

burning. If I had to go through that now, I probably would faint.

L.K.: Did you have relatives who were in Hiroshima?

E.K.: My dad came from a family of 10 brothers and sisters. But seven of the family were in Hawaii.

One of my youngest cousins was in the seventh grade, and she was going to school in the middle of the city. She died. But the mother and the sister tried to track the route that she took on her way to school. They found her. My auntie was very bitter about the atomic bomb and America because she lost her dear child. But in 1985, my wife and I went to visit her, and she kind of softened. She was 87 at the time. Her hatred of America was softened.

L.K.: I'm guessing it's hard to talk about these things sometimes?

E.K.: Yes, because I lost 17 classmates that same day. They were going to the ammunitions factory, and they got caught commuting. I know someone in the class before me who is a survivor because he was sick that day and didn't go to his student mobilization. He explained to me, out of 250 in his class, 215 died that day. That class was in the middle of the city, clearing fire lanes and burying debris in pits. There were 25 of them in the pit when the bomb dropped. I guess the pit was deep enough that the bomb blast and heat went over their heads. So they survived. Ten were at home sick. But 215 of his classmates died instantly.

Every time I go back to Hiroshima, I go to the Peace Memorial Park and offer incense. It's right in the middle of the park. It really grips my heart.

L.K.: What are your thoughts about the bomb being dropped?

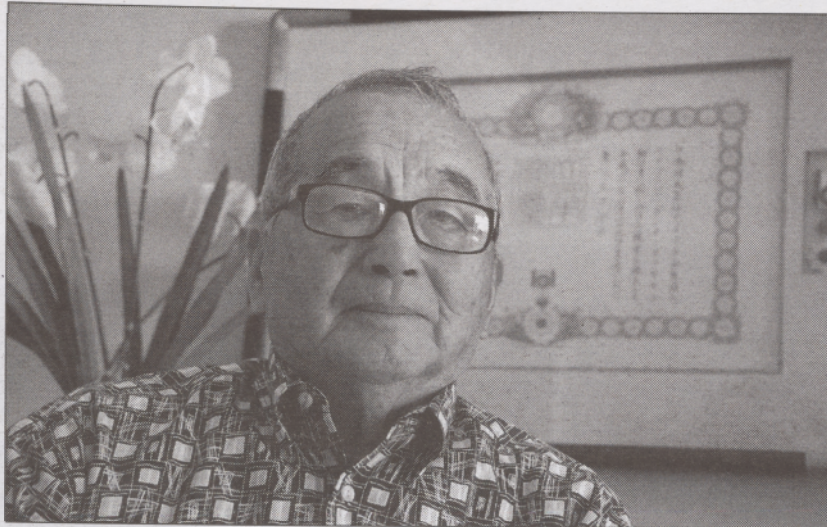
E.K.: The thing that not too many people talk about is this...

(He reads from a paper). Harry Truman and his atomic bomb decision: Was it necessary or was it unnecessary? There's been a theory that Japan was defeated long before the bombing of Hiroshima and apparently the Japanese leaders knew it too. However, the war in the Pacific theater continued to be very heavy. According to the U.S. military intelligence report, during the whole war, not a single Japanese unit had surrendered. Our guess was the war would not end for at least another year. And from a casualties point of view, the invasion of the American forces placed on the mainland of Japan, opinion was that there may have been a million casualties of U.S. forces and maybe millions more on the Japanese side.

And so it was an imperfect world, and an imperfect decision had to be made to end the war.

L.K.: I'm wondering about how you feel?

E.K.: The Japanese military leadership at that time was using ideology, propaganda and brainwash. So the Japanese people probably would have followed the leadership of the military government and fought to the end, just like the soldiers did. And so



Ed Kawasaki, an atomic bomb survivor, has a framed award from the emperor of Japan for contributing to the good relationships between Japan and America.

Educating for Peace: Never Again

Starting Aug. 6, Concordia University will host "Educating for Peace: Never Again," a traveling exhibit commemorating the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

Bombing survivor Ed Kawasaki will speak at a lunch reception Thursday following an 11 a.m. prayer vigil on the campus green.

The exhibit, a collaboration between the Hiroshima Ground Zero Museum and the Wholistic Peace Institute, will be on display through Sept. 19 at Concordia's George R. White Library and Learning Center Gallery.

Oregon and Washington middle schools and high schools and colleges interested in hosting the exhibit before the end of April may contact Chris Spanovich at chris@wholisticpeaceinstitute.com or 503-621-8554.

this article is partially true.

L.K.: Do you feel you would have fought to the end?

E.K.: I don't know. You have to realize I was only 16 years old. How would you have thought when you were just 16 years old? You were playing basketball or baseball and not thinking about war. And it's 70 years ago, so if you asked me how did I think, I can't remember.

L.K.: You were there until 1951. What were the conditions right after the bomb?

E.K.: The funny thing is that nobody knew what the atomic bomb was. They thought the gas tanks in the neighborhood exploded. Later on, they learned it was the atomic bomb. The rumors were, if you passed through Hiroshima city, then in a few weeks, you can die and the plants are not going to grow for the next 60 years. So it was very comforting to us when we saw grass and flowers start to grow the following

spring. And I understand that the radiation dropped drastically several hours after the bomb dropped. Those things, I guess, were researched later.

Fortunately, America was the occupation force. Gen. MacArthur was the head of the occupation force. They really did a good job in the occupation. If the American forces were not the ones that occupied Japan, it could have been Russia or China. So the post-occupation of Japan could have been quite a different life for the people.

The rumor was that the American soldiers were wild and savages. But that was squelched as soon as the occupation took place. The soldiers did not carry weapons when they went into the cities, to the bars and the restaurants. That's the first time in history that the occupation forces did not carry arms, other than the military police. And the Japanese people really respected the emperor's stature. So when the emperor said, "The war ended; drop your arms," that took place and nobody was in the mode of killing the soldiers that came in to occupy Japan. It was a very peaceful occupation.

L.K.: So many people perished with the bomb, and you survived. Do you feel like there's a reason you survived?

E.K.: It's fate. If the telephone call had gone through to Shima Hospital (considered ground zero), then I'm not here. So what can I say, other than fate. Some people were in the middle of the city by chance, and not by choice.

L.K.: Could you explain the word "hibakusha"?

E.K.: "Hi" is victim. "Baku" is bomb. And "sha" is a person. So victim of the bomb. Everybody was a victim of the bomb at the time.

I am a hibakusha. When I went back to Japan, my classmate took me to the city hall to get the certification that I am a hibakusha. With that certification, I can have my medical treatment free of charge throughout my life — if I get treated in Japan. He said, "It may not be anything for you in America, but it's a nice thing to have." So my classmates were the witnesses that I was hibakusha.

L.K.: How do you feel now?

E.K.: Well, I have to tell you that I've lived on this Earth for 86 years. I was born in Hawaii and lived there until I was 11 years old, and in those days, Hawaii was a paradise. And I came to Oregon in 1967 because I had an opportunity with a job. I consider Oregon as my paradise now. I have three sons, and they all grew in this neighborhood. The environment for them growing up was perfect. And so I consider this a paradise. My life is paradise to paradise, and in between.

L.K.: In between...

E.K.: There was unfortunate suffering that we (experienced) during World War II. Other than that, I went through life. Having been born in Hawaii, I went to Japan and experienced the A-Bomb and World War II. I came back to Hawaii to finish my degree at the University at Hawaii through the ROTC. I was a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army, served two years of active duty and six years in the reserves and worked until 1967 before I came to Oregon.

Some of the best times of my life were with the Junior Chamber of Commerce. The motto of JC is: "Service to humanity is the best work of life." When you're serving, you make a lot of good friends and you feel good about what you have accomplished. I was on the founding board of the homeowners association. I was asked to serve on the school board.

Because I was bilingual, I was doing a lot of service to get the local companies and universities introduced to Japanese companies, like NEC or Fujitsu. OPB (Oregon Public Broadcasting) wanted to have Japanese language in their TV programs, so I got some donations from the companies. When the training ships came from Japan, I was a kind of a chairman for those things. One of the greatest awards I received is in that frame over there. It's an award from the emperor of Japan for contributing to the good relationships between Japan and America. (Kawasaki also received a Citizen of the World Award from the Japan-America Society of Oregon, among others.)

L.K.: What we have been talking about is a very small part of your life, and you have had a very full and successful life. There are less than 1,000 hibakusha left in the U.S. I know you are concerned about the young people. Is there something you want to say to them about your atomic bomb experience?

E.K.: (I'm quoting) an American tourist visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. She said, "It was really the only time in my life that I've ever been ashamed to be an American. But the people were very forgiving and gave me hope about the world."

My counter-reaction to her quote is: Do not be ashamed to be an American for it. We all have to realize that war is hell. Yes, we could question ourselves whether it was OK or not OK to have used the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But if you are asked about the atomic bomb by a foreigner, as an American, I would say, "I am sorry that it happened. Let us forgive each other for the war. Let us all pray for eternal world peace."

And then we should just move on.