

The Atomic Bomb

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On August 9th 1945 , I was carrying away soil to make a shelter at the mountain in Nishiyama working as a day laborer. On that day my daughter, Matsuyo [12] was there to help. My daughter was helping carry soil with her top off, but the man in charge of the shelter digging came and told us, "Kids would be better off inside the shelter." So Matsuyo went into a completed shelter.

After a while, the man in charge came again and said "Women should go inside too." I thought I'd go inside. And when I took my first step into the shelter, my daughter called "Mum!" and ran towards me. Right after we hugged each other, I didn't see a flash but I heard a great sound and dark black smoke came into the shelter and it was almost breathless.

I pushed my daughter's mouth against my chest and I pushed my mouth against her head. So I guess because of that we didn't have to breathe in much smoke. As the other people who I worked with were also inside the shelter, they were all safe. But afterward I heard that the man in charge was working outside at the moment it struck and he died a few months later.

Back then, we had no way of knowing that the bomb that was dropped was the atomic bomb but we knew it was a big one, we lost the will to go on working and were also worried about our home so we decided to go back to our house in nearby Nishiyama. My husband, who had lost his health, was at home then.

On that day, my husband was talking with our neighbors on the verandah but when the enemy plane flew over everyone left to go to their own homes and just as he was about to go inside he

was knocked over and blown into the garden along with our *shoji* [Japanese sliding screen]. When I got home, there wasn't one *shoji* left in the house and all the *kawara* [Roof tiles] had been blown off and my husband was down in the garden.

As it was too scary to sleep at home on the night of the 9th, we slept with our child between us in the shelter. I had a short talk with my husband and was about to doze off when I was awoken by a popping sound. There was twinkling twinkling like sunshine flying like a floating balloon right in front of my eyes. Then it flew off towards the mountain. Even now I think that was the soul of a human burning.

The upper half of my husband's body was fine but his lower half was terrible. The flesh on his waist and thighs started to rot and especially on his thighs, we could even see the rotten flesh streaming though between the muscles. Therefore, his futons and clothes got dirty and maybe because of the heat from his body, the tatami mat where he was sleeping got rotten too. My husband died at about 8 in the morning on September 16th, without complaining about or groaning with pain even though he must have been in quite terrible pain. He was 51 years old.

After that, my daughter went into the hospital with a sickness she had had since birth and I worked alone, but because of other people's recommendation I came to this home which brings me to this point of my life.

[Location at Bombing: Nishiyamamachi]