

# **Voices of Hibakusha in Nara, Japan**

Cited from Memoirs of Hibakusha Survivors in Nara Prefecture

**English edition**

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## Preface

The US Airforce used an A-Bomb for killing the citizens of Japan. The first bombing occurred on August the 6<sup>th</sup> 1945 in Hiroshima, and three days later, August the 9<sup>th</sup> in Nagasaki. It was the first time in history an A-Bomb was used against humanity.

In the moment of the explosion, the city was destroyed and people did not have time to escape. They were caught under the falling houses, buried or seriously wounded. The vast majority of people who had more than 20 % of their body surface burned died on the spot or shortly thereafter. By year's end, a total of 210,000 citizens had died. This miserable history has no end. The people that suffered from the A-Bomb and survived after 1946 have lived as *Hibakusha*. Many of the Hibakusha died afterwards from radioactivity. Many of the survivors are forced to live with unreasonable misunderstanding and discrimination about their plight.

After the war, year after year, many Hibakusha returned home or moved to another area of Japan. In Nara prefecture, where we are, still living about 500 people who are Hibakusha or the survivors of A-Bomb continue to reside there.

In our area, Nara, around 30 years ago, the A-Bomb survivor's association published three volumes of books titled "Memoirs of Hibakusha Survivors in Nara Prefecture"\*\*.

Here in this booklet I would like to introduce several voices cited from these books.

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\*\* Original edition of this booklet was edited & illustrated and published by IRITANI Masanao, August, 2019.

\*\* All of the vices cited in this booklet come from the following books.

- Wakakusa-no-kai (A-Bomb survivors' Association), (edited) "*Memoirs of Hibakusha Survivors in Nara Prefecture*", (original Japanese title is "Gembaku e Heiwa no Kane wo!" (Ringing the bell of Peace against the A-Bomb) *Vol 1, Vol.2 & Vol.3*, 1986, 1990, 1995, respectively.



## 1. Moment of flash of explosion

At that moment people led lives as usual. Nobody knew what happened.  
(editor)

Ten times bigger than ordinary lightning and thunder. It was a gigantic lightning as if thousands of flashes came out from a camera.

(anonymous\*, male, 16 years old, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.18)



The clouds from the A-Bomb that were first white changed in color to yellow, orange, and then violet gradually rose up to the sky and formed an umbrella shaped mushroom.

(anonymous\*, male, age unknown, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.1, p.1)

\*In this booklet, the authors names were not disclosed,  
but in the cases where the editor obtained permission from the author or their families, I attributed their names. All information of  
each author is dated as of August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945.



## 2. Disaster of the A-Bomb

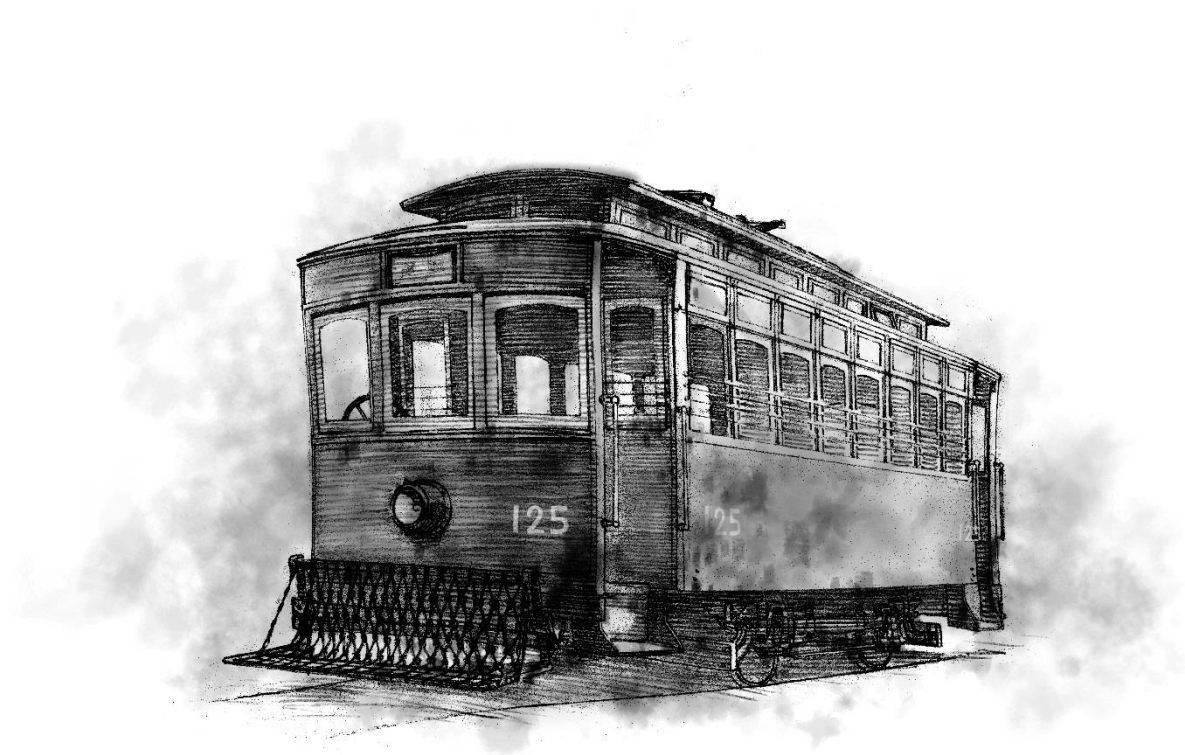
The A-Bomb exploded at a height of 600 meters from the earth with a terrific detonation and formed a fire-ball. Exactly as designed by Oppenheimer, one of the main developers of the A-Bomb, to activate most effectively the energy of radioactivity of the A-Bomb. Then it spread out heat rays, radioactivity in an enormous storm. All of this struck the people.  
(editor)

Crashed roof-tiles were burned and pressed together by heat rays and looked like a row of baked rice cakes. The iron gate by the building was curved like a bar of candy. I was scared of the heat rays. Therefore, I just continued walking barefooted over the heated tiles.

(female, 24 years of age, housekeeper, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3 p.74)

A lot of burned bodies were lying everywhere. Some people around me were walking with fragments of clothes and their skin was burned black and hanging down like black sea weed. They appeared to be no longer human beings! Even today the image of people entering into the river for water does not leave my memory. But the water was so intensely hot that they directly died in the river one by one. Their burnt skin became bloated by the water and soon after they fell down into the river.

(female, 20 years of age, factory worker, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.25)



### 3. Could not do anything but stand by

For most people, all that they could do was to save themselves.

They could not do anything to help others around them.

This fact has remained in the bottom of the survivor's memories for a long time, and still remains today as a deep wound. (editor)

"Dear soldier, please help, please!"

Suddenly I heard the weak voice from a little boy falling down beside me. I heard a curious sound following this.

What was taking place?

Look!

The boy was bleeding from his abdomen.

Helpless! I left the place. There was absolutely nothing that I could do for him.

(anonymous, male, 18 years of age, soldier, bombed in Nagasaki, vol.2, p.25)



"Noodle, I want to eat noodles!"

A naked boy, that looked like an elementary school child, repeated and appealed clearly. During the war noodles were one food that ordinary people could not obtain.

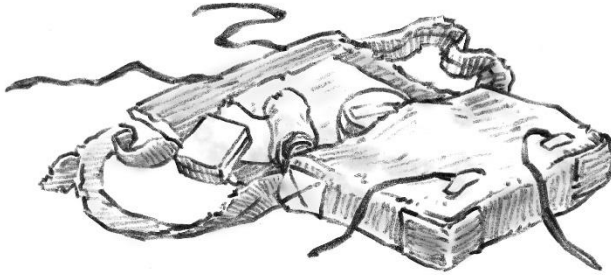
It was a pity that so little a boy cried the name of the food at the end of his short life. The next morning, I found him lifeless at the same place in exactly the same pose as the day before.

(anonymous, male, age unknown, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.1, p.33)



#### 4. Vain attempts to rescue A-Bomb victims

There existed people, who they themselves were suffering from radioactivity, engaging in the rescue work under the hardest of circumstances. Without medicine, without bandages, without hope, they still tried to rescue the wounded people. (editor)



People suffered terribly due to serious wounds to their bodies. For some people their intestines were coming out from the abdomen. For others their bones were visible from wounds 10 to 20 centimeters in width. These were my first patients I encountered as a student nurse! That was surely a cruel experience for me. So cruel that words cannot describe the situation!

(KITAO Mitsuyo, female, 17 years of age, nurse, bombed in Nagasaki, vol.3. p.11)

The saddest memory I could not forget was this. A man or a woman, I could not tell, waiting for his/her turn for treatment, fell down suddenly. This was the end of the victims life. If this person could have waited for a couple of patients, I supposed the chance of treatment would have been possible. Such kinds of scenes were repeated numerous times.

(anonymous, female, 23 years of age, chief nurse, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.24)

## 5. My unbelievable experience

People had no help from God, nor from Buddha. Meanwhile some helped others. It was a kind of miracle, wasn't it? (editor)

Schoolhouses fell down and I was laying under the wreckage.

Suddenly I noticed that somebody was calling me.

"My brother, my brother."

I looked up spontaneously and found the face of my young sister, Katsuko, smiling at me.

"Oh, yes, my dear Katsu!" I called back to her.

At the same time, she disappeared, and from the same direction the light of outside was piercing into the darkness.

At that moment I was pressed by the weight of the debris and could not move, but later I was able to extract myself and now I could stand and go. I do not know how I was able to come outside the hole. Finally, I succeeded to stand on the roof of the house.

It was a miracle!

I cannot describe this story without using the word "miracle".

My sister passed away on that day after just 5 years life. She loved the statue of Buddha and was a very kind warmhearted little girl.

Can you believe the story of my experience created by my young sister?

(anonymous, male, 16 years of age, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.18)



## 6. Black rain



About 20 minutes later after the explosion of the A-Bomb, black rain fell over the destroyed city. At first atomic clouds were made by the explosion of the A-Bomb. It formed a mushroom cloud that consisted of the dust from the earth and heat rays and radioactivity of the bomb. Then black rain including an enormous amount of radioactivity began to fall and lasted two hours\* . (editor)

\* Hitoshi Takayama(edited)(1969) *Hiroshima in Memorium*, p.11

\* Hiroshima City Office (2019) *The Outline of the Action Programs for the A-Bomb victims*, p.1

Over the city in ruins, Hiroshima, black rain including radioactivity fell. It was really a black rain. It was a cold rain in spite of the fact that it was in mid-summer.

(anonymous, male, age unknown, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.1 p.1)

## 7. Do not let them have water

Most people wanted to drink water but at that time they said “if we give them water, they surely will die” (editor)

A mother having a baby on her back said to me, “Dear soldier, please give me some water” Spontaneously I decided to help her up and give some water. But somebody in the distance cried back to me, “No, do not give her water, do you want her to die?”

I was astonished by his loud voice and left the place apologizing to her. But at the same time, I imagined that they would shortly die of dehydration.

Whenever I think of her and her baby, I always suffer from this sad memory.”

(KITAO Shigeo, 20 years of age, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.44)

## 8. A scene in Hiroshima the day after the bombing

~an American prisoner being beaten to death in public~

Most of the victims and suffering people were Japanese, but also some from other countries, an American prisoner, for example. (editor)

When I came to the edge of the Aioi-bashi bridge, near the hypocenter, I met a crowd and in the middle of the people an American prisoner stood still with his hands bound. He was beaten with bars and stones by people surrounding him. People were crying, "you are my father's enemy!" "you are my mother's enemy!" "you killed my brothers!".

They abused him violently.

In the morning his eyes were half open, but then in the afternoon when I passed by his eyes were totally closed"

(anonymous, male, age unknown, an office worker, bombed in Hiroshima,  
vol.1. p.4)

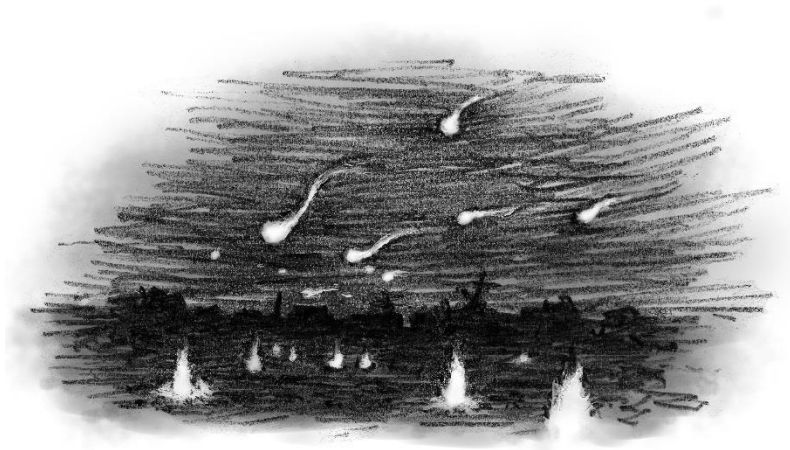
## 9. Fire-balls

Late at night, people had seen hundreds of fire-balls around them.

It was perhaps that phosphorus, a kind of chemical element, from a pile of dead bodies sparkled and they looked like fire balls floating in the darkness. Yes, those were fire-balls colored by blue, violet and orange light. (editor)

Have you ever seen a fire-ball? It floats like a balloon with a tail. Many fire-balls were flying with awful sounds from the mountains towards the sea. It was not one or two, but so many fire-balls were flying, and all of them went in the same direction! I became scared.

(anonymous, male, 24 years of age, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.81)



## 10. Just keep burning the dead bodies

The high temperatures made the dead bodies rot and these smells made people nauseous.

Bodies were continuously burned by the rescue army. (editor)

To the nearest elementary school, trucks conveyed the dead bodies. They were cremated in the fire. I heard voices crying for help. Some of them were not yet dead, maybe half dead, so I thought.

(anonymous, female, 22 years of age, housewife, bombed in Hiroshima.  
vol.3, p.70)

## 11. Heartwarming memories in the disaster

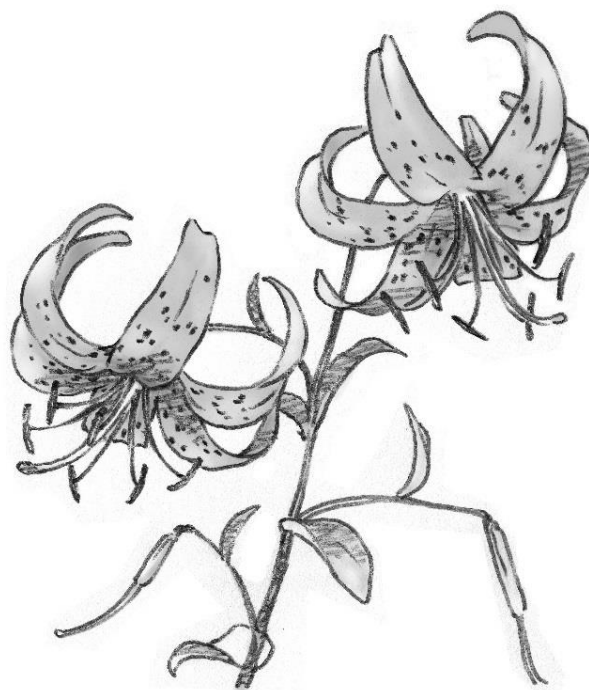
I was seriously wounded by flying glass and burned by the heat rays. And I was lying with ragged clothes, almost naked on the ground.

Somebody who passed by put a kimono with the design of a spiders' web on me. Probably she or he was sympathized with me, a young girl! I am truly grateful to that person for their kindness and warmheartedness.

(anonymous, female, 16 years of age, student, bombed in Nagasaki.  
vol.3, p.48)

I found a Tigerlily flower inside a can in the burnt field. It was surely laid for the tremendous number of victims. I was filled with sadness and sorrow,

(KITAO Shigeo, male, 20 years of age, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima.  
vol.3, p.44)





## 12. History for the people who did not die directly but survived with serious injuries

From the radiation and heat rays many people suffered from sickness and sustained internal and external wounds. Most of them suffered not only from diseases but also from wide range of discrimination resulting from the lack of knowledge about radiation and related A-bomb injuries. (editor)

The tragedy caused by the A-Bomb was not temporary. Sadness continued to exist as long as survivors stayed alive. 2 years later, 5 years later, 10 years later, 15 years later, all kinds of hardship and pain persist with these people, *"Hibakusha"*. My eldest son was three years of age when he was exposed to the radiation. 15 years after the war, at the age of 18, he was diagnosed with leukemia, a kind of blood cancer. For about 2 years he battled in vain against the serious illness and passed away as a 20-year-old young man.

(OMOTE Fusa-ichi, male, 30 years of age, worker at shipbuilding factory, bombed in Nagasaki, vol.2, p.18)

My second son was a baby of 9 months during the attack and he died at age 30. From the beginning of his life, he suffered from a serious condition on the surface of his skin. Swellings on the arms and around the neck were removed by surgery time after time.

He was married and had two children. When he was 25 of age, he was sent to the hospital. After being diagnosed with leukemia, he repeatedly went to and from the hospital. According to the surgeon's report, he passed away 5 years later. Every time his wife used to say to me, "Don't mention the word

*"Hibakusha!"*

"Our daughter will be hindered in her marriage by the word of Hibakusha!"

"Never tell the stories! Never call back memories! I hate the day of August 6<sup>th</sup>!"

(anonymous, female, 25 years of age, housewife, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.3, p.55)

### 13. Wishes and desires by the Hibakusha, the survivors of the A-Bomb

We should not forget the fear and danger of nuclear weapons. We should keep telling the tragic stories in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to future generations, but at the same time we should tell what we, Japanese, have done in China and the South-eastern countries during the war time. We were victims and sufferers in the war, but at the same time we were also invading and victimizing the people of other countries. The fact that the attack on the US navy at Pearl Harbor was also a criminal act that Japan committed.

(OZAKI Toshiyuki, male, age unknown, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima, vol.1, p.5)

Under the threat and fear of A-Bombs nobody could live nor die as a human being.

Nuclear weapons are aimed to totally destroy everything.

In every country and every place, we should not have Hiroshima and Nagasaki again!"

(KOBAYASHI Seijiro, male, 25 years of age, soldier, bombed in Hiroshima. vol.2, p.29)





## Epilog

**For transmitting the voices of Hibakusha to the younger generations**

IRITANI Masanao, editor

The A-Bomb survivors' association in Nara, which was called "the Wakakusa-no-kai", closed their work in 2006. It was the first to close their activity among the same kinds of organizations in Japan.

The Wakakusa-no-kai had published three volumes of books. But most of them are lost today. "Nara Prefectural Library and Information Center" is the only library which has all three volumes. Even that Library has one original version of vol.1 and other volumes, namely vol. 2 and vol. 3 are copies of the original.

These books were written by the survivors in Nara by calling back their hard memories and wishing peace in the world. They strongly wished that as many people as possible could have a chance to read them. But due to the loss of many books, it has become more and more difficult to read them. I am afraid that the days of no Hibakusha will come in the near future.

What can we do against the fear of nuclear weapons? There is one thing we can say that we should do! Yes, it is that we do not forget the real messages by the survivors! It is vitally important to keep them. Since Hibakushas voices are the departing points for all movements created for a world without nuclear weapons.

For transmitting the voices of Hibakusha to the younger generations, what we can do?

Not only from Hiroshima and Nagasaki but also from Nara we have to do what we can.

This booklet which shows several voices of Hibakusha, their sincere words from the bottom of their heart could lead you to open the door for action.



