

Ursula Gelis. 'No to nuclear weapons', Norway

I Had the Feeling I Could Survive the Atomic Bomb

Interview with Mr. Koichi Wada (85 years old) from Nagasaki.



Japan. Nagasaki after August 9, 1945.

1945: Atomic bomb hits Nagasaki.

American forces have dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki - the second such attack on Japan in three days. The bomb was dropped by parachute from an American B29 Bomber at 11:02 local time. It exploded about 1,625 ft (500m) above the ground and is believed to have completely destroyed the city, which is situated on the western side of the Japanese island of Kyushu.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid_3580000/3580143.stm.

Mr. Koichi Wada: I lost my parents early in life. I was ten when my mother died and two years later I became an orphan. My parents were ill. I lived with my grand-parents, working during day time, going to a commercial school in the evenings. I always was interested in education and wanted to achieve something. Later I had the feeling that I could survive the atomic bomb.

In 1945, I worked as a tram conductor. On August 9th, I was driving to the transport terminal which was about 7.5 km away from the hypocenter of the explosion. When the atomic bomb hit, at 11:02 in the morning, I was at the rest-room of my working place. I felt a blast and understood that I was in great danger. The bathroom was completely

destroyed. I crawled under a wooden desk. I survived although the desk was gone. I had minor injuries on my head and hands. The whole building was blown to bits, but I managed to get out of the rubble.

I saw people with heavy burns walking towards me, coming from the district of Urakami, the epicenter of the detonation. I was worried about my colleagues who were driving the Urakami tram line.



Mr. Koichi Wada. Atomic Bomb Museum, Nagasaki. August 11, 2012

The 9th of August was a hot day and many people were outside. After the attack, their skin turned red because of the heat waves. Many had serious burns.

I heard that the Urakami district was completely destroyed and decided to go there to look for my friends. I could not get to the epicenter until the 10th. I simply could not reach it. I only made it to Nagasaki station, 2.5 kilometers from the hypocenter.

I tried to help others. We had no food but we drank from a broken water pipe. I was not hungry at all - the situation was overwhelming because the whole city was destroyed.

A turning point in my life was the birth of my first grandchild, 31 years ago. I suddenly remembered the baby I had seen at the epicenter. The little one was burned and looked like a stone. Since then the memories have come back and I am willing to talk about the horrifying consequences of the bomb. For about 50 years of my life I thought that I did not have a message to the post-war generation who had not experienced a nuclear weapon.

Two months after the explosion I developed red spots on my skin, was always tired and my teeth were falling out. It was frightening that my urine turned red as well. My grandmother recommended persimmon tea to stop the bleeding and it worked.



Japanese Persimmon tree.

http://debsgarden.squarespace.com/storage/fruit/persimmon%20tree%20Japan.jpg?__SQUARESPACE_CACHEVERSION=1291438306788

I was always afraid. I became sick again. I turned to the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC); <http://www.pnas.org/content/95/10/5426.full> and was registered as a patient and 'Hibakusha', nuclear bomb survivor. I have treatments twice a year. I am always tired and have problems with my eyes.

"80.000 people were incinerated in the blast [caused by the Atomic bomb] or died from radiation-related illnesses by the end of 1945".

The Japan Times, 10th of August 2012.