my friends, our teachers and our juniors..." In addition, we had once believed that Japan would definitely win. We were in awe when we heard the word "His Majesty the Emperor". We had been educated and brainwashed that we should sacrifice everything for the Emperor. However, we were betrayed. Burns made me grotesque and the puckered skin of my face looked as if it was not part of my body. I had an almost irresistible impulse to nip it off and throw it away. I was fearful and uneasy. It was scary to hear the sound of siren. I was frightened when I glimpsed mirrors and glasses sparkle. I think all these things added up to make me feel like screaming at the top of my voice.

My classmate said, "I want to be a doctor."

For some years after that, I was possessed by a fervent wish to study. Fortunately, Father was alive. In those days the Japanese economy was in such an exhausted condition that some senior high school students themselves made a decision to even give up their school trip at the students' meeting, because they did not want to impose a burden on their parents' finance. There was a scholarship system, and the students, who became teachers, were exempted from repayment of scholarship. So I entered a higher normal school to be a teacher. However, one year later, the educational system was reformed and a new-system university started. I took an entrance examination again and was admitted to that university.

At the university I happened to meet my elementary school classmate. She told me that she was working at an aircraft factory in Hiroshima as a mobilized student when the A-bomb was dropped. On that day the boys were mobilized for demolition work in Dobashi area near the hypocenter. The girls were working in the factory. When the boys, exposed and injured, dragged themselves back to the factory, the girls devotedly attended them.

After finishing her detailed story about the situation at that time, she added, "I want to be a doctor."

From an anthology titled "Dedicated to the Souls", let me read a part of her story.

"Luckily or unluckily, we were saved, and in confusion we attended the injured boys to release them from their pain, calling to them with the words to encourage them, while crying in our hearts. They passed away one after another in spite of our dedicated care. Seeing that they were trying to overcome their agony without a single groan with all severe injuries, I could not keep back tears. I hid myself from them and wiped tears. Though telling myself off not to cry, I could not stop tears running down my cheeks.

In the meantime night closed in completely. Fierce fires kept soaring ablaze here and there, and scorched the sky. My friend and I cooked gruel for those who could eat only liquid food. I was afraid the cooking fire might be targeted by the bombers, so hid the fire with my body. I swore, together with my friend, to protect the injured people at the risk of my life."

Now I could understand why she wanted to be a doctor. She tried her best to rescue the injured at the risk of her life. She devoted herself to nursing them though she was not used to such work. However, all perished by dawn. I imagine that her deep regret that she could do nothing to save them stirred up her wish to be a doctor and protect the lives of people.

Given a teaching position at school

In 1954 Aikichi Kuboyama, a crew member of Daigo Fukuryu Maru, was killed by the fallout from the explosion of the hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll. That news shocked the people throughout Japan. That happening triggered a signature-collecting campaign for banning atomic and hydrogen bombs among the women in Suginami-ku, Tokyo, and the movement against these bombs widely expanded.

However, there was another negative development. In 1950, only five years after the end of the Pacific War, war again started in our neighboring country. It was the Korean War.

During the World War II, there were record-breaking number of victims in Asia including China, in Europe and in the Soviet Union as well as in Japan. On Hiroshima and Nagasaki the atomic bombs were dropped for the first time in human history. Everybody had a wholehearted wish for peace. The new era when we could live without any fear should have come. So the outbreak of the Korean War upset me.

When the Korean War escalated, President Truman proclaimed that he would not hesitate to use the atomic bomb. His remark might have induced the repetition of the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That was intolerable for us.

Prior to that, in 1950 the United States started to develop new nuclear weapons including the hydrogen bomb, and the next year they succeeded in the first hydrogen bomb test. The Soviet Union too conducted an A-bomb test in 1949 and developed the hydrogen bomb in 1953. The critical era of the race toward the nuclear armament had already started and nuclear war was indeed a potential.

Our animosity against nuclear weapons and our wish for the abolition of nuclear weapons were ignored.

I take this opportunity to tell you that, just after the Korean War began, the police reserve force, the predecessor of the present Self Defense Forces, was organized under the General McArthur's order, and weapons began to be offered to Japan by the U.S. In 1951 the San Francisco Peace Treaty was concluded. It was signed with the U.S. only, not with all the nations which had been at war with Japan, so it is called a separate peace. At the same time the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty was concluded, which allowed the U.S. military to be stationed in Japan. Because of this treaty the U.S. military has continued to station forces and build many military facilities in various places throughout Japan. That means that Japan became an allied power of the U.S. Japan established the Constitution of Japan (effected in 1956) because of the regret that it caused a lot of damages to the countries it had invaded. The preamble of the constitution says, "We have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world", and the Article 9 stipulates renunciation of war and abandonment of military forces. Japan-U.S. Security Treaty is against the spirit of the constitution, and a lot of contradictions have been created in the Japanese society so far.

Japan was economically vitalized due to the special procurements for the Korean War, but the ordinary people still had to live a hard life. Even on the eve of the graduation, I had difficulty in finding a job because of my poor health. While thinking of earning my living as a skilled radio repairman, I was offered a job of teaching. Though it was a part-time job, I was excited and enjoyed teaching with full satisfaction every day. I was wrapped up in the work of developing the study of Japanese language arts, and I had dismissed the thought of keloids from my mind.

In the summer after two years, I took my students to the exhibition on the industrial uses of atomic energy. On the way back we visited Peace Memorial Museum. After we saw the belongings of the victims and picture panels of keloids which depicted the devastation by the A-bombing, some female students said, "I am scared. I can't sleep tonight." The teachers fell completely silent. I was so shocked and could hardly endure staying there because I myself had keloids.

"I was exposed to the atomic bomb, but it is not my fault. What is important is not to look beautiful but to live beautifully. I have been trying to be a person with a beautiful heart. What should I do if I make others unhappy because I look terrible? Human beings seek after beauty by nature, don't they?" Asking myself, I was depressed again. For a long time I avoided talking of the A-bombing and keloids. I was most happy when I did not think of them.

About that time I met a woman who had a survivor in her family and could understand my feeling. I got married to her.

In 1960, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty was forcibly revised despite strong opposition by many Japanese people. The new treaty stipulated that Japan and the U.S. should jointly act for "the defense" of Japan and "the security" of the Far East. A large-scale movement against its revision had been staged for fear that Japan might be more likely to get involved in wars. We, too, had joined the rally and the signature-collecting campaign.

In 1962, the Cuban Crises arose and the nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union was impending.

These incidents enhanced my wish for peace, but did not get me out of the shell of a survivor nor stimulate me to think independently and take actions. I did not have courage nor determination to plunge into the peace movement without feeling ashamed of keloids on me.

Responsibility for passing on my story

In those days, the members of "Wind Association", whose group my university friend joined, visited me. They came to see me in order to make a special publication, "A report from Hiroshima." Our main subjects were as follows: What do younger generations without any experiences of the A-bombing feel and think of it? In what ways can hibakushas communicate with non-hibakushas? Is it possible?

Mr.T, who came to Hiroshima for the first time, seemed to feel frustrated because he couldn't actually see the effects of the A-bombing at all while walking in the city. According to him, he couldn't connect the present city with the gloomy and unbearable impression of the picture he had seen self-inflicted scars on an A-bomb survivor who was so tormented that he cut himself with a razor when he had fits of severe pain.

In addition, he was strikingly shocked to see the scene of a TV program, in which a girl born in Hiroshima on August 6 turned her back suddenly to the TV camera after saying, "I have nothing to do with the A-bomb." He was surprised to find that there were some of the next generation who denied any association with the A-bomb in Hiroshima.

The members of Wind Association seemed to be unable to understand my situation that I locked myself in my wounds of the body and the mind in spite of living surrounded every day by high school students like that girl. They wondered why I didn't tell my experience of the A-bombing as a survivor.

However, as I told them not only the experience on that day but also the agony following, we were able to appreciate each other's feelings little by little. That's because we came to the conclusion that even if my efforts to get rid of the agony in my mind by enhancing myself as a human being were different from their way of thinking in the relations of the politics and the society, we could share our feeling and increase mutual understanding.

I think we need chances for survivors and others to talk frankly, and above all we survivors should create opportunities to talk to younger generations without relying on chance.

However, it's very difficult to reassure myself whenever I meet anyone, saying "My scars are not just simple burns but burns caused by the A-bomb." To my mind, it is much harder to tell my experience openly and patiently to each person individually I meet so that the younger generations can understand the A-bomb as their own issue.

I also wanted my students to learn about and understand the A-bombing well and know my situation, "Oh, you were exposed to the A-bomb" without needing to tell it. In that sense 'someone' needs to convey our experience. Mr. T.'s question of what young people feel and think of the A-bombing made me aware that it was not someone else but I myself who must convey our story because every day I was with the high school

students. I realized this was what I must do, in part in order to remove my anxiety and apprehension about students' response.

First, I set out a questionnaire on what the students feel about the A-bombing and me, a survivor.

I found the result unexpected. They sufficiently recognized the tragedy and inhumanity caused by the A-bomb and they wanted to make efforts never to repeat the tragedy out of their own spontaneous personal feelings, without being influenced by the adults' way of thinking. On the other hand, some answered, "We can't really understand the experience of the A-bombing because we were not exposed to it." or "We really don't know what to do about it, and therefore do nothing because we are pressed by daily work." The survey made it clear that we survivors should tackle these problems.

Taking part in a Peace Pilgrimage

Mr. Reynolds, an anthropologist and researcher of ABCC (present Radiation Effect Research Foundation), saw the tragedy of Hiroshima with his own eyes. Overwhelmed by that tragedy, Mr. Reynolds embarked on a peace movement. He entered a certain European country's nuclear testing area in the Pacific as a protest. His wife, Barbara Reynolds, who had raised money by selling her property, made a project to take hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki through America, Europe, and the Soviet Union and spread the message of peace through exchange and cooperation with people. This was the World Peace Study Mission (A Peace Pilgrimage).

Barbara and her family are Quakers, whose traditional idea is to conscientiously hold on anti-war attitudes by firmly rejecting military service even if hard labor or imprisonment is imposed. Although impressed by Barbara, I was wondering if I also would be able to lead such a self-sacrificing life and plunge into such a peace pilgrimage.

Those days I used to say to myself, "I have to enhance my humanity to get rid of my fear of a public revulsion provoked by my keloids." However, after I noticed that I had withdrawn into my shell, I gradually came to realize that the use of the A-bombs, which caused me such a deep fear and agony, was attributable to a wider loss of humanity.

Moreover, I came to think that I also could regain my humanity, by communicating and cooperating with war provokers who lost their humanity and with those who were not conscious of it. I was positive that I could regain mine only by taking such actions and cooperating with people. I also wanted to be one of those peace workers who would create world peace.

I could take such a positive attitude thanks to the contact with the group of Kaze no Kai (Wind Association)". Besides, our new-born daughter enhanced my positive idea.

To Chiyuki -The birth of a life

Snow is heavily dancing down.
Both heaven and earth
make your birth white and solemn.

Covering the front of my overcoat
a snowstorm is raging.
And yet I still walk on.

Let my days past marked by fears and anxieties
be buried with snow.
Walking in a snowstorm makes me warm;
The snow melts on my face.
My eyes get wet with tears
like you, my crying new-born baby
just carried from the delivery room,
eyes filled with tears.

Out of a dark world
you sprang just now.
You've never seen snow.
But like snow
you are asleep
peacefully,
innocently,
and gently.

Like snow, my baby,
your face, eyelids, nose, lips, face, and earlobes
are clear
yet faintly crimson.
Wearing a cotton hood,
and wrapped in a white cloth,
you breathe gently!

I applied for a peace pilgrimage. Taking a part in a two-and-a half-month pilgrimage around America and Europe, I tried to let people know about the inhumanity and tragedy caused by the A-bomb through my agonizing experience. We met with U.N. Secretary-General U. Taunt to petition him for comprehensive medical and scientific research in radiation. We also met with ex-President Truman, who had ordered the A-bombings. But we heard no apology from him.

During our peace pilgrimage, in addition to telling our stories, we learned that each of the Western peace workers acted according to his or her own situation. When something happens, each of them, whether a student or a housewife, voluntarily gathers to act regardless of individual circumstance.

A woman, a member of the Board of Education in a certain state, said to me, "The textbooks in America don't give us full detail of black people's problems. I suppose your textbooks in Japan give you full information about the A-bombs?" I was at a loss what to answer.

What I Want to Hand Down to You

After I came back to Japan, I immediately checked the textbooks and found that to my surprise they did not have much description about the A-bombings, to my surprise. This was not good. If there was not enough description in the textbooks, we teachers had to take initiative in teaching about the A-bombings. I developed a strong determination. Two A-bomb Teachers' associations were made. One consisted of mainly elementary and junior high school teachers and the other consisted of Hiroshima and Nagasaki high school teachers. The A-bombed teachers promised one another that they would make

the teaching materials based on the facts they had experienced and would lead peace education and the study of the A-bombings.

The Boards of Education of Hiroshima City and Hiroshima Prefecture also gave a notice to every school, which asked all the school teachers to teach “the A-bombing on August 6th” to the students.

Peace education movement has been gradually but steadily expanding. It is going ahead all over the country, taking root in the local communities and schools. The number of schools which make the students study about peace by visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki on their school trips has been increasing.

Many of the people who experienced the A-bombing have strong will to act, even at the risk of their lives, to get rid of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. However, we hibakushas are getting old and there are more than a few people who have already passed away.

I wish the younger generations to adopt our desire. In spite of the voice of the people who desire peace all over the world, the situation of the nuclear weapons is severe. It is not impossible that humans could be exterminated by nuclear war. You will live in the future so it is now that you must adopt our hibakushas’ desire.

For you boys not to be burned black again.....

“Hooh”, Mr. Morishita heaved a big sigh. It was a sign that he finished his story.

For additional Information about A-bomb survivors and their stories, please contact.



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