

# The Atomic Bomb

Mrs. Suga Tateishi

Time of writing: from August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1975

Address at that time: Irabayashi 1 chome 22

De facto husband: Yuiji Tominaga

Suga Kouda

Thirty years ago today, from 7 o'clock in the morning, one member from each family had to go to help make a shelter. It was dangerous to make one by the house, and the work could only be done by men because the shelter we were making, on Mr. Wakamiya's bushland in our neighborhood, was a big one which could fit all of our neighbors. He was not supposed to take time off work in Kawanam which was increasing production, but he took it anyway to go to Mr. Wakamiya's.

Fortunately or not, at about 11:10, he came home to get a hatchet. "It's almost noon, why don't you have some pumpkin I've cooked." When we took the first bite, we heard the sound of an airplane without any warning. It sounded different, so we thought it could be a B29 and just as my husband climbed a ladder, there was an odd sound, like a boom or bam, then it got dark and the *shojigami* (paper screen) at the back of our house caught fire and started blazing. I don't remember how we put out the fire. I thought the bomb must have hit Yahatamachi down below, and put my *boukuuzukin* (cloth helmet) on, but inside my mind was a mess. Then I heard my husband so I went and saw he had fallen off the ladder and seemed a bit strange. Once again I pulled myself together and helped my husband to

get up.

Being that we were currently leaders of our community group, we called out for our group to take shelter. My husband forgot about his pain and was calling out telling everyone to go to the shelter which was about 10 steps from our house. Time passed quickly and the hands of my watch showed it was past 1:30.

We gathered rice then cooked 11 cups of rice and made *onigiri* (rice balls). For the first time, I knew that you can make 22 *onigiri* from 11 cups of rice. The cooked pumpkin in the room wasn't eatable because the house had been knocked askew and everything was covered in earthy dust. Also, we couldn't cook anymore because we didn't have any water. I couldn't leave the shelter because I was really scared the airplane would come again. But I went in and out to stop the *noren* (short curtains) under the eaves catching fire, and then it got dark at last.

At about 9:30 pm *onigiri* from Isahaya were delivered on a truck to Togiya Elementary School. There were two big *onigiri* and 2 pieces of pickle for each person, and four of us from our group went to get them for everyone, walking through the dark Teramachi Street which we knew like the back of our hands.

On our way, we saw that from Urakami to Ohato was covered with a creeping dark red smoke that was terrible and scary. The cracking sound of it was really ghastly. I can't find the words to express the scene. When I think of it now, it seems strange that I could survive and live.

In August for the next two or three years, I cried, depressed, and didn't want to talk to people. Usually Teramachi Street is dark with its temple and the graves and it was too scary to walk along alone, but on that night I could walk fast as I was fitted out

for hard work with my *mompe* (work pants) and my *boukuuzukin* on my head. It is very strange when I think about it now.

I haven't been there for 30 years since then. I'm sure Teramachi is bright now. How delicious the *onigiri* and pickles were at that time, I think everyone felt the same way then. Because we always had rationed food during the war, we didn't have any food during that whole day ... through the entire frightening day....

All night I let out a muffled *Kowai, Kowaii* (scary, scary), then the day dawned, finally. But, inside the house was all muddy, the *koushido* (lattice door) had been blown off its hinges and a part of the roof had collapsed. I didn't know where to start work, or what to do. The bamboo spear drills were no use. My husband, who instructed us in it, was disappointed. He went to Kawanon but he couldn't settle down to work or maybe there was no work to do. Soon, fifty or sixty strands of his hair fell out suddenly. I was really surprised. I felt listless.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, we received notice of the end of the war. My husband's hair gradually fell out and eventually he lost everything. And his stomach started to get bigger and bigger. After half a year, because of the pain from his stomach and his embarrassment for his baldness, my husband, who was in his prime of manhood, finally confined himself to bed.

When I recall the year before then, it was the year that he was supposed to get his draft card. But my husband had been working for Mitsubishi since he was 11 by the time he was as good with a lathe as his father had been, and his daily wage was 6 sen. By the time his father past away, he was promoted to foreman. When Kawanon started, he went there as a foreman and worked as a specialist with the lathe. He was always talking

about boring on ships. Because he was so good at it, his company organized a petition to keep him when he was drafted. He should have gone to the war. He may have had a chance at surviving then.... I regret it now.

For 3 years from then, my husband, who had suffered and suffered, finally died while under the care of Dr. Kikuchi from Otemachi. In the meantime, the assets we had couldn't be turned into enough money and there weren't any jobs, like there are now. I was doing some work making *haichin* [cotton down vest type jacket], *tabi* [socks], *monbe* and *kimono* [with very hard material] to pay Dr. Kikuchi. Back in those days, I just wanted to depart this life with my husband.

The biggest regret I had was losing the koto which my parents had taught me faithfully since I was 6, so they had trained me with it for 12 or 13 years. The authentic koto which my parents bought me came all the way from Hakata for 100 yen. As I got better at playing it, when we were in Isemachi... Ichigennkin... the koto which I held onto until the very last... I sold to a master in Isahaya for 700 yen before Tominaga died. It was a really good Koto which had been well used and highly curved so it was easy to play. I still can't forget about it. But I was really helped by it back then because it became a medicine bill.

I held a small *hastubon* [1<sup>st</sup> festival of the dead ceremony since someone dies] then soon after I went to Sasebo, started single life and joined a nurses' agency. While I was living as a nurse I met Tateishi and with the recommendation of Mr. Inoue from Hongouchi, I became Mrs. Tateishi. He died 6 years ago.

I'm living simply in this 4 *jo han* [7.4 square meter] room taking each day as it comes with my pension and with some welfare supplements to make up for some shortages.

Please know that I wrote this with tears.

I'm thankful - Today's life is still my life. Please shed mercy from Heaven on the earth and its people.

[Location at Bombing: Irabayashi]