

I want to get away from the A-bomb

Hataguchi

At that time my parents lived in Miyajimaguchi, 20 kilometers west from here. My father worked for Railway Bureau, and he was at Hiroshima Station. Just then, my mother saw a flash, and after the big sound, she saw a column of smoke in the direction of Hiroshima. My father did not come home, but the railroad was cut off. So four days later, my mother walked to Hiroshima Station, and was given a watch and a buckle as remembrance tokens from a colleague of my father's who had found his corpse. She collected some bones nearby and came back. The watch was the one my father had got as a prize in Tokyo, so it was identifiable. My father was 31 years old, and my mother was 27 then. My mother is so called '*Nyushi hibakusha*;' it means that she was exposed to radiation because she entered within 2 kilometers of the hypocenter for rescue activities, relative search, etc. within 2 weeks. I was in the womb of my mother, just two months pregnant. My father did not know my presence.

When I was two years old, my mother started to leave home for work. She left me breakfast and lunch. I would often go to her workplace after lunch. She did not tell me anything about the A-bomb, and I did not ask her, either. I liked music very much, and soon I was infatuated with America, but in my late teenage years and in my 20's, I hated America. So I had conflicted feelings.

At the age of 21, I received an Atom Bomb Survivor Health Book. But I did not like even to give it a glance. Luckily I was employed by the city and engaged in hibakusha supporting service. But I did not like to hear the word, "A-bomb." I became the director of this Museum at the age of 51, but until then I had visited this museum only twice in my life. I had not told my colleagues that I am a hibakusha in utero. I once

buried these two items, the watch and the buckle, into the tomb. As the first director born after the war, I was asked many questions, but it was hard to say that I am a hibakusha myself.

In 2005, a European reporter asked me, “Why have you hidden the fact that you are a hibakusha? Do you think being a hibakusha is wrong?” He was right. The mass media reporter guessed correctly. I backed away from the fact, and it was not until I was over fifty years old that I began to speak about it little by little.

At the press conference when I retired at the age of 60, I was told that I would be the last hibakusha director of the Museum. My father was killed by the A-bomb, leaving his heart behind, and was found by my mother later. Perhaps it was destiny that I was appointed to be the director of the A-bomb Museum. Hearing those comments, I felt a little better.

A reporter asked me what made me feel guilty, and I answered, “I don’t know. I did not want to be regarded as victims, or I felt like getting away from the issues of A-bombs or peace. Hibakusha were discriminated against, and I think nine out of ten hibakusha tried to hide the fact.”

Talking of “Hiroshima Peace Volunteers”, which I myself established, I feel good. 180 people applied for the 60 open positions. I served as a training instructor while I was in the post.

After I retired last year, I became a trainee for one year, and I will start volunteering this year. I would like to convey a message. I want to hear the voice of visitors, then I will be able to see where problems are, and to recruit new volunteers who will support testimony activities.

In a green jacket I will be talking and explaining inconspicuously to visitors here and there in the Museum.