

The Story of One *Hibakusha* [Atom Bomb Survivor] who didn't Actually Experience the Calamity of the Atomic Bomb

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I wonder if there could be a story with this title. I was asked to write something about August 9th of 1945 before it fades with time. I wish I could let you read something about the most terrible calamity of the century but unfortunately I can't do that.

The reason is because the members of "Soldiers of Peerless Loyalty and Bravery" were having a nap in a safe place at that time. Because we had been in battle position since the night before, we hadn't slept at all but had been eating rations and were continually tense. [Although in reality, I don't think one enemy plane had come over Nagasaki.]

After breakfast, I took two soldiers as my detail to receive provisions and fodder, then was given some food for the day to take to Kouyagishima Company Headquarters [which wasn't adjoining then] from the Air Defense Headquarters Position [Now the Marine Meteorological Observatory]. Because there were no sweets or anything for my children, I didn't stop by home but went on to Kawakoumaru [the ferry used to take workers to the Kawan Manufacturing Company on Kouyagishima] which was preparing for departure at Ohato Pier. As soon as I got aboard, I quickly took an empty wooden bench and fell asleep before I knew it with my steel helmet as a pillow.

I don't know how long I was sleeping. I woke up with a terrific pale blue flash. And at the same time, I think I heard a hissing sound. I thought incendiary bombs had been dropped on the

ship and I jumped off the seat to lie face down on the floor. The ship gave up on going to Kouyagi and it turned its 200 ton class body around to make an emergency berthing at a coal mining company's pier in Kozone.

As I was lying down, by chance, I was able to see the area inside the harbor, Nagasaki Station and the Nakanoshima reclaimed land. There was a fire coming out from a chimney on a ship with the Mitsubishi mark is on it which was berthed at Mizunoura Pier. In the sky from above Nagasaki Station to the Nakanoshima reclaimed land, fiery smoke which was like a cloud of dust made out of peeled off roof tiles was about to rise up at crawling height. To drop this many incendiary bombs all at once, you need dozens of planes but with my sleepy head, I didn't hear the sound of an explosion and couldn't see any planes and nor do I remember any air raid alarms. Though it was only for a short time, it seems that I must have been sleeping deeply.

I had the feeling of something being out of the ordinary amongst passengers. After we made the emergency berthing at the pier in Kozone, I was surprised to see the captain who came jumping down the gangway. The upper half of his body was covered in blood. Because it was extremely hot, the windows must have been opened but it seems like some bits of glass which had been shattered by the bomb blast had cut some of the passengers who were sitting.

I left the provisions and fodder on the ship and hurried to the unit headquarters. On my way, I walked past a few groups of injured people. Everyone had become pale. I realized this was no trifling matter. At this time, the effects the greatest calamity of the century could be seen under the sky over the northern part of the city which I saw as something like a cloud of earthen dust

over the Station and Nakanoshima reclaimed land.

Zigokuzue (a form of Japanese painting depicting scenes from hell) is outside of my story's territory. I am sorry but my story only covers a fraction of the side story of that day. However, I climbed a steep slope and arrived at the unit headquarters, and then I stood by the entrance of a shelter which was full. "Message! Message!" A resolute soldier who was in active duty came up the steep slope, losing his breath. He was naked to the waist. He shouted "Nakanoshima Company was annihilated!" An officer who was on duty for that week yelled, "What happened to the company commander?" He replied, "Sir! The company commander is putting out a fire at the entrance of the communications shelter bank." While this exchange took place, some trucks came up. Everyone was naked to the waist. They were Konpira Company soldiers. One of them [a classmate from basic training when I was drafted] jumped off the truck and seeing my face told me with a bitter expression of resignation "we are done...". They went through the fire to get to the unit headquarters. Everyone was covered in merbromin (antiseptic) and blood. It was around 2 pm when I left the unit headquarters in time for the ferry's departure.

While I was waiting for depart for Kawakoumaru at the pier in Kozone, the murky cloud over the northern part of city sky was getting worse. The ship departed as the white smoke over the prefectural office's dome, which had appeared to be like clouds of steam from public baths, then became more like "Maybe that's fire?" level clouds. By the time the ship went around Kouzakibana, I could definitely tell it was fire. As time passed, the fire razed the whole of Hokauramachi. I've heard later that there was an explosion from the careless handling of the gas

used for cooking in one of the rooms in the prefectural office - at that time there were no fire fighters and the situation was such that it had to be left to burn as it was.

After we got back to the company, the sky over Nagasaki, which I could see over the mountain of Kouzaki, was bright red, and remained so all night. I wondered if my house had been burnt too? Where are my wife and child? What happened to my parents' home in Ginyamachi [Furukawamachi now]? And mother? And my brother's family? Everyone was looking out at the sky over Nagasaki all night. I don't recall there being a preliminary alert or air-raid alarm that night.

Next morning, I left with orders to deliver provisions and fodder. The soldiers who left to search the afflicted area got armbands to certify their orders. There was an experienced soldier, Mori, who had left with orders on the 9th (he didn't have the same duty as me but we had been in the same unit since we were drafted). He had stopped by his home near Hamaguchi tram stop [Daigakubyoinmae back then, near the hypocenter]. All that remained of him for the search party to find was his steel helmet and bayonet.

When I went to the house just above Yasaka Shrine where my family had previously evacuated to, I saw our Singer sewing machine for industrial use and a radio turned over on the Tatami mats and a bamboo sieve which seemed to have been blown out of the kitchen, under the Butsudā [family Buddhist altar], and the Butsudā was about to fall down. My family came out from a tunnel cave close by. My wife had been hit by a heavy door, from the Shianbashi Eighteen Bank branch gate, on her left shoulder and her shoulder had turned blue black. If she had been carrying our one year old eldest son on her back, we

know what his destiny would have been. Now, he works for Toyota as a section chief in Toyota City, Aichi, but when I think of how we had been wondering about evacuating to the Urakami area prior to the bomb, it's like sadness and gladness succeed each other.

Mr. Fukahori, a young first year soldier who joined the army without training, was sent to reconnoiter the conditions in the Urakami area and came back late that day. For his return report, he said "I cremated seven relatives. That's all!" The new soldier's shoulders were trembling.

He was a soldier with enthusiasm back then, but if he is still alive, it's heartbreaking to think that he will have had to go through the first anniversary of the family's death, the third, the seventh, and so on for the last 30 years. I weep in sympathy when I think of that time when he said "That's all!" fighting back his tears. If he is still alive, he's about 60 years old but there are many Fukahoris around the Urakami area. There is no way to find out how he's doing now.

As for my daily activity, I left with orders for provisions and fodder. On the way back to harbor, I sat down next to a man who was carrying something wrapped around with a straw mat on his back. When I asked, he told me that he found a primary school student on the third day. The child must have been burnt so badly that it didn't even have the smell of a dead corpse. It was a sad sight which reminded me of the character Itawari Asataro who killed his uncle Kansuke for justice and carried the boy Kantaro on his back, back to Mt. Akagi, in the climax of a play called "Akaginokomoriuta".

On that day, I saw Mr. Shimada, who had lived in the house across from us before we evacuated, on the street. He was

working for Mitsubishi Heiki and we rejoiced together about our safety but it was about 10 years later when I heard that he had died from radiation. In contrast, there was Mr. Tokunaga, who was like a brother to me and 50 years old back then, who was blown over by the bomb blast into a pit shelter while he was working as a subcontractor in construction at the same Mitsubishi Heiki company. For about 10 years after that he sometimes suffered bouts of coughing up blood, but now he is 89 years old and is still hale and hearty and he was recognized for his distinguished services for carpentry and received the 6th class prize a few years ago.

I'm sorry to prattle on with idle talk, but Mr. Shimada who died 10 years after the bomb wasn't a drinker but the latter Mr. Tokunaga was the drinker of drinkers. [Though, I think it was black market Shochu back then].

I wonder if there is some kind of connection between drinking alcohol and radiation exposure. As for this reckless remark, which was a rumor at that time, I keep drinking even though I don't have any information and don't know the right answer about it, but I would like to know more about the relationship between drinking alcohol and radiation.

I'm sorry for being rude to talk about such things when Hibakusha like me should be talking about the misery of the atomic bomb. I think this story should be rejected from publication.