

The 9th General Conference of Mayors for Peace

Atomic Bomb Survivor Testimony

August 8 (Tue), 2017 11:00-12:00

Nakabe Hall, Nagasaki University Bunkyo Campus

Sachiko Matsuo

Atomic Bomb Survivor Testimony

MC

Now, we are going to start the session. We have invited an A-bomb survivor to share her testimony. She is Sachiko Matsuo, and Ms. Matsuo was 11 years old when she was exposed to the atomic bomb at a location of 1.3 kilometers from the hypocenter. Currently, she serves as a Councilor of Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivors Council, and is an active member of the Succession Division of Nagasaki Foundation for the Promotion of Peace. Now, Ms. Matsuo, please.

Ms. Sachiko Matsuo

I would like to extend my warmest welcome to the delegations of Mayors for Peace who have traveled a long distance from abroad. Welcome to Nagasaki, the second A-bombed city. Today, originally, Mr. Sumiteru Taniguchi, the President of Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivors Council, was going to address you, but he became ill and is hospitalized, so on his behalf, I would like to share with you my experience. My name is Sachiko Matsuo.

Seventy-two years ago, on August 9, I was 11 years old in the fifth year of elementary school. My house was located 700 meters from the hypocenter. It was in Ohashi-machi of Nagasaki City. In my family, there was my grandmother, my parents, nine sisters and brothers including myself, two of my aunts, and another five relatives. This was a family of 20 people living together. Air raid was becoming intense. I was so scared that I was only able to go to school until June of that year.

My father was offering delivery services using a horse cart. My father saw a flyer which said that on August 8 Nagasaki will be ruined to ashes, so he built a cabin in our field on the hillside of Mt. Iwaya. Two days earlier, we started a new routine, leaving home at 8:00 and coming back at 5:00 in the evening. However, on August 8, there was no air raid. On the morning of August 9, my mother told father "We no longer want to go to the cabin on the hill because it's already August 9." Then father said, "There is a time difference of one day, so today, you still need to go to the cabin during the daytime." So, grandmother, mother, my younger sisters and brothers, and me, a total of 10 of us decided to go to the cabin on the hill. My older sister made lunchboxes for us with rice

balls and cooked potato.

This is what I was wearing when I went to the cabin with my family members. The baggy pants were called *monpe*, and this is the anti-air raid hood, and this is a bag for first aid and the adults used it to keep valuables. I also brought this bag, and I was wearing a long sleeved blouse. So, wearing these and carrying a bag, we went up the hill to go to the cabin.

When we arrived at the cabin, I was so hot that I took off the hood, and all the clothes except for my underwear. Then I looked into the bag I carried to the cabin. I was standing. We were at 1.3 kilometers from the hypocenter. We were taking a rest and relaxing, then there was "*pika*," a penetrating whitish and yellowish flash, which started fire on the tin-plate roof of the cabin. I was wondering what that light was. We were just astounded. Then "*dooon*," a shuttering roar came, and I was in a total confusion.

Suddenly, I found myself in blackness, the cabin was gone, I was barefooted, standing on earth. "Where is everybody? Are you hurt? Are you OK?" I could hear my mom shouting, searching for us. When the blackness left, I saw my mom standing right in front of me. She had an injury on her forehead, which started swelling and covered one of her eyes. My second youngest brother had a cut on the back of his neck. The wound was so big and open. The boy and the girl who were with our family, had severe burns.

Our cabin had been blown down to the valley by the blast. The sweet potato fields next to the cabin had no leaves, no stalks, nor green. In a moment, the atomic bomb turned the green field into an earthen ground. US military aircrafts were flying low. I was able to see the cockpit which was very frightening.

After a while, we became worried about our house, so I walked to a place from where I would be able to see the house, but there was something like a big cloud covering the whole city, and the cloud was growing and climbing up toward us. I could see nothing below. My grandmother started to cry, "Everybody is dead. This is the end of the world." My mother carried the youngest brother on her back, and together with another brother who was injured, the three of them decided to go down the hill, but me and my

immediate younger brother could not go with them because we were too scared. However, soon afterward they came back. Down below, they met a mother and her children who were seriously burned. Because their burns were so serious, my mom could not recognize them until they stated their names. They asked for water, so my mom gave them water. After that, she gave up going down to the city and returned to the cabin.

It was around 3:00 in the afternoon, when I heard footsteps. Someone was walking up the hill. Approaching him, I found it was our father. His head, hands and legs were wrapped in triangular bandages. He was covered with dirt and was injured. He was walking with a cane. I was so glad to see him that I cried with joy. I was really happy then. As a member of a civil defense unit, he was at the unit station in Ohashi when the A-bomb was detonated. He was rescued from under the debris. When he was pulled out of the debris, he found everything burned down. He was really stunned. Everything- houses and factories- were flattened, and they were all burned down.

He was rescued out of debris, but was feeling sick. This is my father. He was stationed in a civil defense unit in front of the arms factory, and was exposed to the atomic bomb at this place. This is the gas tank. In order for the factory to use the gas, there was one single gas tank. When he saw the tank, he thought that he was feeling sick because he inhaled the gas which leaked out from the gas tank. He didn't know that he was exposed to the radiation. But up on the hill, he was very happy to see us all alive.

In the evening, two cousins came to see us. They told us that our sister who made lunchboxes for us that morning was burnt to death in our house. This is my sister-in-law. She went to a relative's house and she died there, burned to death with the member of that relative's family.

That afternoon, the first relief train arrived, and one of our aunts who had serious burns was transferred to a hospital by this train. The cousins also told us that my second-eldest sister who was a student, was injured in Ohashi Factory and fled to an air-raid shelter. This is the aunt who got burned and was transferred to the hospital on the train. The people were in such horrible conditions.

We spent that night on the hill. Aircrafts flew over and dropped flare bombs which lighten up the darkness like daylight. Boom, boom. I was trembling with fear as I saw the city being swallowed in bright fires. It looked like daytime, not night.

On the morning of the following day, August 10, I walked down the hill with my younger brothers. Trees had fallen and blocked our way. We saw corpses here and there. There was no house left standing, and there was a disgusting smell. Fires were still burning in some places, and in those places, there were white ashes with enormous heat. I saw many fragments of bones. It really scared me in the beginning. We walked on the hot ashes and reached to an air-raid shelter. It was full of people who had taken refuge in there. Some had injuries and some had burns. Others looked intact. We heard unbearable groans and cries.

People who had been within the radius of 1 kilometer from ground zero all died in agony. One person had a rotten mouth and a high fever, but he couldn't drink water. He was so hungry, but couldn't eat. Earlier, he was glad to be rescued, but now he was crying, saying why he had to suffer in such an agony. I cannot forget this awful sight. He was weeping and crying.

We brought rice balls as lunch from the cabin on the hill, but they were covered with dirt and we couldn't eat them. We were so hungry that our feet were unstable as we went down the hill. Our house was burned down. There was no food left. Among the white ashes, I found white bones of my elder sister.

We found our neighbor, an elder girl, dead near the place. A pregnant woman was also dead in the nearby ditch. Her body was rotten. A few days later, her body was incinerated, and I found a big skull and a tiny bone at the same place.

My eldest brother was with my father in the civil defense unit. I was told that somebody saw him on the rooftop of Yamazato Elementary School to sound the alarm of the arrival of enemy planes. Somebody went to look for him. He was blown by the blast, and was found dead on the rooftop. But at that time, we were not able to bring his

corpse down to the ground. The next time when we went there, his corpse was gone.

My aunt who was brought to the hospital by a relief train died on August 11, in the City of Isahaya. We received her bones and buried them in the graveyard.

Another elder brother and another aunt never came back. Even today, we still don't know their whereabouts. Their names were inscribed on the grave, which says, "Died on August 9, 1945."

We stayed inside the air-raid shelter. My father said to me, "There are remaining gas inside the gas tank. It's better to leave this place." On August 15, I was told the war has ended, and we went to Togitsu village where our relatives were evacuated.

In Nagasaki, hospitals were also totally destroyed by the A-bomb. There were many people suffering from severe injuries and burns, but they were not able to get treatment. They were lying on the floor, moaning in pain and suffering. Surrounding them were the people waiting only to die. Corpses were cremated near the shelter, and smelled terrible. A week later, my injured father came to Togitsu. In Togitsu, there was a hospital and the doctor gave him a shot every day. However, he lost his hair and suffered from fever and diarrhea. He died on August 28. I was saddened by his death, but thinking about those who died without getting any treatment, my father was fortunate enough because he died after receiving treatment to some extent.

I lost seven of my family members. These are the seven family members that I lost. The whereabouts of these two are unknown. This is my brother who died on the elementary rooftop. When the atomic bomb was dropped, we were around here. This was taken after the A-bombing. It's turned to ashes, but this place used to be surrounded by the greenery. We were around here, 1.3 kilometers away from the hypocenter.

A total number of 1,581 students were in my school, among them 1,300 students died. Almost all of the friends I used to play with died. I don't want other people to go through the same experience. When I was small, I clearly remember the adults were rejoicing to the news from the radio of the outbreak of the Great East Asian War.

Children waved small flags as the soldiers went off to the battlefield. I just wonder how those young soldiers felt at that time. Once a war is started, there is no way you can escape. We should never wage a war.

Nuclear weapons are evil weapons. There are so many people who are still suffering from the aftereffects of radiation. I myself have thyroid disease, and just recently, I received surgical operation of cancer. Seventy-two years have passed, but nuclear weapons still exists. I cannot allow them to exist. With the strong call of hibakusha, we launched the Hibakusha Appeal, and in Nagasaki Prefecture, an association to promote signature collection for the appeal was established. Governor Nakamura and Mayor Taue also came to the street to ask for signatures for the nuclear weapon abolition. Last month, at the United Nations, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by a majority. I am so happy with this. Let's get rid of the nuclear weapons from the world. Make Nagasaki the last A-bombed site. Thank you very much for your attention.

MC

Thank you very much, Ms. Matsuo. Now we would like to invite comments or questions from the participants. If you have any questions or comments, please raise your hand. Any questions or comments? Now, we would like to express our deep thanks to Ms. Matsuo. Please give her a big applause. Thank you very much. This was the testimony of the atomic bombing given by Ms. Sachiko Matsuo.