

The Life I have Lived for 45 years

Ms. Kazuko Nagase

I was born on October 29th 1937, the third daughter of the Nagase family. I was born lame. At that time, my father was working for Mitsubishi Shipyard and doing some loading work for the military that were refitting a ship. My mother was working at a neighboring chicken ranch and farming to make a living.

In those days, we were a large family of 10 siblings. By the time I could remember anything, my brothers and sisters were already working outside the prefecture. When the atomic bomb was dropped, there were only 7 of us, my parents, one sister, two older brothers, one younger brother and me.

At the moment the atomic bomb was dropped, I saw a yellow thing flash and I thought a spark came out from my eyes. After that, I lost consciousness. When I recovered, I was under the house and I crawled out of it with great difficulty. Then I saw a cloud spread out all over the sky, turning over with yellow, purple and red lights flashing like lighting.

I got scared and went back under the house again. Just then I could hear a voice from somewhere. When I looked toward the voice, there was a lady whose face was squashed by a big piece of wood and she was suffering. I couldn't do anything by my strength; all I could do was pray.... With a faltering voice she stammered, "Don't worry about me. Just get out of here, quickly!" The words still haunt my memory.

The next thing I remember, I was inside a shelter. I had a splitting headache and felt badly nauseous, so I remained lying down.

It was full of injured people all around. My father and older

brother were relatively fine but my mother's whole body was burned badly and her face was swelled up so that I wouldn't have recognized her until she called my name even if she was right in front of me. She kept throwing up blood constantly and passed away in the evening on the next day, the 10th.

We cremated her by the river in front of our house with the firewood which she collected to make our meals and picked up her bones. I didn't feel any sorrow at that time. It was a lot later before I realized that it is sad not to have parents. My second eldest brother, who went to play at Shiroyama Elementary School that day, was missing and didn't come home, ever. My older sister and 3 year old brother also passed away, one after another. We started to live in a shanty which my father made with wood which remained unburnt. But father also passed away by the time the cool autumn breeze began to blow because of tetanus from the injuries he got from the atomic bomb. My life with my older brother, who was a 6th grade national school student, started all alone, but it was hard to arrange our meals. How many times a week could we eat? It was a struggle to keep alive from one day to the next. I and my brother protected each other, helped each other and survived the worst time after the war together.

From 1953 to 1960, I was drifting from work in one restaurant to another in the city but when I was 20 years old and working and residing at a Sushi restaurant, the symptoms of the atomic bomb started to show. Because of the fever, I couldn't work at all and I had treatment at the *Genbaku* [Atomic Bomb] Hospital. The wife of my brother, who had already got married back then, ... my sister in law and I weren't getting along well with each other and it was getting awkward. Therefore, after my brother

left for work, it was hard for me to stay home, and I often wandered about aimlessly alone. I didn't know what to do and started working at the sushi restaurant that I used to work at, even though my doctor was against it. But because of a lack of understanding of radiation sickness plus my gammy legs, I became tired of living and tried suicide three times, but all of my attempts failed. At that time, I realized it is my privilege to live because I couldn't die, even though I wanted to.

I met Sumako Fukuda who died shortly after our meeting. Ms. Fukuda, who had a hot temper, encouraged me and offered to adopt me as her daughter. But I decided to be independent and I left to work at a garment factory in Osaka, which my sister in law had found for me.

However, in 1964, suddenly my legs started to get sore and I was diagnosed with articular rheumatism. I asked to go back to Nagasaki, but because of the shortages of workers, I couldn't quit. I was pushing myself to work but when I could no longer make my body move as I wanted it to, I was discriminated against due to my radiation sickness and got bullied. Finally I couldn't stand it anymore and escaped back to Nagasaki by the end of that year.

After that, I was constantly in and out of hospital for operations on my hip joints and so on. Then, I entered this *Genbaku* Home, which I was introduced to by the doctor from the *Genbaku* Hospital in July 1975. Seven years have passed since then.... I heard people sympathetically say, "What a pity. She's still young ". I wonder how many times I have cried. There were only old people and there was no one to talk to. I thought about leaving the Home but there was no place to go to or no one to welcome me. I did my best to think that "This is my home. Those old men

and women are my fathers and mothers.” Now, I’m really glad I was able to enter the Home. I can always talk to Maria and I’m living a fun life here.

I am appealing for people to join The Peace Movement as a member of Otome’s Association but it’s sad that we’re not getting the response we expected. We all get old and one day we go to God... I think it will not only be the second generation of atomic bomb victims, but everyone who takes over the duties after us. Let’s cry out with our hearts as one for the Non-nuclear and Peace Movements. I want to appeal to people all over the world not to destroy peace and not to start war.

I would like to dedicate this poem to my parents and siblings who passed away here.

Oh, the atomic bomb in Nagasaki
The town of Shiroyama is all destroyed

Father, Mother

You were burned

It must be hot

You must be painful

Sister, you must have suffered

Brother, where did you fly to?

Oh, my brother... you were only 3

Flash! The light of the atomic bomb

[Location at Bombing: Shiroyamamachi]