

# The One Thing That I'm Proud of

Mrs. Asa Aiba

In the 19<sup>th</sup> year of the Showa Era, I evacuated to Nagasaki with my 6 children from Tokyo where we had lived for a long time.

The abominable atomic bombing happened the following August. On that day, the preliminary alert was announced in the morning. I evacuated my children to a shelter at Naminohira Primary School, which was about 300 meters away from my house. It happened when I was doing the washing outside. With a bright yellow flash, I heard a dreadful sound like some kind of explosion, then the roofing tiles started cracking, all the glass doors were broken into pieces and all our furniture and household goods were blown over. When I came to, I was inside the house. I didn't know what to do.

When I looked towards the sea I saw a fluffy mushroom thing with a mix of red, blue, yellow and purple colors going up into the air. I later heard that was 'the' mushroom cloud. I immediately knew it was a bomb, so I ran to the shelter at school where my children were. My children were safe. There wasn't a lot of damage in my part of town, Naminohira machi, which was about 4.5 km away from the hypocenter of the blast. After a little while, people who had been in the Urakami and the Nagasaki Station areas started coming back injured. They were being treated at a first aid station.

In the evening, the mountains of Urakami area were so red, like the sky was burning. Someone said, "It's a forest fire". When my eyes drifted towards the road, I saw a man whose whole body was red, walking along unsteadily and groaning. At first, I

thought he was naked, but he actually had his whole body covered with bandages and it must have been red because his blood was soaking through the bandages as he walked. I heard that he died later that night near Konpira Shrine, in Naminohira. That same night, we went up Fifth Mountain, which is next to Mt. Nabekanmuri, with summer futons and other provisions. We couldn't sleep at all that night because of the enemy air raids, flares being dropped and also mosquito attacks. So, we waited till dawn then we went back to the shelter at the school.

There were people at the school ground who had been injured the day before. When I listened to their stories, one said "I was treated yesterday but I don't know what to do from today. We don't even know when the next attack will be, so I'd like you to treat my wound." Back then, I was a midwife, so I had some disinfectant and medical gauze etc. And I had also worked at a surgical department for short time in the past, so I readily agreed to do it and started looking after the injured. If it were today, I would have gotten into trouble for practicing medicine illegally, but I didn't even consider such things at the time.

About 2 days later, someone came to visit me for help at the shelter at about 7 pm. I asked if it was about childbirth, but was told it was about her son who had had a traffic accident and was in Nagasaki University Hospital. The hospital was also damaged by the atomic bomb, so she had him at their home. They asked me to help because they couldn't do anything, but as it would be a problem if an air raid started (I wouldn't be able to get back to my family), I asked them to bring him to the school grounds.

The patient, who was carried on a door, soon arrived and as I went near him I noticed he was giving off a very bad smell. His

femur was broken and two drainage-tubes had been inserted. I pressed his femur from the top, down towards the wound, and a lot of pus and maggots came out. I had heard maggots breed in dead bodies before, but I had never seen that in a living person. The boy was severely debilitated. I changed his bandages every day, thinking he may die at anytime and then I realized something. Because I am a midwife I can write a stillbirth certificate but I'm not a doctor so I can't write a death certificate. I thought it would be better for him to go to a hospital in Isahaya before it was too late, so I told the family to go there. Soon after that they went to Isahaya.

About 10 months after the end of the war, half-American half-Japanese babies gradually started to be born. I assisted one of those in childbirth. The baby was a girl. The family member asked me to do something with the baby. I found out Maria En took care of orphans. I took the baby there immediately but a sister told me that they only accept children with official registration. I was at a loss as to what to do. After thinking about many things, I decided to have this baby entered into my family register so that she would be able to enter Maria En if that was the only way to save this mother and baby. I talked to the mother and her family about it and in the end Maria En looked after the baby. But I asked the baby's family to promise me that if something happened to cause me trouble, I could remove her from my family register anytime.

Time flew, and it was already March when I realized she was school aged. She was going to begin Naminohira Primary School from April. My own child was already going to Naminohira Primary School, though. I visited her family straightaway because it wouldn't be appropriate for someone in my job if a

mixed race child entered the school bearing my family name. But the mother was now married and had moved to Iki Island. I tried to notify them on Iki Island but it didn't go as smoothly as I expected, so I told the school principal about the situation and asked them to use the girl's mother's family name, and not to call her Aiba, because one day she will be removed from my family register.

I also asked the principal of Maria En to use her real mother's family name for the school. By the time I could finally bring a suit against the girl's mother for absence of parent-child relationship and she was removed from my family register, it was already the end of May.

20 years had passed since the end of war. I was working at the obstetrics and gynecology department in Showa machi. I got a phone call. The woman on the other end spoke to me with familiarity, but I couldn't recognize the voice. Turns out she was the sister of the boy who had maggots in his femur I had treated 20 years ago at the school ground. She had come to the hospital in Showa machi because she had something she needed me to do. If I testified that I had treated her brother, she could get an atomic-bomb victim's record book [medical treatment notes for atomic-bomb victims which meant all of her future healthcare would be free].

While I was writing the certificate, I asked about her brother. I asked as I thought he must have died from malnutrition, but I was really happy and relieved when she smiled and told me that he had become a tailor and lived on Goto Island now.

30 years had passed since the end of the war. I met Sister Hirata at Maria En in Minamiyamate machi. According to her story, Michiko [the mixed race baby who I asked them to look

after] came to visit them in her military uniform from America the other day. She said “Mother, I got permission to come here because I wanted to see you. I am a nurse in the military now.” When I heard this, tears came to my eyes. I was so glad. Because the principal of Maria En accepted her back then, two people were saved. If it’s possible, I’d like to see Michiko while I’m alive. If she hasn’t gotten married her name will be Michiko Tada.

[Location at Bombing: Naminohiramachi]