

A-Bomb

Guilt, horrors recalled as Hiroshima survivors appeal to US for peace

By Sandy Johnstone
Of the Emerald

Kaz Suyeishi was an 18-year-old American citizen going to school in Japan when the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima.

"I was right in the city, one-and-a-half miles from the target area," she remembers. "There was a clear blue sky. It was right after breakfast, about 8:15 a.m. I saw the B29 (bomber). People ask me why I didn't try to escape, but we saw them every single day. They never dropped any type of bomb before. We thought we were safe. It looked like an angel to me.

"Then I saw a white spot coming down slowly. I only saw one, although other survivors say they saw two or three. I told my neighbor to look at the white spot because it was unusual.

"Then there was a powerful flash. I was unconscious for a while. A short time I think. The house was on top of me. I crawled out. It was silent. Nothing. A dead town. Just a moment ago it was a clear day. Now it was grey and I could only see five to six feet ahead of me.

"I heard people say 'Help me!' 'Help me!' It was bloody." She shudders. "We did not know it was radiation.

"It was a human barbeque. I went into the bomb shelter and stayed for a while. The next day I went to the target area — the most dangerous area — to look for the missing."

Suyeishi is traveling in the United States speaking about the emotional and physical problems of the hibakusha, as the Japanese call atom bomb survivors. She and Miyoko Matsubata, a representative from Hiroshima, will travel to 25 cities across the United States and eventually to the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in June.

Suyeishi remembers one woman who was near the target area when the bomb dropped, but had enough strength to get home to speak to her daughter. "She looked like a hot dog on a barbeque, like a balloon,"

Suyeishi shudders. "She gave her message and then died. Her daughter, who was about 12, said 'Please stay with me. I'm afraid.' But her mother had private things to talk about to only the daughter. So I stayed behind the curtain." Suyeishi pauses with tears in her eyes. "It was pitiful."

Suyeishi herself nearly died from radiation sickness. She went to study in Hawaii when she recovered, joining the large Japanese community there. She spoke no English.

Shortly after her arrival in Hawaii, Suyeishi started losing weight and nearly had a nervous breakdown. She wore sweaters to hide the skin on her arms, which changed color to purple and brown. Doctors told her she was just homesick.

"Then, one day (in Hawaii) a Caucasian man in his '50s stopped and pointed at me. 'You killed many soldiers at Pearl Harbor,' (he said). It was impossible for me to speak English. I was feeling I am a Japanese-American and an A-bomb survivor," she says. She resorted to pantomime, trying to gesture a message of peace.

"I never thought until then that I was a survivor," she says. "Then I thought 'I'll be all right—I'm a survivor.' I'm not a criminal. I didn't drop the bomb to attack Pearl Harbor."

Matsubata could not speak about her experiences. But she "is not angry at this country," says Suyeishi. "If she feels angry she would not be here. She comes for peace." Matsubata also came on a peace mission in 1962.

After the physical scars heal, there are other wounds reminding victims of the atomic bomb. "The mental, the emotional — that is the serious sickness," says Suyeishi. "We don't know when we will be a victim. I still carry the bomb. When I get sick, or my nephew or my daughter, there is no guarantee. We are always fighting — there is no safety anymore."

"Our psychological and emotional feelings needed treatment all that time," she continues.



Kaz Suyeishi

"That is the most serious sick. We will have it until we die.

"My daughter never shows she is suffering," she says. "But when she is sick she asks me 'Is it because you are hibakushu?' I think 'God, what did I do? I did not mean to hurt my daughter.' I cheer up, but inside I cry."

She points out that the hibakusha and their children have a higher cancer rate than non-hibakushu and that the mental

stress from worrying about radiation's effects also creates stress.

Suyeishi said the few insurance companies that will issue policies to the hibakusha charge them two to three times the normal rate.

There are now specialized hospitals in Japan to deal with bomb survivors, but there is no comparable facility for the approximately 500 hibakushu liv-

ing in the United States although bills have been introduced in Congress to provide some type of medical care and funding for them.

Suyeishi is vice president of the Committee of Atom Bomb Survivors in the United States which is pushing for the legislation.

By Sandy Johnstone
Photo by Mark Pynes

Weaver, panelists back nuke freeze

"I hate to interrupt your summery day," said Congressman Jim Weaver, "but we're dealing with an issue that may not allow us to have future summers."

Weaver was one of three speakers at a panel discussion on nuclear disarmament held Thursday as part of Ground Zero Week. Also speaking in were University political science Prof. Tom Hovet, and Steve Johnson a member of Students for a Nuclear Free Future.

All speakers expressed a desire for a complete halt to nuclear arms proliferation, citing many statistics to support their plea.

"With the 30,000 nuclear missiles the U.S. has, we could blow up Hiroshima every second for the next two weeks," said Hovet. Three Trident submarines have enough missile power to destroy all of Russia, he said, "and we're building 14 more of those."

Pres. Reagan's bid to increase

the United States arms supply before negotiating with the Soviet Union is a step in the wrong direction, according to Johnson. "If we struggle with reaching parity, we'll never have reductions."

The panelists conceded to the risks inherent in a total nuclear freeze, but claimed that the Soviet Union would comply and not "cheat" because it would be heavily monitored.

And as to the one out of six Americans employed in nuclear

arms production who would lose their jobs, Hovet said they could be given new, "socially useful" ones.

According to Johnson, Americans have become newly aware of the subject since the announcement of Reagan's \$1.6 trillion defense budget for the next five years. Previous to this, he said, "everyone went through psychic numbing, we were so far removed from it all."

Johnson continued that Americans have now gained the

administration's attention, and "we must prove it's not a fad," asserted Weaver.

To avoid this, Hovet suggested the audience write letters or call their representatives, and participate in rallies.

"But the most effective way is by single issue voting; asking each candidate to support peace and the freeze, and if they don't during their term, don't vote for them next time."

By Debbie Janes