

An Incident That Cannot be Forgotten

Mrs. Wakae Okubo

August 9th is a day I cannot forget. I was evacuated to Iwayamachi which was 3 km from the hypocenter.

On that morning, I saw my husband off to our house in Komabamachi. When he left, I and a man who lived across from where we were, tried to dissuade him from going but he was calm and took off on his bike with a bank book hanging down, and with a smile told us that he was going to withdraw some money from the bank. Who would have thought that would be the last time I would see him, tears fall when I think of it.

Just before 11 am, when I was sewing *Jika-tabi* [split toe socks], my 2 year old granddaughter Yumiko insisted on going down to wait for her grandfather's return saying [in baby talk] "Jichankai! Jichankai!". She must have been sleepy. So I gave her a piggyback and we walked around the back streets.

Then it flashed. I held her to my front and went into a shelter quickly. After a while, I heard a crackling sound so I went out fearfully to look around. The house behind our one and another one down the slope and some distance away were burning. When I got home, a big shelf had fallen onto the place where I had been sitting, windows were broken, and the tatami mat had been dislodged. I would have died or been seriously wounded if I had been sitting there.

I prayed for my husband to come home. However people who came back from town told us that everywhere this side of Urakami Station had been burned and there was nothing left.

Some people who had been injured gradually started to come

back. I waited and waited, but my husband didn't come back. I couldn't sleep all night in the shelter and the next evening Mr. Yamada [a dental college student who had been injured and was staying at our place] said he was going to look for him, so I joined him.

The road was unable to be walked on so we walked along the railroad line. On our way, we saw a naked person and a person with disheveled hair putting their heads into the river and there were so many dead bodies along the riverside. And people were coming from mountain side calling "Help me! Give me water!" This must be hell.

Finally we got to my home. My husband had been burned to death and I found his shrunk, charred, limbless body in the drawing room. I could see it was my husband from the outline of his face and teeth.

I burst out crying but Mr. Yamada said "There is no time for crying, mum." Eventually I could pull myself together.

The house was burned down and only a gate post, the safe and our refrigerator were left. [My house was a wholesale merchant for electrical appliances in Motokagomachi] Half of my house was rented out to a civil engineering construction chief from Hazamagumi. In the hallway I found his wife and their 4 or 5 year old daughter who were dead and looked like they had just come out of a crematory. There were many corpses around the neighborhood and it looked wretched.

I don't live a day without thinking about my husband's death. There have been times when I wished I was dead with him.

I'm praying that this never happens again.

[Location at Bombing: Iwayamachi]