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Double A-bomb Victim: My Life beneath the Atomic Clouds

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YAMAGUCHI's profile

Tsutomu Yamaguchi was born in Nagasaki in 1916. After graduating from Keiho junior high school under the prewar education system, he started working at the Engine Rigging Team of the Machine Design Section in Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard. He designed commercial ships. In May, 1945, he went on a business trip to Mitsubishi Hiroshima Shipyard. He experienced the atomic bombing on August 6. Three days after that, he experienced the atomic bombing again in Nagasaki. After the war, he worked as an interpreter for the occupation army and then worked as an English teacher. After that he returned to Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard. He was engaged in tanker production until he retired from the company. He visited the United Nations and has spoken on behalf of the anti-nuclear movement. Also he speaks to high school students in Nagasaki about his experience as a double victim. His experience was also made into a movie. He started writing Tanka, Japanese poetry during his teen years. He received the Governor's Prize at the 37th Memorial Atomic Bomb Literature Convention in August 1999. He is the author of "Book of Poetry Human Rafts" (Asunaro Publishing, 2002).

It was June in 1945 –60 years ago. At that time I was working for the Commercial Ship Rigging Section of the

Design Department in Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard. Japan was fighting in World War II and the tide of war was against us. The Japanese military was losing its power rapidly due to supply shortages and personnel loss. A lack of fuel and steel left the Japanese military no choice but to change their strategies. Now we could only manage to build 5,000-ton battleships instead of our standard-size 10,000-ton battleships. We also started building small transport ships in our shipyard. These ships were intended to transport fuel, but only three out of ten returned with fuel safely. Enemy submarines were beginning to be seen near our waters and even in the sea of Setonaikai.

It was the beginning of May when my boss called me in and sent me on a business trip to the Hiroshima Shipyard. I had to accompany Sato-kun and Iwanaga-kun, my coworkers who were two years younger than me. We were to work on a three-month project designing small ships. Whether you were in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, you could feel the battle on the mainland was inching closer and it was just a matter of time.

I started for Hiroshima leaving my wife and three-year old son behind. On the way, we passed through Tokuyama where fuel warehouses were supposed to be lining along the coast, but everything was completely destroyed. Not one fuel refinery was left at the site. It was just one large burnt field, except for the Tokuyama Station barracks which had been newly built after the air-raids. We couldn't help thinking we were heading toward a grave future. Hiroshima, in contrast, looked quite peaceful, even in wartime. It was a city rich in water and greenery. After we settled in a dormitory in Enami-cho, we immediately reported to the Machinery Design Section of Hiroshima Shipyard. Most of the workers there were from

Nagasaki. Hiroshima Shipyard had just recently been built. It was situated in Enami-cho and consisted of an army barrack-like office, steel framed plant, small docks such as repair docks, and a big sandy field that surrounded the plant. At the edge of the field, there was a sand pump with a big pipe and sand kept flowing out from it. Several days passed peacefully. In our free time, we went out to the sandy field with shovels in our hands and dug foxholes.

One morning in June, after I got to work, I suddenly heard the blast of the air-raid siren. We ran to the foxholes, sank in, and stretched our necks to see what was going on. We heard a distant bombing sound and then above the horizon in front of us, an enormous armada appeared. At first they were like beans shining in the morning sunshine, but soon they became as big as dragonflies. The faraway sound of the armada soon became a roar. Layers of combat units, each consisting of 100 fighters, began to fill the sky and the sea. My heart was pounding because they were coming in the direction of Hiroshima Shipyard. I got so frustrated with my helpless situation. Hiding there, I could do nothing but think what might happen to me in ten minutes.

A mysterious thing happened as I was just giving up on my life. All of sudden, the armada turned in a different direction. "They are heading for Kure naval port!," everybody thought in surprise. That was when the Japanese battleship in the port started fighting back. Barrages of tracers were crossing the air, making an arc like a snake tongue. And then, the fighters made steep dives, one by one, in the direction of the mountain. We thought they had all crashed, but they remerged and continued this fierce fight. By this time my fear had been gone. I got carried away by the battle. It was just like an aerial war I

had seen in movies. It was a battle of madness.

At last the enemy armada began losing control. The glittering fighters were flying around in confusion. The entire port was covered with smoke. Our anti-aircraft cannons and naval gunfire were helplessly sporadic. When all the fighters finished firing, they disappeared. The two-hour deadly battle passed like a dream. Even after the all-clear siren, I was still standing on the sand field motionless. Other people were desperate just like me. They just stood there. After a while, they began going back to their workplaces. That was my first shocking experience in Hiroshima. Later that day, I heard that Kure naval port had been completely destroyed.

From this time on, the enemy aircraft carriers gained command of the air. They made midday attacks in the Kansai area.

The radio broadcasted the dire situations of cities such as Ashiya, Suma and Akashi. Despite the enemy intervention, our project was in progress. However, the food supply was becoming more and more scarce. My coworker, Sato-kun said he was so hungry and wanted to get some extra food before going back to the dormitory, so he went to some far away place to buy some kumamochi, sweet rice cakes.

In July people started evacuations. Every morning I saw school boys and girls leaving the city accompanied by their teachers. We too moved from the Enami Dormitory to another dormitory by the river near the Izumi residence, and then evacuated again to a new building in Senda-cho near the Monopoly Bureau. We loaded our gear onto the company electric cart, sat on it, and went slowly through the towns. The new dormitory was by the Miyuki Bridge and behind

Hiroshima Industrial Technology School. Strangely, neither Hiroshima nor Nagasaki had experienced heavy bombings by then, so the cities were both unaffected. It was as if they were avoiding Hiroshima. They kept attacking Fukuyama and Okayama. The roaring sound of B29s passed above our heads like regular flights. At night the city was under blackout conditions. In darkness we heard the squeaking sounds of the evacuees' carts going in many directions. The sounds lasted until the night was over. All over the country, nights like this were repeated again and again. How many times did I spend the night wearing gaiters, sleeping for a short time, waking up, and waiting with fear for the hot summer night to end? I often had this dream. I am lying down holding a bamboo spear right in front of an enemy tank. Gunfire surrounds me.

In my dream I was killed again and again without any resistance. When I woke to reality, I wondered how I should kill my wife and son. In those days we feared the way of dying rather than death itself, because the media agitated for all-Japanese-death for honor in the final battle on the mainland.

In early August, our three-month project at Hiroshima Shipyard was completed. Mr. Morikawa from Nagasaki, who happened to be staying at our dormitory, told us that the boiler shop of Nagasaki Shipyard and part of company housings had been bombed on July 29th. Despite our desire to rush back to Nagasaki soon, we were not allowed to travel home, which irritated us. Under such circumstances, the assistant manager, in spite of supply shortage, was kind enough to have a sukiyaki-party to comfort us and other workers together.

It was a clear and sunny morning on August 6th. Three of us got up earlier than usual full of happy feelings, because we

were to go home the next day. Breakfast was ready in the dining room. It was not sufficient but considerably prepared.

Then, we were standing in a long queue at Takanobashi bus stop as usual, waiting for the bus bound for Enami-cho. It arrived and people began boarding the bus, when, I realized that I had left my seal in the drawer of my desk in the dormitory room. The seal was very important for various company-related procedures. I told them that I had to go back there to get the seal and they should go to work without me. Then I immediately headed back to the dormitory.

I found Mr. Nakai, the boarding master standing desperately at the gate of the dorm. I put the seal in my pocket and came downstairs. Mr. Nakai invited me to have some tea with him, saying it was too late for the bus. We had some hot tea at the cafeteria. He said, "I had to go to the city hall to do some errands this morning. But after I sent you off to work, I didn't feel like going to the city hall and I was absent-minded for a while."

We had a strange feeling, something like uneasy premonitions. There was a clattering sound of someone washing things in the kitchen. I thought remaining seated here would be a waste of time. So I decided to leave the dorm to take a tram for Enami terminal point.

On the tram I was watching the familiar scenery of Hiroshima city passing by through the window, wondering if I would visit the city again in such wartime. Before long, my tram arrived at the terminal. Passengers were sparse and I was the first to get off the tram.

On the way I crossed a wooden bridge which led to a road about five-meters wide. I saw the shooting gallery of the Japanese Army on the right, and on the left, an ocean of sweet-potato patches spreading far and wide to Huneiri-cho. It was a straight road and not busy after the rush hour.

Fresh morning due on the leaves of sweet potatoes shone brightly in the sun. It was just an ordinary neighboring region of summer-time Hiroshima. There was nothing in the sky but the glare of the sun.

I caught sight of the figure of a woman wearing trousers approaching me. I thought I heard a faint roar of a B-29 bomber in the distance. Then, suddenly the woman, who was already around 20 meters away from me, looked up at the sky showing an expression of dismay. I followed her eyes to look up at the sky.

Though I could not see the shape of the B-29 in the sky, I heard a nose-diving-like engine sound in the air. In that instant, I saw two small parachutes gradually coming down toward the ground maintaining a certain distance between them. I remembered seeing something white like these parachutes when I viewed fireworks.

I suddenly sensed danger. In that instant, I saw a gigantic ball of flame, which bursted away in midair. That was a tremendous explosion in the color of magnesium, rather white than blue.

No sooner had I lain down than I felt blast waves and a bombing roar shoot through my whole system. In my consciousness I saw the faces of my wife and baby son moving like a running movie film, and I fainted. All this happened in an instant.

I came to my senses with a sharp pain which I felt as if my bare flesh was pressed with a hot poker and I opened my eyes. Because of dust clouds and bombing smoke, everything was blurry in the dark like the ocean bed. I thought my brain might have been damaged by the shock. Though the radiation of heat waves scorched my hair to the flesh, I was still alive. I was sure of that. The loud clangs of roof tiles hitting each other in the air, the noise of falling objects, and various other

breaking resonances shot through my body. I realized the sound I had thought to be a running film in my half-conscience was that of roof tiles hitting the ground.

When everything was quiet down, I saw it. It was a huge mushroom-shaped pillar of fire, rising high up in the air. The tornado-like pillar of fire, which showed of no sign of moving, was pivoted to the earth, towering higher and higher up in the sky with its mushroom cap spreading wider and wider at the top. It seemed just like volcanic fumes, gushing, rolling and curling up. Against the sunbeams, a rainbow-color prism was changing its lights like a kaleidoscope in a complex rhythm. This fire pillar, which was at an altitude of almost 2 kilometers, was changing its shape like a living thing, growing its cap, occupying the sky. I believed the man-made mushroom was a lethal gas and that all life forms must die off when this mushroom cloud came down and covered the whole city.

Then the sky got darker and darker. I recovered my senses and thought I should do something. I lay down flat to hide myself in the bush in the sweet-potato field. Only the outline of the sun, which was like the one in a solar eclipse, could be seen distinctly in the evil cloud spreading across the sky.

In Hunairi-cho, a town which was visible from my hiding place, houses that had held against the blast, began to catch fire and flared up from the eaves. Trams parked on the railway track in the distance also bursted into flames.

A group of young workers in their late teen came to seek refuge around me. The trousers one of the boys was wearing was soaked with oil and smoldering. When his friend pointed it out, the youth wearing them was panicked and cast off his smoking trousers. There was also a boy whose chest was stuck with shards of glass. He was breathing hard, shedding blood and sweat.

In that surrounding area, there were many small factories. The teenagers told me that when their morning work began, they got a surprise attack and that they did not know what had happened. They added that they had fled in a panic. One boy said that a gas tank had blown up near his factory, and the other said that he thought a big bombshell had dropped in his vicinity.

The boys tried to take care of each other's injuries. However, there was no gauze nor bandages for aftercare. They were all half-naked, smeared with oil, blood and sweat. One of them was weeping and exhausted with a mixed feeling of displeasure, a sense of panic and shock.

At that time, we suddenly got caught in a black shower, which left spots on the tucked sleeves of my shirt. It was black rain, as if it were mixed with heavy oil. On my red-burned face and the wounds over my arms, the black rain showered down mercilessly.

Some boys lying in distress obsessively asked me for water. Others who still retained the energy went to the creek to get water with empty cans, and poured oil-filmed water into the sore lips of the boys in great pain.

Then there was a faint detonating sound. I thought it a surveillance-plane.

I sensed that it would be safer to move somewhere. I thought of running to the shooting gallery of the Japanese Army about 200 meters from my shelter. I had already known that there was a lookout foxhole behind the bank of the shooting gallery because I had noticed on the way to and from work. I stood up unsteadily and headed towards my destination.

On the way I met a strange-looking man on the path of the potato-field. He also unsteadily came up to me. He was a big man about 2 meters tall. Intuition whispered that he was a man from the Korean Peninsula. He carried two pans bound

with rope hanging from his neck, and around his waist he had some pumpkins roped together. In both hands he gripped the limp heads of hens. His face was burned red by heat rays, his eyes were glaring crazily. I was overwhelmed to see such an example of human vitality.

After a great struggle, I got to the trench. A sound of crying in Korean language could be heard from the back of the trench. There was a naked woman burned over her body, which reddened like the color of boiled lobster. She was wiggling and giving a moan of pain. However, I did not know what to do for her. I could do nothing but just sit on a strong L-shaped wooden bench about 5 meters from the hole entrance.

The black rain stopped. Then two mobilized student workers came to sit on the bench. One of the two gave me a penetrating stare and said, "You got badly burned over the face." Taking a small case of medicine out of his backpack, he put ointment on the burn wound over the left side of my face. "It must be painful for you. You've got a horrible burn injury." Saying this one after the other, they were amazed at my burned face.

At that moment I felt an acute and electrifying pain in the left part of my face and through my left arm and realized that I was extraordinarily burned. Until then I had been too tensed to know my condition.

At the moment of the explosion, I was aware that my body was irradiated with heat rays. Though I had lain low and covered my face with my palms, the left side of my face was burned perfectly by the heat rays without any trace of my palms that had protected my face. The beams had also scorched my head hair into the scalp. I found that I had been exposed to the heat rays and blown off by the shock waves into the sweet-potato field right after the detonation and that

my face-down posture was too late and useless.

The students were from Hiroshima Industrial Technology School. They said that they had fled from the nearby factory where they worked to find shelter. The ointment that one of the students put on my burn was coconut oil. His mother had told him to always have the ointment with him in his rucksack ready for emergencies. As a result, his mother's deep affection for him relived my pain. I thanked them for their prudence.

The sky over Hiroshima was covered with dark smoke and in the sunless city, day and night could not be distinguished.

I worried about my two co-workers, Iwanaga-kun and Sato-kun, who were with me earlier that morning. I wondered if these co-workers and other company members were worried about me, which impelled me to leave the lookout trench for the shipbuilding plant. I rolled up my loosen puttees with my injured hands, saying good-by to the students. I got out of the trench and headed for the shipbuilding plant.

On the way I passed by a Korean hamlet, which looked as if it had been blown apart by a tornado into merely a mountain of messy lumber. The Enamiyama anti-aircraft trenches, which had played an active part at one time, were all quiet, showing no sign of any guards.

The joists of the shipbuilding yard's barracks had fallen down and the floors had crumbled. All the company members were taking refuge at the beach under the shade of trees.

A security officer told me to take first-aid treatment at a hut in the pine wood forest. In the hut were a lot of opened oil-cans of white ointment. As I was told to apply the medicine by myself, I put my left burned hand into it to get some out of the can and applied the ointment thickly over my burned face and scalded neck. I believe I must have looked like a

snowman then. Because of the oppressive desert outside, the right half of my body which was not rubbed with ointment was drenched in sweat.

It was round noon. Iwanaga-kun and Sato-kun, who had gone to the center of the city to look for me, had not shown up yet.

Hiroshima city was roaring with fire, creating smoke and dark flames which were rising higher and higher into the sky with the central part bulging. It was dead calm at midday. Though I was given a bag of hardtack as food service for lunch, I did not feel like eating at all due to pain and fatigue.

Before long I fell asleep squatting down under the shade of a pine tree. Someone woke me up to point out that colleagues, who had gone off to search for me, had returned safe.

At first, they looked puzzled by my appearance like a snowman, but in the next moment they ran up to me. We gave a cry of delight, falling into each other's arms.

They said that in town after town the bridges were burned away, that they had been wandering about the city of Hiroshima, which was full of numerous burned corpses, looking in vain for me. They were disappointed to find no clue in their search for me. They said that it was a miracle to see me again.

The office girls near us, who were listening to my colleagues' report about Hiroshima city, bursted into tears unable to bear it any longer, because they had been worried about their families' survival.

Regarding the company building, part of the floor of the design room slanted and a big joist of the medical office downstairs almost fell down. At the front office executives were discussing measures for the workers' departure. At five all the launches were assembled for us to get out of the place by sea. We took a launch for Uzina harbor because our dorm

was near Uzina.

The sunless Hiroshima was as dark as in winter, though it was still five in the evening. Hiroshima Bay, seen from our launch, was calm in the evening. On the seawater surface shone the reflection of a mass of tongues of flame that were rising straight and horrifically. They looked like creatures with their own will, making ghastly sounds from each town in the delta regions . Hiroshima, a dying metropolice remained burning like a blazing inferno as if it was trying to hide the traces of the disaster.

When we reached the waterfront of Uzina, it was already twilight. The exhausted workers landed weakly and speechless. Passing by the town of Uzina on the way to Hiroshima, we saw the town in a catastrophic situation. A boatman on the raft was blankly looking at the image of burning Hiroshima on the surface of a river.

A group of elementary pupils who were half-naked were walking without uttering a word.

A girl is coming
with her hair half-burnt and frizzled
carrying a baby on her back
with its eyes and lips burnt and bruised

These pupils, boys undistinguishable from girls, were tottering along at dusk like ghosts, holding up their arms with the burnt flesh of half of their arms hanging loosely like women's long gloves. Their head hair had completely come off. From their appearance one could not tell who was a girl or boy. However some older children were recognized as girls by the small swell of their breasts.

We were all standing at the foot of the bridge staggered by the sight, forgetting to encourage those phantom-like children.

We were left speechless, just watching breathlessly the young witnesses, who had survived the tragedy this morning, passing by us.

The Okawa River was running, reflecting clearly flames rising from each town in Great Hiroshima. Near the Miyuki Bridge, the warehouse of the Monopoly Bureau was on fire, emitting a great deal of smoke.

Our dormitory was around the corner. What had happened to it? What had become of the couple of boarding masters and their children? I couldn't help walking faster as I felt increasing alarm. I got to Senda-machi crossing the Miyuki-bridge. Though this was the outskirts of Hiroshima, fences, walls and houses around this estate-like area were badly damaged. Streets were empty. Finally three of us reached our dormitory.

It had completely changed. We could hardly recognize that it was the same dorm where we had left that morning. The upstairs of the compound had almost crumbled. We noticed someone coming towards us. It was the wife of the boarding master, who was appearing from the dark of the drawing room. We hugged and clapped each other on the back to find each other safe.

She said that she thought the three of us might have been killed or missing in such a tragedy. Her husband was bombed before going around 10 meters from the front door. While he was reluctant to go to the city hall, that moment had come. Regarding their oldest son, a student at Hiroshima Industrial Technology School, there was no news about him since leaving home that morning. There was no way of knowing if he was alive or dead, she said.

Feeling some anxiety, we had to make a decision on how to spend that night with the threat of tongues of fire looming. Without taking a breath, we gulped as much water as

possible from the bent garden faucet. The tap water I quaffed for the first time in ten hours was like the sweetest lemonade I had ever drunk.

We made the following four measures for the nighttime.

1. Valuables, such as food, should be kept in the shelter in the premises.
2. Women and children should sleep in the shelter.
3. Men should take turns watching over the fire.
4. In case of emergency, boats along the nearby rivers should be assembled to get out of the place by sea

We men ate some soup-run rice-balls standing in the garden, and ready for the fight against fire at night.

As the night progressed, the force of the fire was on the rampage. Never expecting the possibility of fire-fighting operations at all, we just watched Great Hiroshima city engulfed in flames. The playground of Hiroshima Industrial Technology School at the back of our dorm was the last fire break. We took turns sleeping. At dawn, the creek along the playground managed to check the spread of the fire.

It was the morning of August 7th. As alleys of this residential area were such a mess, there was no place to step. We heard of rations at the office of a neighboring organization. When we went to the office to get some canned food for emergency, some ranking members of the shipbuilding yard were there too.

They remembered us and said, " You should return to Nagasaki as soon as possible. If not, you will miss your chance for a month." and said that evacuation trains would be available. We asked them to contact with the company to look after our affairs when we were gone. We thanked them for everything, saying we would soon return to Nagasaki.

Returning to the dorm, we told the boarding master about our return. She said that she felt this would be the last time to see us. She prepared rice-balls for us with what little rice she had laid aside. We forced back our tears, showing our gratitude to her for her kindness.

We decided to walk as far as we could to Koi-station where the train bound for Nagasaki was to leave. We could not help wanting to get even one step closer to our hometown, Nagasaki, unwilling to part from the dorm where we had spent three months living with other people by helping each other in such a desperate plight. We were not sure when we would get to Nagasaki.

Having finished our extended business trip, we literally took the first step through the debris. On the way we were forced to find a hiding place every time we heard the sound of enemy planes. The bomb had reduced Hiroshima city to rubble, with only a single smokestack seen far in the distance. Everywhere in the city the embers were smoldering. On the street with a street car truck in front of Hiroshima Bunri College, a bombing victim, burned like a ragged piece of cloth lay there, trembling slightly.

Not knowing which way to go, we decided to walk straight ahead treading on the devastated land to our destination. I was thrown off balance with my burned left hand in a sling. I often stubbed my toes against dead bodies, almost falling down. I felt a shiver going down my back and felt weak at the knees to see a half-charred corpse for the first time. The lower part of its body was seared to the point that the bones could be seen and the upper part was half-blackened. The organs, which were a jumble of lungs, stomach, heart and part of the bowels mixed together, flowed out of the chest cavity. The head region of the body was partially burnt off. Its gender and age could not be recognized.

We stood paralyzed, gazing at each other. This was an extraordinary fire casualty. The sight left a deep impression on us. Getting out of the place, we saw numerous charred bodies lying over one another. However, after that, we became ruthlessly apathetic toward such a horrible sight around us so that we hardly got shocked by whatever we saw.

When we got to a bridge, we began to seek for a stairway to descend to the river's edge, stepping over piles of the dead. The stairway was covered with blackened bodies and the river current was also dammed with the bodies.

Sitting on the step paying attention not to step on the burned bodies, I thought of a way to cross the river. As I was seriously burned over my left hand, it was impossible to swim to the other side of the river. I walked downstream to look for shallows. The upstream bridge was far and broken, making it impracticable. I tried to crawl over the corpses floating in the shallows. But I reconsidered that if I did so, I would sink under the water, which would make my left hand worse. I returned to the spot where I could cross the river.

I kept moving. Passing several burnt deltas, I finally got to a wide road. The road was crowded with evacuees walking in silence. I also saw many military rescue trucks arriving. They were full of unwounded fire personnel and veterans. The police and fire departments in Hiroshima were all destroyed. The rescue corps guarded the wide road. They dragged corpses with a fire hook making heaps of dead bodies. There was a concrete bridge which had escaped the fire, but it had a big hole in the center and when I looked into it, I saw the water of the river running. By the edge, a well-built man with a tin hat was standing with both hands up, dead. A rope surrounded a fallen object which was said to be the detonator of the bomb. People with vacant looks somehow walked around that area

and went on their way. Unlike the rescue corps, survivors were heading for their own destinations, moving slowly toward the suburbs. The sun of August 7 was blazing down on the necks of the people whose heads hang low. Our destination was Koi station beyond the Okawa River. The rescue train was our only hope.

The sun rose so high. Now the road was in chaos. My two young coworkers and I were walking separately from one another because of slightly different levels of tiredness and energy. We reached the railroad bridge over the Okawa River. Koi station was on the other side of the river, about a thousand meters ahead of us. Because we had no strength or time to take a detour, we started crossing the bridge carefully concentrating on steps on the sleepers. I was afraid I would get dizzy if I looked at the river under me, so I tried to look only ahead. And from a half way along the bridge, I was crawling. Finally I succeeded in crossing the long bridge. It was a long, long bridge. Koi station was full of people waiting in a long line. I found Iwanaga-kun there. I had him watch our baggage and went to look for Sato-kun. Sato-kun had gotten separated from us. I looked at each face in the long line and also searched the crowds of evacuees outside, but he wasn't anywhere. I was responsible for him. The evacuation train would leave at 1:00 p.m. Time was pressing. I was upset. It was my responsibility to find him. We had to show our victim certificates to the station attendant and go through the ticket gate. We gave up at the last minute.

The train left Koi for Nagasaki. It moved slowly. I got a seat by the window. Through the window, I could see water was running from a tap on the platform. I was so thirsty that I just kept staring it. A man in a railway uniform kindly put a rice

ball in my hand. I wasn't hungry. I politely told him he should keep it because it must have been all he had for the day. "No, I am getting off at Moji. I'll be fine. You are going all the way to Nagasaki. You need it. You must eat even if you have no appetite." he insisted. I was struck by the fact that he hadn't lost humanity even in the midst of such an emergency. I knew I was badly injured, but to this man my injury must have looked even more serious. Now my tired body couldn't fight any more. I developed a chill and a high fever of more than 40°C. My body started shivering. I said to myself, "Just hang in there and this train will take me to Nagasaki." This idea gave me relief and then fatigue overtook me for the first time since the bombing. I leaned back on the seat and fell into a deep sleep.

The train arrived at the terminal in Nagasaki in the late morning of August 8. My left arm was severely swollen. Under the black skin was a blister filled with fluid that was about to rupture. Nagasaki was under an air-raid alert. The carrier-based aircraft were flying about, roaring in the sky. My arm needed immediate medical attention. It was worsening. I didn't hesitate to run under the eaves of houses to go to Funatsu-cho where Mitubishi Hospital was. The hospital seemed deserted, but I found Dr. Sato, who was an ophthalmologist. I begged him to treat me. We had gone to the same school. He was my senior and his brother was my classmate. He took me to his office and started the treatment right away. When he cut the thin surface of the blister, the fluid burst out and filled the pus basin.

I left the hospital and went down the hill by Shohei-do stationary store near Katsuyama elementary school, and I finally got to my parents' house in Okeya-cho. My wife and

son had evacuated from our current house near Inasa Park during my business trip. I had their new address, but didn't know the exact location. Because of the air-raid alert, no one was in my parents' house. I went inside and waited alone for the alert to be cleared. My parents came back after the all-clear rang. They were astonished to see a man with bandages all over his body sitting in front of their family altar. How could they imagine that this white monk was their son? That day's Asahi Newspaper's headline said, "A new bomb dropped in Hiroshima. The city suffering considerable damage. Details under investigation, according to the Imperial Headquarters". However, people in the town already knew about the dire state of Hiroshima. There were people coming back from Hiroshima who were there on that day, or people who had come back through the city after the bombing.

The paper also said that a parachute had exploded in the air. It was an inhuman, atrocious new bomb. It was also reported by the Imperial Headquarters that American and British small fighters had attacked the Keihinseinan region in Kanto and about one hundred bombers had attacked the Toyokawa region in Aichi prefecture. So my parents had given up hope for me, thinking I was already dead somewhere in Hiroshima. But here I was, sitting in front of the altar. Although they took me for a white monk ghost, I had returned alive. I had sent a postcard to my wife from Hiroshima, so she and our son came to meet me and we went back to our house in Mizunotsu-cho together, later that day. The house number was 204. Shortly after we got the house, the neighborhood association members paid me a visit and I told them about the bombing in Hiroshima in detail. White clothes reflect the heat ray while black clothes can easily burn. Glass can be dangerous - shards of glass will cause you intolerably severe injuries. When you see the flash, crouch down in a sturdy shelter. I made a point to

tell this to people, and they shared the information.

It was the first time for the three of us to be together under the same roof since I had left Nagasaki three months before. My son had grown bigger. He was five months old now. I was suffering from a high fever and nausea. I was afraid I had come down with dysentery because I had bloody diarrhea many times. People living within a 50 meter radius of Nagasaki Shipyard were forced to evacuate to the Urakami area. Conversely, my family moved from the house on the slope near Inasa park to the most dangerous area, Mizunoura-cho near the shipyard. A big motor-like piece of a boiler drum was found in a trench nearby. It had been blown there by an air-raid on August 1. I also heard that one of the bombs from the air-raid had fallen in the field near the transformer station right above our house and had made a 20- meter hole there. Also i heard that a group of junior high school students had been shot during the evacuation. It took long for the police to arrive to examine the bodies so they were left alone for many hours. I also heard that when the people were hiding in the trench, they were scared to death because the earth above them kept falling. I had finally got back to Nagasaki, but the people here had also been going through this cold and deadly experience.

On the morning of August 9, I woke up sweating, feeling chills from the high fever. The office of the Design Section was just in front of our house. I forced myself to go to work a bit early. My office was on the sixth floor of the No. 2 office building. My weird appearance in bandages attracted people's attention. I was a witness who had returned from Hiroshima alive. People kept asking me questions. I advised them to leave all the windows open so the bomb blast could go through. We

used to close all the windows as a precaution. Then I went to the main building to report to Mr. Nomura, our section manager. I told him that Iwanaga-kun had come back on in the same train as me and got off at Isahaya safely. I also told him that Sato-kun was alive, but had got lost and even though I tried very hard to find him, I couldn't. Then we talked about Hiroshima. Mr. Nomura was saying to me that he couldn't believe just one bomb had destroyed the entire city. As he was saying that, there was that flash. I instinctively knew it was the same one as Hiroshima and leaped under the desk. There was a roar, and then a blast. It went right through the room. Drawings, documents and trash were blown away. I couldn't see even ten centimeters ahead of me. When the roar had gone, I had to crawl through the trashes and dashed out of the building. I climbed the cliff of the rocky mountain behind the building and ran into the concrete air defense tower there. From inside, I could see a young guard lying on the ground. He was burnt red and his binoculars were blown away. My wounded face and body were covered with torn documents and looked like flour-coated whale red meat. In the sky towards Urakami, the mushroom cloud, just like I saw in Hiroshima, rose audaciously. It looked as if it were scoffing me, someone who had barely escaped from Hiroshima with his life. It was a satanic pillar of fire. It was a prophecy of Japan's future.

After the war, the great shipyard survived by producing cooking pots and frying pans. I became a victim of the company's restructurings and was laid off. After that I worked as a clerk and translator for the occupation army and some other small companies. Then I started teaching English because I happened to have a license to teach at junior high school. I became a teacher at a newly established junior high school in 1948. I started teaching at Fukuda junior high school

and then at Nishidomari high school. After that I taught at Takashima junior high school on Takashima island. During these days I spent my time watching the ocean with the children from the coal mine. Little by little I was trying to rise up from the absolute bewilderment that the lost war had left me with.

In January of 1956, after ten years of teaching English, I returned to my old workplace, Nagasaki Shipyard. Both the people and the place had been affected greatly by these ten years, but in my case, I had somehow survived. Now those ten years of hiatus has become a precious part of my life and that will always be a part of me. My students grew up to be responsible workers and mothers and they are living in this new Japan. I was engaged in tanker production and then finally retired. I have been suffering from symptoms unique to bomb survivors for a long time. However, I mysteriously survived and had become ninety years and eight months old. The scars on my face and arm healed gradually. My son was five months old on the day of bombing. He talked for the first time when he hurt himself on a shattered piece of roof tiles. "Pain" was the first word he said. He lived for sixty years after that. He worked as the third unit manager of the machinery factory at Mitsubishi, but on February 4 last year, sixty years after he was born, he died because of whole body cancer from the atomic bombing. Iwanaga-kun became the manager of the General Affairs Department of Nagasaki City Hall. Sato-kun became the waterworks section chief of Hondo City Hall in Kumamoto. Mysteriously, we three double victims are still alive.

Sixty years after the bombing, the Peace Bell still resounds in the sky of Nagasaki.

At 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945, the U. S. army aircraft dropped the atomic bomb and it exploded in the sky above here, and in a moment it destroyed Nagasaki. 74,000 people died and 75,000 people were injured. People died without knowing what was happening. People died asking for water. When children were charred and died, they couldn't even cry. People who escaped from death have incurable scars on their bodies and have been suffering from later-developing diseases. They have lived constantly with the the threat of death.

In Nagasaki a lot of young people are learning about the atomic bombings and peace. They are voluntarily doing peace activities. I am speaking to you the younger generations.

Epilogue

Nuclear-free lasting peace has been my earnest desire. I have devoted my life in this engagement through literature. Since 9/11, the nuclear strategy of the U. S. has been suspiciously unclear. We victims won't be able to rest in peace unless it changes. On the days of bombing, the rivers in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not destroyed, but an extraordinary number of people sank under these rivers and the sea looking like human rafts. Survivors never forget these days. We hold a memorial service to mourn the victims. We throw lanterns into the river to pay respect for them and pray. I sincerely pray and hope for peace every year. Please think of the despair and sorrow of those people who were killed by the atomic bombs. Please learn from history. Think sincerely about the importance of peace and the preciousness of human life. Sixty years after the bombings, I pray for their peaceful rest. And I pledge to do my best to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons and lasting world peace as long as I live, never giving up.

(October 15, 2006)