

My Experience of the Atomic Bombing

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My family members on August 6, 1945

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| Father: | Out of town on business at a factory in Okayama Exposed to radiation upon return to Hiroshima Died in 1983 |
| Mother: | Exposed to radiation in Koi Town 2.4 kilometers from epicenter Died in 1996 |
| Son: | Out of town in the army in Yamaguchi Exposed to radiation upon return to Hiroshima Died in 1998 |
| 1st Daughter: | Died in 1938 from a disease |
| 2nd Daughter: | At home in 2nd district of Yokogawa Town in Hiroshima City 1.4 kilometers from the epicenter |
| 3rd Daughter: | In Tsurumi Town in Hiroshima City 1.5 kilometers from the epicenter Died after the bombing |
| 4th Daughter: | In 2nd district of Yokogawa Town in Hiroshima City 1.5 kilometers from the epicenter Died after the bombing |
| 5th Daughter: | At home in 2nd district of Yokogawa Town in Hiroshima City 1.4 kilometers from the epicenter |
| 6th Daughter (me): | At uncle's home in 1st district of Yokogawa Town 1.3 kilometer from the epicenter |
| 7th Daughter: | At uncle's home in 1st district of Yokogawa Town 1.3 kilometer from the epicenter |
| 8th Daughter: | Exposed to radiation in Koi Town 2.4 kilometers from epicenter |

I was born on March 20, 1939 in the 2nd district of Yokogawa Town in Hiroshima City (now called Yokogawa Town in Nishi Ward) as the 6th daughter. I was a very small baby with infantile beriberi and had no voice. Soon after my birth, I suffered from pneumonia, so in later years my mother often said that she was very busy taking care of me. I got over my childhood illnesses little by little and entered elementary school in April 1945. I was 6 years old in August 1945. At

that time, pupils in higher grades in elementary schools were sent to the countryside school by school because of air raids, but my whole family decided to evacuate to the countryside. My mother, two older sisters (who were 12 and 10 years old), two younger sisters (who were 3 years and 11 months old), and I carried some belongings with us and left the city sometime in June to visit an acquaintance living in a rural area. My father and my two oldest sisters, who were yet students, remained at home. My brother, who was a college student, was sent to the army camp in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The school in the countryside was closed in July, the busiest month for farmers, so my mother and I temporarily returned home.

August 6, 1945 was a very fine day. My mother took my 11-month-old baby sister (8th daughter) to visit a relative in Itsukaichi Town (to which we all evacuated after the atomic bombing). My 12-year-old sister (4th daughter), Michiko, who later went missing, saw my mother off from the road outside the house. Michiko had asked my mother to take her with her, but my mother sent her to get ice for our home refrigerator. Michiko was on her bicycle when the bombing took place. My eldest sister (2nd daughter), Hideko, was mobilized to work at the Japan Steel Works as a mobilized student, but on August 6, she was at home on a holiday, hanging the washing on the upstairs balcony when the bombing took place. My next eldest sister (3rd daughter) was mobilized for construction work on Hijiyama-shita, currently named Heiwa Odori (Peace Avenue). There were about 8,000 junior high school students engaged in this construction work, of which about 7,000 were killed. She was among them when the bombing took place. My ten-year-old sister (5th daughter) was watching my eldest sister doing the laundry when the bombing took place. My three-year old sister (7th daughter) and I went to a nearby uncle's house after the air raid alert was all cleared, so we were there when the bombing took place.

My uncle's house was a new, one-storied structure with a courtyard. My aunt was cleaning the study room while the children were listening to music from a record playing on an electric gramophone in the center of the room. Then, I saw a B-29 flying over the city, and I climbed onto the windowpane from a desk to better see the plane. My cousin also came to the window, so I moved a little to the right side of the window and grabbed the window frame with my right hand as I watched the plane reflecting the glaring sun. It was then that it dropped the A-bomb.

I do not know how long I was unconscious, but when I awoke I found that we were lying on dirt inside the house. The desks, chairs, bookshelves, electric gramophone, six tatami-mats, and the wooden boards that made up the floor were all gone. They were blown away. We all got up eventually. Fortunately, the house escaped collapse. We stepped outside. The fires had not started yet, but we saw many fallen houses. An old woman who lived in the neighborhood was crying over and over for help because she was trapped under a fallen stone wall. Her daughter-in-law tried to free her, but the stones of the wall were too heavy for one person to lift. My aunt told us not to move while she went to the underground shelter to look for something with which to tie a child on her back. My younger sister and I wanted to wait for my aunt to come

back, but I became so terrified seeing other houses beginning to catch fire that I ran away, leaping on the roof tiles of collapsed houses and abandoning my little sister. She recently told me that she had shouted for me to wait for her, but I do not remember hearing anything.

I went to the riverbank of the Yokogawa River and walked in the direction of the mountain. After crossing a bridge called Chuobashi, I reached the riverbed. As many people started crossing the river, I decided to follow but could not because the river was too deep for me. Then, a kind woman carried me as she crossed the river. She had some cucumbers. It was then that I realized I had been burnt. I wanted to put the cool cucumbers on my stinging burns.

Walking toward the mountain, I came across my uncle from Itsukaichi and the father of my aunt. They were on their way to our house in Yokogawa, worried about our family. My uncle carried me on his back to run faster. I received first-aid treatment for my injuries at an emergency clinic on the way to his home in Itsukaichi. My mother and youngest sister were already at his home. She was so happy to see me alive. My uncle prepared a large, two-wheeled cart and headed back to Hiroshima. My aunt, my cousin, my little sister, and my two older sisters who were at home came to my uncle's house in Itsukaichi. Some walked, but those with serious injuries were brought to his home on the cart.

I do not remember the exact date, but my father heard from someone that my sister who had been working was at a school in Fuchu-cho. After finding her, he laid my sister on a board and brought her home by bicycle. When she got home, she said in a loud voice, "I'm home!" She had been wearing black clothing, and her back was totally burnt. An awful lot of big maggots bred on her back injuries. My mother and my other sisters picked them off from her back every day. The maggots crawled deep into her skin, pressing against still-living nerves, causing her great pain. She often cried and said, "Stop it now, it hurts so much."

After the war ended, one day when we were having breakfast, we heard her scream, "Mom! Please come now!" Mother hurried to her sickbed but noticed that she was already dead. I still remember my sister's voice calling my mother.

We do not know where Michiko died. Without any clue of how to find her, my mother kept saying for the rest of her life, "I did a pitiful thing to her."

The atomic bomb exploded about 600 meters in the air above the city, causing a great shock wave of heat and radiation to strike us. About the blast, I have already told you. As for the heat wave, because I was watching the plane, I got burnt on my face and on my neck as well as on my right arm, which was against the window frame. On the day of the bombing, I was wearing a white dress, which may have protected my body from burns by reflecting the searing atomic light. My right eye, however, was injured by the light and oozed pus for a long time. A pillar

protected my cousin, who was sitting to my left at the window, and my cousin received only small injuries to the abdomen from the flying glass. My two sisters who were inside our home did not have any external injuries, but many of my relatives were killed in the bombing. Besides my two sisters who were not home, my grandparents on my mother's side, my mother's sisters, my mother's nephews and nieces, and the entire family of my father's brother were among those who were killed.

When the Pope visited Hiroshima, he said that testifying of the past is tantamount to talking about the future, and I recently read a book in which a mother said to her son that he was born neither to kill nor to be killed. I hate war, and I testify about my experience of war because, yes, we all came into this world to construct and to maintain a society in which everyone can live without fear. Actually I want a society in which we no longer need to talk about the past. We must build today a peaceful society with all our wisdom so that in the future we will not need to talk about the past. But rather than building a peaceful society, we continue to possess nuclear weapons capable of killing the entire population of the world.

There is not much time left for us Hibakusha. We must find ways to not create even one more Hibakusha. This forum is a place to concentrate all our wisdom. Here, I express my hope that this meeting will bear fruit. No more Hiroshimas! No more Nagasakis! No more Hibakusha! No more war!

Thank you.