

Tamiki Hara's Notes of the Atomic Bombing

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In the safe for my family business, (there are) some cigarettes, and a will.

Suddenly, about **8:30 a.m. on August 6th**, we were attacked by air. The whole city was destroyed in a twinkling. I was in the bathroom, and heard a bursting sound above. I hit my head against the wall. In the next moment everything became dark, and I heard the sound of a building collapsing. In the faint light, I found that my house had collapsed, and many of the goods in my family's store were scattered everywhere. A bad smell filled my nose, and I was bleeding around my eyes. I found Kyoko(1) and then realizing that I was naked, I looked for my clothes. I found my shirt, but couldn't find my trousers. Mr. Tatsuno's (2) face was all bloody and Mr. Ezaki(3) complained that he was wounded. I picked up a bag somebody had dropped on the porch while he was running away. Stepping over a fallen maple tree, and the collapsed house, I headed for Sentei Garden (4), and made it to one end of the Sakae Bridge.

On my way as I was escaping, I found some houses which were already on fire. Going through fallen bamboo trees in the garden, I reached the bank of the upper river. I met more than ten students there and among them, I found my elder brother (5). The fire on the other side of the river was spreading rapidly.

Then we had a thundershower. Some people became sick as they looked at the river. It was high tide and I found a box of onions floating in the water. A tornado hit, and trees in Sentei Garden flew up in the sky. I heard a rumor that a carrier-based plane was coming to attack us.

Some time later, it became quiet on the other side of the river. I tried to go over there, but I saw there were many people who were seriously wounded because of the blast. Others were dead in the river. It was a horrible sight.

(I wrote this note while spending the night at the precincts of Toshogu Shrine on **August 7th**. I continued the following note on the second floor of a house in Yahata Village.)

I arrived at the other side of the riverbank by raft. A wounded soldier asked me to let him lean on my shoulder. While walking together with me, he cursed the bombing, saying that he would rather die. I gave him some hot water. A maid in my house at Yanagi Township (6) got a flesh burn, and escaped to a house in Yahata Village holding Sakura (7). She says that she missed Hana (8) at the end of a bridge. Some trees at Nikitsu Shrine (9) were burning. The shore at high tide was covered and the water reached the bank. It became dark at night. The wounded female students were lying down on the ground. They cried out saying, "Mother, I can't wait until morning!" A wounded man at the riverbank called his family members' names one after another, "Mother! Sister! Micchan!" all the night, saying, "Give me water! Give me water!" A wounded woman cried saying, "Mr. Soldier, help me. Help me." It was cold at night. Kyoko and my brother slept covered with a black curtain. I fell asleep without notice. I heard the sound of an alarm.

On the next day, **August 7th**, my brother and Kyoko entered the ruined area. The wounded staff members of my family's factory in Yanagi Township went to a first-aid station at Toshogu Shrine (10). I arrived at Tokiwa Bridge with the wounded soldier on my shoulder. Volunteers made a fire on the ground and gave me some boiled rice. The soldier waited there for an ambulance. I found a faucet in Nikitsu Park and put some water into an empty beer bottle. When I arrived at Toshogu Shrine, I knew that Hana was safe and that she had been taken care of for the night. Her face was wounded. A doctor dispatched from Mihara City treated her.

A vast number of wounded people were lying down on the roadside. Their heads and faces were swollen, and the hair under their hats was gone. A young man wearing a civil defense uniform was lying down on a stone, saying in a low voice, "Doctors, or nurses, please help me." A young girl was shouting, "Mr. Soldier,

help me!" There was a long line of people waiting while a police officer wrote down names and addresses and gave each victim a name plate. It was very hot. Hana, my brother, and Yoshiko Harada finally were treated, and went back to the shrine yard.

Since there was not any shade by the tree, we leaned some lumber against a cliff to make a roof, and stayed under its shade. Ezaki joined us after he was given first aid. An alarm went off and we heard the roar of a plane. A rice ball was given to each person. Next to us was a man whose hands and legs were wounded. He was swaying with half of his shorts sticking to his body. Ando(11) and Sanshiro(12) came back with rice balls. They put some water which was spilling from under the stone steps into an empty beer bottle, and took various things out of their bags. There were many wounded people around us, some of whom were dying. One of the girls from Girls' Commercial High School(13) was moaning out that she would like to have some water. A woman was lying down with her face burnt black. A cadet's body was bleeding. There were feces and urine everywhere drawing a lot of flies. It was really filthy. The carved transom window of Toshogu Shrine fell down, and the debris was lying about at the foot of the stone steps. Stone lanterns were collapsed. A man next to us asked for water and food.

It was a dreary night. A girl from the commercial school was craving water. It was cold at night, and the ground was too solid for us to lie on. I had a stiff back the next morning.

I went to Hiroshima Station, and found that the whole town looked grey as far as the eye could see. A few buildings such as the Fukuya Department Store remained standing. A horse was wandering around the military drill ground. At the station, sailor boys were working.

I got the information that there were train services at Yokogawa Station. It was very hot in the shack because of the strong sunshine. The woman with her face burnt black died and a policeman identified her as a person who came from Kure City. A student also died in the sunshine. I heard prayers to Buddha. It is a shame, however, that we heard some soldiers blowing bugles on the military drill ground. Ando brought a rice ball and was eating it in a casual way, but the horrible sight disgusted him. The acidic plum pickle in the rice ball seemed to increase his sickness, so he drank some water. I took a rest alone in the shade at the foot of the stone steps of the shrine.

Miraculously, I was unwounded, and I thought I should accept my fate to survive and tell people of the misery I had seen. I thought that this would be a difficult responsibility. While I was at the military drill ground waiting for someone to issue my proof as a victim, I heard an alarm and the roar of a plane. I lay down on the ground.

I took out some oatmeal, and cooked it using someone else's pan. My family members praised me and thought it was really tasty. In the afternoon, my brother(14) came from Hatsukaichi and brought fried sweets and peaches. We all breathed a sigh of relief and decided to hire a horse and cart in order to move to Yahata Village. It finally came and we got on it. The horse and cart passed by Nikitsu Shrine, going across the bridge, and went to the streetcar line at Hakushima. On the road which led to Sentei Garden we found something lying in the road. We got off the cart and ran to it to find that it was Fumihiko's (15) dead body. We identified him by the yellow pants and the belt he was wearing. We found a lump as big as a peach on his breast with some liquid spouting out of it. His body was swollen with his fingers squeezed together and his face burned.

Beside him there were two other dead bodies of a woman and a Shudo Junior High School(16) student. The woman's body became hard as she writhed with agony. I felt sorry for her, but it was unusual and frightening. We took Fumihiko's nails, and left the place.

Everything inside the Fukuya Department Store had burned. We saw burnt streetcars and some fires that were still burning brightly. A big camphor tree at Kokutaiji Temple had fallen down, and gravestones were scattered everywhere. There were many people around the city hall. A notice was put up at the entrance of the Asano Library to leave dead corpses there. Another dead body lay at the Sumiyoshi Bridge, where we

met Shigeru(17) who got on the cart. Also, I saw a dead horse with the body swollen. Strangely enough, the bridges were not destroyed. There were shacks to accommodate the wounded.

When we came to Kusatsu* (He first wrote, "Koi," but later, he modified it to Kusatsu, which is further from the hypocenter), we saw green rice fields and dragonflies flying in the sky. Although houses were destroyed, we saw less tragic sights around here. The trains running on the Miyajima line were full of people. We saw Itsukushima Island on the other side of the strait.

The horse and cart arrived at Yahata Village that day in the evening. A nurse came to treat our burns. **On the 9th**, we went to Hatsukaichi, and carried our household effects on a cart back to our house in Yahata Village. Somebody said that from a window of a train, he had seen three parachutes falling down from the bomber on the morning of August 6th. Other people said no sooner had they seen parachutes falling down than they saw a bright light followed by the thunder of an explosion. Everyone thought that the bomb must have attacked only his/her house. Those people whose skin had been exposed to the light got burned. I assumed that the burns would become more serious as time went by. At Kamiya-cho, a downtown area of Hiroshima city, a line of people were killed while standing as they waited for a bus. One person died with his hand on another person's shoulder in front of him. Most of the members of two troops were killed at the Drill Ground in the West. One person died as he was climbing up a ladder leaning against a riverbank.

As far as I could see, the dead bodies were all similar: their heads were swollen, their whole face was burned, and both bodies and arms swelled as they died. The burnt arms were crawling with maggots. I heard that there were tens of thousands of unidentified corpses lying on the ground in the city **on the 13th**, and that spirits of the dead are shedding light as ghostly flames.

Four students died. So did a grandmother of the Asamis(18), and the daughter-in-laws of the Maedas. Even those who did not get burned had their hair fallen out, vomited blood, and died one after another. Also, I heard that those who entered the city in good health to dig in the ground for their belongings they had buried before the bombing, came back sick. Those who had slight wounds on the end of their lips and on their fingers died of the effects of the acute lesions. Those who ate dead fish, which came to the surface of the river died two or three days later.

Kites were flying in the sky above Hiroshima city where there was no shade. Frogs, crawling along after being burned, were doomed to die. Imamoto(19) lifted the dead bodies of hundreds of women who were lying on their faces as he tried to find his wife. He said he found no bodies that had watches on their wrists.

Footnote

1. Kyoko was Tamiki's younger sister.
2. Mr. Tatsuno was an employee in the Haras' Shop. The Haras ran a sewing factory for military uniforms through a business contract with the Army and the Navy Departments.
3. Mr. Ezaki: a staff member of Hara Shop
4. Sentei Garden: the present Shukkeien Garden, which was constructed in 1620 as a garden in a villa built by the feudal lord Asanos. It was designated as one of the places of scenic beauty in Japan.
5. Brother: Tamiki's second brother
6. A maid in our house at Yanagimachi: Yoshiko Harada, a maid working for the Haras, is mentioned below.

7. Sakura: Sakurako

8. Sakurako and Hanako are both Tamiki's nieces.

9. Nikitsu Shrine: located to the north of Hiroshima Station. Nagamasa Asano, the feudal lord is enshrined here.

10. Toshogu Shrine: Located in Futatabi Sato, to the north of Hiroshima Station. On August 7th and 8th Tamiki and his family members slept there for two nights.

11. Ando: a staff member at the Haras' factory.

12. Sanshiro: Tamiki's nephew.

13. Hiroshima Girls' Commercial School was founded in 1925. On August 6th, 1945 students had been mobilized to move houses. Approximately 400 students, including 362 first and second year students were killed at the bombing.

14. brother: Tamiki's elder brother, Nobutsugu

15. Fumihiko: Tamiki's nephew, who was a first grader at Saibi Elementary School run by Kaikousha, a military organization founded for the purpose of soldiers' reciprocal help and brotherhood. On August 6th, 1945, almost all of the 150 school children and five teachers in the school building were killed by the bombing. Fumihiko was one of them. He was the only victim among Tamiki's big family.

16. Present Shudo Junior and Senior High School. On the day, 32 first year students, 136 second year students and 10 teachers were mobilized at Zakoba Township. Almost all of them were killed.

17. Shigeru: Tamiki's nephew

18. The Asamis used to live in the house on the opposite side of the street from the Haras. The Maedas were the Haras' relatives, Tamiki's mother's home.

19. Imamoto: A member of the staff working for the Haras'

A Commentary on Tamiki Hara's Notes about His Atomic Bomb Experience in Hiroshima

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Tamiki Hara (1905-1951) suffered the atomic bombing in his elder brother Nobutsugu's house at Noborimachi in Hiroshima, situated about 1.5 kilometers from the hypocenter, on August 6th, 1945. Luckily enough, he was safe because he happened to be in the bathroom. He put down what he saw in a notebook with a pencil as he was escaping from the devastation. This is, what is called, "Tamiki Hara's Notes of the Atomic Bombing," and is one of the most valuable, real-time records depicting the devastation of Hiroshima just after the bombing. He wrote the first part of the notes on the shore of the Kyobashi River on August 6th and the second part on August 7th while he was spending the night at the precincts of Toshogu Shrine situated to the north of Hiroshima Station. After August 8th, he wrote the rest of it in a house his elder brother obtained for his family as a place of refuge in Yahata Village (Yahata, Saeki-word, Hiroshima City). After the war, his efforts to publish his novels, bore fruit. They are entitled, "Summer Flower," "From the Refuge," and his poem, "The Scene after the Atomic Bomb." All these writings were based on his notes. This record, therefore, is ranked as the foundation for postwar literature and atomic bomb literature in Japan.

(At the beginning of his notes, he writes, " In the safe for my family business, (there are) some cigarettes, and a will,☞ but the existence of a will has not been identified.)

Tamiki's three notebooks remain. They are common, 13-by-7 centimeter notebooks manufactured in 1944. On the first two pages, he put down information about his height, weight, and vision, besides some English words. From the next page, he put down one word a day like a diary. Even on January 31, 1945, when he returned to his hometown on the train, which left Tokyo at 9:00 p.m., holding an urn containing his wife Sadae's remains, he put down some words briefly. Also, because of the air raids every day and night, he did not write anything but the time in detail. In the other two notebooks, we find nothing but memorandum.

On May 1st, 1945, he wrote down, "Mussolini was killed," and "Hitler died. Hurrah!" After the bombing, he and his family moved to Yahata Village, where their postwar days of hardship began. On August 13th, just before Japan's surrender, he scribbled down, "Every day we eat only three bowls of rice porridge, besides sweet potatoes." From the 30th page of the notebook, he started to write detailed notes about his experience of the atomic bombing. Also, he wrote a note about what he should take to the village, as well as some words from his monologues, which seem to have been motives for his works published after the war. This record not only increases our interest in his literary works, but also provides us with some historical prewar and postwar facts. A minimum amount of footnote has been added to this deciphered copy of his notes. Since there are some people who are still alive, only the relationship between Tamiki Hara and the person is described in the notes.

Note:

*The Kagenki Society: The anniversary of Tamiki Hara's death was named "Kagenki." This society was founded in September, 2000, by those who love his literary works. The society hosted an exhibition of materials concerning him to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Tamiki Hara's death in 2001, and has a memorial service in front of his monument placed next to the Atomic-Bomb Dome every year.