

# **My Experiences of the A-bombing**

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### ● **Life in those days**

In those days, I was 31 years old, working for Chugoku Haiden Corp. (present-day Chugoku Electric Power Co.) in Komachi, and lived in a rented house in Otemachi with my wife Mikie and two children (three-year-old son and seven-month-old daughter). Since I had joined Chugoku Haiden after graduating from Onomichi Middle School and had gotten my drivers' license in February 1934, I must have been 20 or 21 years old. While I was at Chugoku Haiden, I was drafted twice, from September 1937 to January 1941 and again from September 1942 to November 1943, alternating between being a draftee and a worker.

After the terrible bombardment in Kure around the end of March 1945, I saw many carrier-borne fighters flying away like a cluster of dragonflies. There was an underground air-raid shelter, which might have been dug by previous residents. Whenever an air-raid would hit, I'd run into the shelter. But it was difficult with small children like ours—only three years old and seven months old—to deal with the situation. While paying attention to one child, the other child would be trying to get out of the shelter. I decided that we couldn't take it anymore and at the end of March evacuated my wife and two children to my wife's parents' home in Mukaeda in Wada Village, Futami County (present-day Mukoueta-machi, Miyoshi City). Since it was during the war, I left all our household goods at my company's warehouse and evacuated my family without any belongings.

After evacuating, I lived temporarily in the warehouse. But at the beginning of May when I returned from my wife's parents' home after staying there on Saturday and Sunday, I found that all our household goods had been burned to ashes due to bombardment of the warehouse. Without any change of clothes, I immediately returned to Wada Village, had my wife make me a shirt and trousers out of summer kimono, and went to work on the first train on Monday. Since I had lost my temporary dwelling, I rented a room in a house in Ushita-machi through my co-worker and lived there until the A-bombing.

### ● **Damage from the A-bombing**

In those days, when a red alert was issued at night, I had to be on night watch in work clothes under orders of the municipal office, which was called "calls for guards." This duty was assigned to veterans. On the night

of August 5, with a red alert issued, I went to my designated area, Yanagibashi, on night watch. Usually, the start of work the day after the night watch was delayed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., but that day I didn't receive any message about a delayed start. So, I arrived at my company at 8:00 a.m. on the 6th, the day after the night watch, to which I consequently attributed my survival.

Since I had 30 minutes before I had to start working, I went to the underground bathroom exclusively for staffers and started washing the work clothes I had worn the night before. I was crouching in order to do the laundry, but was suddenly blown backward by a blast coming from in front of me, and then crushed against a wall, after which I then passed out. I didn't remember anything but the flash. When I came to, it was pitch dark with excessive dust. But when I saw flames on the fourth or fifth floor, my sense of duty to do something cleared my mind. Being unable to see past my nose, I groped my way through the darkness from memory. Sometimes I bumped into something when going forward, assuming there were stairs there, and finally reached the security guards' office at the base of the building. From there, I could see the tram street. When I reached the tram street, I saw a tram car toppled over onto a private house, and thought then that this was a serious matter. There was no one who could tell me where should I escape to.

Although the grounds of Hiroshima Prefectural Hiroshima First Middle School, located south of my company, was designated as our shelter, I wasn't informed of it. I headed north along the tram street, turned right just before Shirakamisha Shrine, and then headed east along Takeya-cho street. On my way to escape the disaster, I saw a woman (age unknown) at Hiroshima Prefectural Hiroshima First Women's High School crushed under a fence that had been knocked down by the blast. She was crying for help, with only her body from the neck up visible. Unfortunately, I was barely able to escape from the disaster, myself bleeding with pieces of glass stuck in my back, which was thickly covered with blood.

I then went south down along the Takeya River and headed for the Miyuki Bridge. Despite its name, the Takeya River was just a small ditch that didn't even appear on maps of Hiroshima, running underneath Fukuya. As I was escaping, I didn't see any other fleeing people but people in a house across the Takeya River were clearing away rubble saying, "This is

really serious.” I had no idea what time it was, but it might have been a long time since I started escaping.

Before crossing the Miyuki Bridge, a military truck came along. I asked the driver to give me a ride to Ujina Harbor, from which I evacuated myself to Ninoshima Island by ship. On the island, the situation was difficult, with many injured people taking shelter there. There were some medics but I couldn't get any decent treatment for the pieces of glass still stuck in my back, except for simple treatment like applying bandages. I couldn't sleep with all the noise from people like madmen, people screaming, people giving an earful to the screamers, people running around, even at night where people were sleeping, and people admonishing those who were running. I didn't eat anything on the 6th. On the morning of the 7th, I received some porridge in my pipe-shaped bamboo container, and ate it with a pickled plum, which was the only meal on Ninoshima.

The situation on the island was such that I asked a soldier to allow me to return home out of fear of dying, and returned to Ujina Harbor by ship on the morning of the 7th. Luckily, I found a truck and asked the driver where he was going. Since he answered that he was headed for city hall, I asked him for a ride there. “Hop in!” He consented immediately and drove me to the front entrance. I thanked him and got off the truck. Since my company was located in an area a little north of city hall, I went there on foot. When I arrived at my company, two staffers were at the reception desk. I told them, “Now I'm going to evacuate myself to my wife's parents' home in Miyoshi,” and gave them the address. I then walked to the boarding house in Ushita-machi via Kamiya-cho and Hacchobori. I stayed there overnight, and on the 8th caught a train from Hesaka Station for Wada Village, where I had evacuated my wife and children. I hurried to my wife's parents' home, thinking she must have been worried about me. I don't recall much about what happened on my way there, except for a strong impression that many corpses were piled up at the Kohei Bridge.

### ● **Situation after the A-bombing**

When I arrived in Wada Village, pieces of glass were still stuck in my back. Every day, I went down to the river to have my wife wash my back. The blood coagulated and clung to my back like coal tar. When my wife removed the blood clots with a needle, fragments of glass came off with the

clots. She removed the blood clots and pieces of glass from my back for a week or 10 days. Even when I assumed they were all removed, my back festered with remaining glass pieces during the 1950s and early '60s. I went to a surgical hospital in Sakai-machi to get all the pieces of glass removed.

A short while after I arrived in Wada Village, which was before I had all the pieces of glass removed, my father visited me from Onomichi. Since I hadn't been able to contact my relatives in Onomichi since the A-bombing, he had assumed I was dead so came to Wada Village to talk about which family should hold my funeral. When he learned I was still alive, he was very surprised and happy. My father returned to Onomichi soon after drinking only some coarse tea sitting on the open veranda.

In Wada Village, I was getting along quite well without feeling any abnormalities with my internal organs. After around three weeks of good rest, I got back to Hiroshima at the end of August or beginning of September, and returned to work.

A short while after returning to work I had a bloody bowel discharge. It must have been mid-September because I remember that chestnuts had started falling. I went to my parents' home in Onomichi and took better care of myself. Judging from my condition, everybody—including my doctor—assumed I had come down with dysentery, and even consulted with each other over whether I should be quarantined. But my bloody bowel discharge stopped after I ate some chestnut rice, which my sister had cooked for me. It sounds pretty miraculous but I believe that my sister's chestnut rice worked well for my condition. In Onomichi, I bounced back from my stomach condition after several days of good rest with healthy meals. So, again I returned to work in Hiroshima.

### ● Life after the end of the war

When I returned to work, there were many staffers who had lost their homes. I was living together with these people on the 5th floor of my company. At first, we had to fix our own meals, but the company later hired cooks for us.

Since I could drive, I was assigned as a truck driver for the Material Section of the General Affairs' Department, and transferred materials to every power plant in Hiroshima Prefecture.

In 1946, my family returned to Hiroshima and started living with me. My co-workers built a house for us in Enomachi with pillars they collected after work. We lived in Enomachi for 30 years after that.

Despite various difficulties, we always had some food since we could get some rice from my wife's parents. But we had no clothes and bedding because these had been left in my company's warehouse and all destroyed. We started all over again by depending on other people's kindness; creating underwear out of summer kimono and asking my parents in Onomichi to send us some bedding.

### ● Health

In July 1947, our second daughter was born. Again, I worried if she'd be affected by the A-bombing. There were times when I'd see her with a nosebleed or with something different from other children her kindergarten age and jumped to the conclusion that it must have had something to do with the A-bombing.

As for myself, in 1956, I discovered I had a tuberculoma, a type of tumor, with my average white cell count reduced to 2,000 (at its lowest it dropped to 1,000). My weight dropped by 8 kg from my previous weight of 65 kg. During the 15-month period from July 1956 to September 1957, I was admitted to a hospital in Hara, Hatsukaichi-machi (present-day Hatsukaichi City), and also took off work for two years. On the morning of July 7, the day I was hospitalized and also Tanabata, the day of the Star Festival, my second-year elementary school daughter said during breakfast, "Stars are going to meet today, but we have to split, don't we?" Listening to my daughter saying that, everyone cried.

Since then, I was alive and kicking without suffering from any serious diseases until ten and several years ago when I started suffering from a bloody bowel discharge again. When the symptoms appear, I stay at a Red Cross Hospital till the bleeding stops or I get a shot to stop the bleeding.

When I underwent surgery for prostate cancer four years ago, I received a certificate recognizing me as an atomic bomb victim.

### ● Current thoughts

I am currently 94 years old, and thankful for the fact that I have been able to live so long. Everything I am today, I owe to my wife. My children

have been very kind to me. I can never thank everybody enough for all they have done for me.