



**ORIGINAL GODZILLA.** In this April 28, 2014 file photo, original Godzilla actor Haruo Nakajima, speaks during an interview at his home in Sagami-hara, near Tokyo. Nakajima, the actor who stomped in a rubber suit to portray the original 1954 Godzilla, died August 7, 2017 at age 88. (AP Photo/Junji Kurokawa, File)

## Haruo Nakajima, who played the original 1954 Godzilla, dies at 88

By **Yuri Kageyama**  
AP Business Writer

**T**OKYO — He stomped over miniature bridges and buildings in a rubber suit and gave the world Godzilla, the fire-breathing, screeching monster that became Japan’s star cultural export and an enduring symbol of the pathos and destruction of the nuclear age.

Haruo Nakajima, who portrayed Godzilla in the original 1954 classic, died of pneumonia, his daughter Sonoe Nakajima told The Associated Press. He was 88 years old.

The film, which went on to become a mega-series and inspired Hollywood spin-offs, struck a chord with postwar Japan, the only nation in the world to suffer atomic bombing, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the closing days of World War II.

Vivacious and energetic, Nakajima said he invented the character from scratch, and developed it by going to a zoo to study how elephants and bears moved. He said it was important to show the pathos of the creature, which could only smash everything in its way.

The theme of his Godzilla was grand and complex, he said, addressing universal human problems, as it spoke to a Japan that still remembered wartime suffering.

“If Godzilla can’t walk properly, it’s nothing but a freak show,” Nakajima said in a 2014 interview with The AP at his

suburban Tokyo apartment, proudly sitting among sepia-toned photos of him as a young man and Godzilla figures.

“It’s not some cowboy movie,” he said.

He recalled that the rubber suit he wore was so hot, especially under the glaring lights of the movie set, that the sweat he wrung from his shirt would fill half a bucket.

In the original movie, directed by Ishiro Honda with an unforgettable score by Akira Ifukube, Godzilla surfaces from the Pacific Ocean suddenly, a mutation as a result of nuclear testing in the area.

Nakajima was a stunt actor in samurai films when he was approached to take the role of Godzilla. Some fans prefer Nakajima’s version over some Hollywood depictions, which they say resemble an evil-looking animal.

Although recent Godzilla films use computer graphics, the latest Japanese Godzilla remake, released last year, went back to using a human actor, Mansai Nomura, a specialist in the traditional theater of *kyogen*. His movements were duplicated on the screen through “motion-capture” technology.

Until recently, Nakajima had continued to be a star guest at festivals and events. He had been scheduled to be featured at the Tokyo International Film Festival in October.

“I am the original, the real thing,” he said in 2014. “My Godzilla was the best.”

## 72nd A-bomb anniversary in Nagasaki held amid U.S.-North Korea tension

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan marked the 72nd anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki amid growing tension between the U.S. and North Korea.

Nagasaki mayor Tomihisa Taue said the fear of another nuclear bomb attack is not in the distant future and urged nuclear states to abandon the weapons. He criticized Japan’s government, being under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, for not contributing to the U.N. nuclear arms ban treaty.

Pyeongyang and Washington recently traded escalating threats. U.S. President Donald Trump threatened North Korea “with fire and fury” and North Korea’s military said



**A-BOMB ANNIVERSARY.** People pray at a church in Nagasaki to mark the 72nd anniversary of the world’s second atomic bomb attack over the southwestern city, on August 9, 2017. Japan marked the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki amid growing tension between the U.S. and North Korea. (Takuto Kaneko/Kyodo News via AP)

it was examining its plans for attacking Guam. August 6, 1945 that killed 140,000 people in Hiroshima. The bombing of Nagasaki three days later killed 70,000 more.

The U.S. launched the world’s first nuclear attack with a bomb dropped on

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