

Farewell to My Brothers, Longing to See Your Smiles

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I am one of those who suffered from the bombing when I was 10 years old in Nishimachi, which was 1.8 km away from the center of the explosion. The severe blast - skewed houses, collapsed houses, warped ditches and so on, the scenes of the time still fill my mind. I was going to Nishiurakami Primary School back then, but even though I was at school, the same thing would happen every day; the siren would blow as soon as we got there and everyone had to get under their desks.

On August 9th 1945, under the blazing sun, I was walking to where my mother was waiting on the porch of a house that was 2 or 3 homes away from ours, and less than 30 seconds later I was picked up and blown into a ditch.

Later on, mother told me that at that time, when she had been thrown into that same ditch, she quickly saw a small light through a gap in the rubble that had been blown over her, and then she grabbed something that had been clutching onto her hand and crawled out of the hole desperately. When she looked at the thing that was clinging to her, with relief, she found that it was me, her own child, who had ended up in the same place by chance.

After that, my mother took me and instinctively went towards the house without knowing what she was doing, but by then it was already ablaze with bright red flames.

Suddenly I noticed that I was covered in blood from my head to neck. But, because I was frightened at that time I didn't feel the

pain. I got a shock to see the thing that my mother, who was next to me, pulled out from my head. It was a long nail from lumber that had been sticking out of my head so it looked just like a *kanzashi* (*Japanese hair pin*). When she pulled the nail out, fresh blood began to pour out and my mother quickly wrapped a Japanese towel around my head to stop the bleeding.

Then, while we were running and hiding as we fled the flames, I got a huge shock when my mother threw me into a pond. She later said "I just did it without really knowing what I was doing because I wanted to clean off as much blood as possible before it congealed."

I crawled out from the pond and while we escaped towards the mountains, the awful roaring sound of an airplane was continuously echoing throughout the sky. We picked up leaves and branches from trees and put them on our shoulders to camouflage our backs while we ran around. Then we met my brothers fortuitously and soon it was the evening.

My brothers had raised their hands to cover their faces when the bomb flashed and exploded, so they were all swollen up red from top to bottom - it was so brutal I felt I couldn't gather enough pity for them. My oldest brother passed away that night. His was the second death in that area. I spent the night on a tree root using a piece of wood as blanket. My mother and brothers stayed up all night, clinging to my eldest brother's dead body.

My sister was working at Yamazato Primary School, but because part of the bridge between Yamazato and Ohashi had collapsed, she came over the recesses of the mountain in Nishirakami to get home. It was about 10 o'clock at night when we saw her face and as we had been worried about her fate, we re-

joined together. We could only be thankful to God at that time.

After that, we lived in a shelter on one onigiri (rice ball) and then on the third day received a message saying “Why don’t you go to Isahaya Hospital?” So we decided to go to Isahaya and as I was a child, I was really excited to get on the train. But when I got on the train, my hopes and expectations were dashed by reality.

All the seats had been removed and there people with their insides hanging out and lots of stained black faces all over the train and around the station entrance. There were many people lying down naked and all I could hear was “Give me some water, give me some water.” My mother used absorbent cotton to catch some water from her canteen and let people have one sip each, but before long she realized that she would run out of water for her own children, so she stopped. “Oh, this is what trains are like...” my fickle dream flickered out.

Then, the train arrived at Isahaya Station but we got stuck on a concrete platform for 2 hours and when we asked “Where is the hospital?” they only replied “It’s full.” Finally we were carried off by a truck and got off at a primary school. From then, we slept on a hard floor every day.

My hair was stiff with congealed blood and it hurt every time I moved. My mother could not contain herself any longer so she begged to see a doctor. “There is no time to examine her just for this.” The doctor’s answer was cold. But I was just a 5th grade primary school student, so didn’t hold anything against him.

After about a week, the time of my second brother’s death arrived. He only had a small burn next to his ear, but the radiation had gotten into his head and the day before he died, he said “I’m done. Touch my head, it’s rotten.” When I touched his head with

my forefinger, it easily went in up to the second joint. I still can't forget the moment of parting with my second brother, but I also remember that I didn't shed even one tear at that time.

Maybe because of the memory of my eldest brother becoming a soldier after graduating from military academy, but my second brother was always begging my mother, "Please get me a long sword! Please get me one!" I guess because my second brother was still spending every day with the student mobilization corps, he dreamed of being like his older brother.

Our life in Isahaya ended with my second brother's death and we left to go to Nagayo. At this time, my third brother started to be threatened by a high fever. We used a Japanese towel to keep his head cool but the towel became as dry as a chip in a flash, so I had to wash it with well-water repeatedly. When I removed the towel, his hair came off with it, and when I washed it, if I left it as is, it would get painfully prickly, so it was my job to remove those short hairs one by one, in a washbowl before putting it back on his head. But as the number of times I had to do this increased, I started to get annoyed and complained a few times.

That brother also passed away eventually, and now I wish I could apologize for not taking better care of him, but there is no one to apologize to. "I'm sorry, my brother!" I don't know how many times I have sobbed saying these words. I still can't forget the smell when we burnt my brothers on piles of branches from the mountain, and the suffocating atmosphere which made it hard for me even to join my palms in prayer.

That smell hung in the air every day, constantly, and as I would chat with my mother I'd say "Oh, there goes that smell again." It was finally my time to suffer with high fever and my throat

swelled so badly that not even one yolk could get through. People around us were saying "It's finally her and her mother's turn." When I think of it now, it can only be called a living hell. But someone like me was then given a new life and I was able to enjoy a life in which I could participate actively as a member of society. But 27 years later, I have become someone who can't even take one step.

That dark sky and the walk over dead bodies as if you are just walking over ants on the ground... I don't want to remember my experience of the atomic bomb, but this experience is unending even if I talk all through the night.

My brothers, may you rest in peace.