

Reminiscences of Childhood

Ms. Chizuyo Yamasaki

Yes, yes ... that time, the time that though I try I can't forget.

At 11:02 on August 9th, 1945, my life turned 180 degrees. I lost my parents, lost my sister, lost my grandmother and my brother then my life of pain started.

There was not enough food and the only food we had was *suiton* [flour dumplings boiled in soup] with chestnuts and potatoes. No, that was even better, there was a time we could only eat one meal a day. It was 1946, when my uncle who looked after me died and my foster mother remarried and took me along. I turned 5 and was about to be old enough to understand what was going on around me.

I'm not an immediate atomic bomb victim but am an indirect victim. Because I was 4 years old at that time, my memory isn't clear. On that day, I had been evacuated to Kawabira and saw a flash of light, far away. I was very young so in a child's mind, I thought it was beautiful.

The next day, I remember I went to look for my parents and sister's remains with my grandmother. At that time, my grandmother's hands were black and ragged but still I remember they were gentle hands. I don't remember my sister's face at all. Back then, she was carried on my mother's back but if she had been evacuated together with me, she might still be alive. She would look after me and even have built a wonderful family.

Father! How did you live and spend forty-odd years of your life? Now that I am getting to your age I wonder if I might be able to understand you or your mind. I don't remember you playing with

me and also I don't remember eating meals together.

Mother! I've heard that for forty-odd years of your life you were continuously in hardship. You carried my sister on your back and worked for us, and then you were bombed while you were working and died. My tears still fall when I think of you.

Sister! You lived four months of your short life to the fullest then your too short life was ended. I'm sure you became a child of God and are watching over me.

Grandmother! You sold your Kimono for your grandchildren and sold all of your precious things to feed us, even just to get us something that tastes a little better. I've heard that that was a tremendous hardship.

Brother! I couldn't do anything sisterly for you at all. My only biological brother - even that brother got separated from me after the atomic bombing, and finally, three years ago, we were reunited for the first time in 37 years. It was an indescribable surprise and delight.

If the atomic bomb wasn't dropped, one ordinary family could be here. My parents didn't even have remains; my sister, my uncle, my grandparents.... I believe that no matter what it cannot be allowed to happen for a third time. No, it's definitely not acceptable. Anything but this atomic bomb...!!

[Location at Bombing: Inasamachi]