



## Message by an Atomic Bomb Survivor

Sanae Ikeda

I had gone out shopping with my mother, and the two of us were approximately two kilometers from ground zero (Present Koebaru). I was twelve years old. I heard the explosion from the B29 and looked up to try to spot the plane, but all I saw was a thin layer of clouds.

Then suddenly, my eyes were pierced with a bright blue light, and I lost consciousness. When I came to my senses, I was crouched at the foot of a large tree, trembling. My mother had been knocked flat by the shockwave. The only thing in my head at the time was that a giant bomb had just been dropped on us, and blindly I ran to the farm where we had originally been headed. The sky was filled with black clouds, and I couldn't see the sun. We hurried to finish our shopping and headed home; on the way back, a man who had been burned black from head to toe approached us. The man's teeth and eyes were shocking white, and stood out as he staggered towards us. He was motioning to my mother, and the bottle of water she was carrying with her. My mother gave him the bottle, and after a long drink he began to speak. "Nagasaki is gone," he said.

I asked him, "Were many bombs dropped at the same?" to which he answered "A single bomb with an immense power was dropped over us. Many people were killed charred black and many were screaming in agony as if they were just about to die."

My mother became afraid about my five brothers and sisters who were in the house and too anxious that she could not walk anymore. I went on ahead alone, and found our house, which was only 800 meters from ground zero, completely destroyed.

My father had gotten home from work (Nagasaki Prefectural Government) one step ahead and had managed to rescue them. He had laid them in the middle of a field near my house, on top of two tatami mats.

I noticed that my little sister was missing. When I asked my older sister about her, she said that just before the bomb dropped she had gone outside, so that she couldn't have survived.

About a meter away from my house was a ditch, full of people who had died in the blast. I found my sister there.

Her face, her head, her entire body had been burned black.

I had asked what my little sister had been wearing, and my older sister told me that she had had on a pair of panties with a tiny flower pattern. That ended up being how I knew it was her; by the one or two rows of tiny flowers printed on the inner elastic bands. The atomic bomb burns human, so black that no one can recognize your face again.

After a week of living outside, my youngest brother died. Shocked at her children's death, my mother laid up in bed. My father was busy taking care of my other brothers and sisters. So, he asked me to cremate my little brother. I did it, all by myself. I collected pieces of wood, piled them around, and put my brother (who was wrapped in a bamboo mat) on top and lit the wood. He disappeared into the flames with the sound of his joints popping. I put my hands together and said my final goodbyes. The sunset had turned the western sky red, and seemed to mix with the red of the fire, and turn my falling tears red as well.

My little brother was born on the night of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and died the day after the war ended. During his four years of life, my poor little brother had never lived a single day of peace. And I knew the bitterness of war as having to cremate your little brother by yourself. When I returned home, I think my father noticed my deep sorrow; I did not have to see the cremation of my other brothers and sisters.

On the next day, the 17th, my eight year old brother died. On the 18th, my ten year old little sister followed. Death was coming daily. On the 19th, my last sibling, my fourteen year old sister, died as well.

I remember an afternoon when I was alone. I was near the ditch when I saw something moving on the water. It was a dragonfly. It had been quite a while to see an animal after the new type of bomb destroyed all forms of life: human, animals, insects, and plants. When I saw it, I was certain that my parents, my family, and I...we could live, too.

I am working on peace education programs and sharing my experience of the atomic bombing. Let us spread the voices calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons so that Nagasaki will be the last atomic bombed site.