

One Summer Day When I was 13 Years Old

Ms. Nobuko Uno

In 1945 on August 9th, the atomic bomb was dropped in Nagasaki. Back then, I was 13 years old and I don't remember clearly but it was really very dreadful and I don't want to remember it anyway.

At that time, I was living with my parents; 3 sisters, 2 brothers and grandmother in a small hamlet near what is currently called Ishigamimachi. My father was working as a security guard at the university hospital and he was at work that day.

I went to a shop which was near Saint Francis hospital in Motohara with my mother to get our alcohol rations. We walked in the hot weather, sweating. Because it was really hot I took my skirt and shocks off when I got home.

The air-raid alert was called off but I noticed the sound of an airplane flying low. I thought "That's strange" so I said "I'm going to have a look" then I went out to the big orange tree which is right in front of our house, but there was only the sound of an airplane and couldn't see it.

Just as I was going inside, a blue light flashed and at the same time the house was flattened. I lost consciousness then.

When I became conscious, I was under the house. I looked around and saw my grandmother with her face covered in blood holding my younger brother near the broken house. I couldn't see my mother or my sisters. I couldn't move and could only stay where I was.

I wonder how long I waited there? My neighbor came and asked "How's everybody in this house doing?" and then he found me.

He said "Wait there! I'll be back with something to get you out." And then he helped me out. At that time, I couldn't see my grandmother. A couple of my neighbors came and said "It'll catch fire, so let's escape toward the mountain." So I ran off toward the mountain barefoot, not having any idea what was happening.

Many people who were downtown when the bomb struck were escaping toward the mountain. There were people whose blood was spurting out where their burned skin had come off, people who were covered in blood from injuries with pieces of broken glass. I heard voices calling for help, groaning and crying out from everywhere. But I could barely take care of myself, like most other people. Some of the people who had escaped from downtown could no longer stand up and just died there along the way where they stopped. In any case, I just kept walking for my life.

It had been about an hour since I started walking, and we thought "It should be safe being this far" so we decided to wait and see what happened there for a while. I was looking down on the burning towns in Nagasaki and all I could think of was my parents, my brother who was held by my grandmother and my sisters. And I felt anxious about what was going to happen and what she should do.

I was there for about 4 or 5 hours. Then some old ladies who had escaped with me said "Your family must be worried". So I decided to go back to where my house was.

The area where I was living didn't catch fire because it was surrounded by a bamboo grove. The people who lived around there and had survived were gathered there in the bamboo grove. I found my mother, father, grandmother, sisters and my brother there. I burst into tears. Everyone rejoiced saying "Great, great,

what a relief” and had tears in their eyes.

My sisters, brother and grandmother had gone into a shelter and my mother was under the house but my father came back worried and found her and then helped her out. Everyone got injured but we were happy just to be alive.

However, sadly the house had collapsed on my youngest brother who was just 17 months old and he died. He looked pitiful with his face all black from bruising and smashed in. We gathered the dead bodies which were from our hamlet, including my brother, and cremated them praying for the repose of their souls.

Back then, we gathered and cremated dead bodies like this. At night, there were blue fires called “rin” gleaming here and there in the pile of remains. They looked like a soul which had no place to go.

For a while after the atomic bomb, there were lots of airplanes flying over so we continued to live in the shelter. After the war was over, we didn’t have a house to live in so we lived with other people from the hamlet in the bamboo grove using a mosquito net.

There were bodies on streets and many people who were injured were in ragged clothes and covered in blood. They were crying for help, “Help me, help me” “Give me some water”. But those people died as soon as they were given water, so we were not supposed to give them any, even though we wanted to. However, one day a guy who looked like a university student begged me “Please give me some water.” I didn’t see any burns on his body so I gave him some. He was really happy and thanked me for it over and over. But it was about 4 or 5 days after that, I saw him dead on the street, swelled up like a balloon. I

was so shocked and couldn't move from there. "I must have killed him." I blamed myself. It still hurts my chest, when I think of him.

My aunt made arrangements for my family to go back to Goto Island, so we took a ferry from Ohato and left the ash town, which was Nagasaki, on September 1st. But the injuries sustained from the atomic bomb followed us. Two or three months after we were evacuated to Goto Island, my gums started to bleed and wouldn't easily stop. When I think of it now, it was probably a good thing to happen and that's how I'm living till now. At about the same time, my sister's hair started to fall off and she passed away a few months after.

We must not allow the use of atomic bombs which caused such great damage to so many people's souls and bodies, and took their lives. I'm angry and also praying with all my heart that we do not waste those many lives. There are still many people who are suffering from illnesses caused by the atomic bombs' radiation now. And they have to continue to suffer with it. We must not turn away from those people. I want everyone to listen to the voices of the *Hoibakusha* [Atomic Bomb Victims] who have survived and are suffering.

So, the experience of my thirteenth summer... I was dropped into a pool of despair and lost my sister and brother... a tragedy I want to forget as soon as possible. But I think I must call out and tell people about it now as they continue testing nuclear weapons. And I will continue to pray for "Peace".

[Location at Bombing: Motoharamachi]