

A Chronology of Grief

August 11, 1945.

I heard from Tokunaga Sensei that ten students from Junshin were being taken care of at the aid station at the Nagata Primary School in Isahaya, but there were no nurses there and they were in miserable conditions. I was assigned to visit there and to nurse them. With some pears I had bought before the Bomb was dropped packed in my knapsack, I walked to Michino and from there took a train to Nagayo where I stopped off at the school to inquire after Otoko Adachi Sensei and Shizue Yamaguchi, one of our Junshin students. I stayed at the school overnight.

August 12, 1945.

I left Nagayo early that morning for Isahaya, where Tokunaga Sensei took me to the aid stations in the primary and high schools to ask after Sister Christina Tagawa and two of our students. At the aid stations I passed out some of the pears I was carrying. By the time I left for Sagata, I was carrying a much lighter knapsack.

The aid station at the Nagata Primary School was little more than an hour's walk from the Isahaya station. Every room was filled with victims. The rooms with the straw mats were the better rooms. Most of the victims were forced to lie on the bare floor. There were few doctors and nurses in the area and they had no medicines. The result was that many died who might have been saved. One room had already been set aside and filled with the bodies of the dead. I searched all the rooms finding all told some seven girls from Junshin.

I also met a girl from Keiho High who had been working alongside our girls in the factory. Her wounds, which were numerous and had been caused by flying glass, were now infested with maggots. Slowly I picked out the pieces of glass and the maggots, trying all the time not to hurt her. I never dreamt that she would survive, but I hear that she recovered.

The Junshin girls were scattered through many rooms, but at my request a large matted room was assigned to them. Then, with the help of some of the villagers I moved them in, carrying on stretchers those who could not walk. One of the students, Fujimori-san, had a large gaping wound in her neck, and had lost a lot of blood. She died that night. Before she died, I baptized her, telling her that I would later inform her father. We cremated her the following day.

August 13, 1945.

Miss Meika Kaku came to help us. She was a Formosan girl who had changed from Junshin High to Isahaya High School. She had once lived near Junshin with her uncle, a doctor. As I had mentioned before, we had no medicine and that day no doctor came. However Meika's uncle gave me some medicine to treat the student victims. He regretted that he could not come himself to help the girls, and asked us to do the best we could with the medicines he donated. And so along with Meika Kaku, we did what we could for those who were wounded or burned.

At one time Miss Kaku took me to a room where there were some clothes and kitchen utensils which her uncle had donated. I took whatever I needed – underwear, summer dresses for each student, some towels and pans. Then going to the students I stripped off their tattered uniforms, taking care not to cause them too much pain; some of the girls had their limbs in splints or supports. We washed their perspiring and blood smeared bodies and dressed them in clean clothes.

As they lay on the mats, now feeling fresh and clean, many of them cheered up. Their next urgent need was nourishing food. So far all they'd had to eat were rice balls, a gruel of some sort, and some pickled plums. With some money given me by the principal, and with the help of a friend of one of the girls, I was able to acquire the minimum necessities – some eggs and some fresh vegetables, which helped to supplement their meager diet. I also managed to get some 'miso' soup, a favorite dish of all the Japanese, but I could not get any milk which would have been really good for them.

We were joined in caring for the students by Miss Tanaka, one of our graduates who had recently finished nursing school. She was living near by and felt compelled to come and help. I was happy to have her near. I only wished I could do more for the students.

August 15, 1945.

On the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, as I was wondering where I might find some of the cakes made traditionally on that day, a villager brought a tray full of water melons. "Give these to the students," he said. Before I could ask him his name he had disappeared into the crowd. As I cut the melons and passed around pieces, one of our students joyfully said, "Look, a present from

our Blessed Mother!” Later I inquired about the man who had brought the present but no one seemed to know who he was. That same evening, the Emperor broadcast over the radio and announced that the war was over. Many were deeply moved as they went about tending the wounded. More patients died that night.

After a while the victims were moved to the hospital in Isahaya which belonged to Nagasaki University. All the villagers helped carry the patients who could not walk, either in carts or on stretchers. As they started for the hospital it was like the procession of the Israelites who moved from Egypt to the Promised Land. On arriving at the hospital, for the first time the doctors came around to visit the victims. And two of the girls, Yamamoto-san and Shukuwa-san, were given permission to leave the hospital. Yamamoto-san, who lived in the Urakami district, had no home to return to, and her father and brother were still at the front, so I asked Sister Uda to take her to the teachers’ sanatorium. I went back to Nagasaki with Shukuwa-san. Later Miss Yamamoto’s condition worsened, and she passed away not long after her father and brother had returned to Nagasaki.

Another of the girls, Miss Suzuki, had gone to her family on returning to Nagasaki. The entire family was suffering from the effects of the Bomb. To assist her own recovery, so that she might then be able to help her own family, she was re-admitted to the hospital. Here her condition began to deteriorate; she still talked, however, of going back home to help her family. Shortly afterwards she died. While I was helping at the hospital, my father came with the ashes of my sister, Teiko. She had been found very badly burned and had died while I was away searching for the Junshin students. I knew how he felt but I could not find any words of consolation.

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