

CHAPTER 3

Activities of the Medical Corps

SECTION 1

The day of the bombing

Bombed

The positions of individuals at the moment of bombing were as follows : I, the captain of the rescue team, was at my desk in the Radium Room, arranging X-ray films into two piles, sorted out teaching materials and discards. Deputy Shi, with staff member Moriuchi, was developing film in the Dark Room. Staff member Umezu was servicing treatment equipment. Staff member Tomokiyo, Shi and Nurse Tsubakiyama were setting photographic equipment in the basement floor of the department of Internal Medicine. Head Nurse Hisamatsu was working on administration. Nurse Hasimoto was working at the reception desk. Everybody was working. Five nurses, Yamashita, Hama, Inoue, Oyanagi, Yoshida had just gone to tend to the potato farm field on the playground. Staff member Kozasa and Nurse Oishi were absent.

Escape

Pika, a moment of fate! Everybody got to know his or her own destiny under the debris of equipment. There was complete darkness, nothing could be seen. Injured. It must be that they dropped a bomb in front of us. Why did we hear the falling sound of bombs? Are we dying? We are injured. It will be the end if flames come around. Can we escape? How about other people, etc? My thinking was fragmented.

I tried to push here and there by my hands, feet, bottom and head.

The first person to escape by herself was head nurse of Medicine located in the basement and, Tomokiyo's group from the ground floor of the building. I looked outside. My vision had returned. The lumberyard of the old evacuation site for the X-ray machine had already caught fire.

The head nurse drank a cup of water and gargled her throat. And with Tsubakiyama, she started to extinguish the fire with buckets of water. It was a big fire. Two people could not do the good job. Then, Hashimoto came running from the reception desk, shouting, "The chief* is buried !" Tsubakiyama said, "Well, is he safe? What shall we do?"

They started to run. The corridor was blown out, and they could not

*Publisher's Note : Dr. Nagai was Chief of Radiology Department and he was called "Captain" to denote his leadership of the Ite Medical Corps of Nagasaki Medical University.

get into the entrance. They climbed up the concrete wall by a human ladder. Nurses had jumped into the Radium Room from the high window of the Pharmacy. There, the half blood stained captain patted the incoming subordinates and said, "Oh, good."

Deputy Shi was crushed by the ceiling in the developing room, his chest was pinned down, but he was able to escape, calling, repeatedly "Chief, chief." Into the Radium Room came the rescued, yet severely wounded captain.

Deputy Shi called out "Moriuchi is still buried." The captain, Tomokiyo and the deputy Shi tried to get into the developing room, but could not get by the mountain of debris. Looking in, they could see that there was no sign of people. There was no sound of moans. They must have escaped safely. Then, Umezu came out staggering from the Treatment Room. Everybody ran up to him.

His whole body was stained red. "I have lost my eyes," he said.

"What are you talking about? You have eyes," Deputy Shi told him.

"Let him sit down," he told the others.

There was a 10 centimeter laceration above the eyes and his whole body was pierced with glass splinters. With all of us helping, we pushed gauze onto the wound and applied a triangular bandage.

The chief asked, "Where is Yamashita?"

The head nurse's complexion suddenly turned pale. "They are outside," Tsubakiyama said, "They said they were going to the playground." "Maybe they are still there, look for them," the captain ordered.

Hashimoto and Tsubakiyama, calling the names of five unseen friends, ran towards the direction of the fire. I kept watching their backs. Yamashita, Inoue, Hama, Oyanagi, Yoshida-the faces of five people appeared in front of my eyes, one-by-one, then disappeared. When the captain took his hand away from pressing on his right ear, red blood streamed out.

"Chief, it's blood."

"Yeah, I know."

"It's a piece of glass."

Then, Deputy Shi and the head nurse pushed a pressure gauze on to the wound and applied a triangular bandage. The white rectangular bandage stained red rapidly and blood dripped down his chin.

The artery had been severed.

"Shi-kun, Tomokiyo, how about instruments?" the captain asked.

"Yes," the two said, and they each went to the rooms separately to check on them.

About this time, outpatients, who had been injured in the corridors of the Medicine, Gynecology, and Dermatology departments, were crawling, naked, bloody, skin stripped, face with soot and disheveled hair. It was a scene out of hell coming towards us. The captain and head nurse gave them first aid.

Soon, Hashimoto and Tsubakiyama came back crying from the

outside. Everybody was gloomy when they received them.

Where is Yamashita?

Is she already dead or dying?

I was thinking about our five staff members, while watching the prostrate and bloody patients die. "Everywhere was damaged. It was a catastrophe." "The fire has flared up from the middle of the hospital. There is no way to communicate with people left behind. The roads are impassable, filled with dead and injured," each one reported.

The deputy and Tomokiyo reported that "the equipment was completely damaged, all tubes were ruptured. Electrical connections were cut off, the transformers could not be pulled out because the passage was completely blocked."

The captain was holding his own arms, saying, "The most urgent thing is right now," and sat down on the floor. The flames had already invaded the next door Pharmaceutical Dispensary, making crackling sounds. The staff, nurses, and a group of patients passed this corridor in panic. The captain glared at this group. All of the group stared and looked at the captain. After a while, my mind calmed down. A crowd of people passing by looked pitiful.

Suddenly, the captain grinned as usual. Everybody was induced to laughter. They had presence of mind. The captain shouted, "Look at each other!" Everybody laughed with one voice. The captain was wearing slippers because he could not find his shoes. Nobody was properly wearing their air-raid uniform.

"Let's dress right and get together in front of the entrance," the captain said. He stood up and went down the stairs and went out to the open space in the front of the entrance. Everybody returned to his or her own room. This time they calmly looked around their rooms. They remembered that the captain had often said one can not fight a war if one is hungry. They did not forget to bring out their lunches. When they came to the entrance, the captain, standing straight up and holding his arms, was gazing at the hospital in the background of the burning town. There were three treated patients lying at his feet. The captain bled quietly.

Everybody had calmed down and got together in front of hospital entrance. The fire flared up ; the hot wind kept blowing.

"Help people first, equipment second," the captain decided.

Shi carried the wounded Umezu on his back, climbing to a safe rear hill. It was like during the Russo-Japanese War. The head nurse gave the captain's personal effects to the other staff. Then, suddenly, Moriuchi appeared. One person was safe, all of them voiced at once.

Kozasa, the Xray technician of the Gynecology Department, came running from the back. She shouted, "Doctor!" Everybody called, "Oh, good!" "How about the equipment?" the captain simply questioned.

"It's already damaged," Kozasa answered.

"Could you bring it out?" the captain asked.

"No, I could not." Kozasa replied.

"Well, nothing can be done," the captain said, "A hard time is coming."

"Oh, good !" "I just worry about the chief and head nurse. I don't know how I came through the sea of fire," Kozasa said.

"How about Sakita?" the captain asked.

"Ah, Sakita-san" (Dermatology Department, X-ray technician)

"Look for him," the captain said.

"Yes, I will go to look for him," Kozasa answered.

"I will be here till the last. I will go up the hill after completing this business. Get in touch with me here or there do you understand?" the captain said.

After a while, the relieved Kozasa got tense again. She ran through the sea of fire towards the dermatology department. For only one person to go, it would be too lonesome, so Moriuchi accompanied Kozasa.

Everybody was thinking about Kozasa. She has barely escaped from death and yet is going again into a dangerous place. The head nurse asked, "Is it alright (to go with Moriuchi)?" The captain answered, "It'll be training." "Ah, it is training, it is training," the group members understood. They then divided into pairs to start taking care of the patients.

Patient rescue

The people who could move by themselves were running up the hill. The scene was one of mass exodus. From time-to-time, the captain stopped the treatment of the injured to shout at the people running up the hill, "Come down, students! Nurses, stop!" But, nobody stopped. This was also a scene of defeat, like when the beaten troops of Daimyo Katsuiye ran away from Shizugadake. Maybe the enemy would land here. If so, we would not be able to fight like this.

"We rescued our university president," a voice said. I looked at the entrance. Technician Tomokiyo appeared. A red blood stained person was being carried on Tomokiyo's back. The captain ran close to them.

The gray hair, face and white uniform were definitely those of the bloodied president of the university.

The president was still in high spirits. He told the captain, "You certainly have a big job here! Thank you."

Fire was making the place dangerous. Deputy Shi, carrying a first aid kit, escorted the president. They climbed up the hill. A little behind, the head nurse of Medicine, started to run. The medical staff members came out too. The captain let them go up the hill. Probably, the staff of the Internal Medical Department had disintegrated.

There was such a strong unity of the staff members with the captain in the center ! Without this, we could not have carried out our jobs in this confusion. This union was not made from admonitory speech or sociality. This camaraderie was only the result of long years of close cooperation.

The captain spoke to himself, "Our soldiers have been training ten years for this one day."

In the dialect of Izumo province, the confusion and clamor meant defeat. Regarding this scene in those terms, we were definitely defeated. The superiors forgot their subordinates. The subordinates running around did not care about their superiors, only seeking their own safety. The university had totally collapsed. Of course we were in a very dangerous situation. I understood that people were ready to run away to the hills and yet they fell down. Accompanying persons tried to help them, but gave up and ran away. The fallen people below asked for help from below. Nobody looked back, just ran away.

Associate Okura of the Internal Medicine Department and about twenty medical students stopped there and started to rescue the injured under the captain's command.

The fire invaded the Patient Ward. We evacuated the admitted inpatients from the great fire and carried out the injured from the basement.

The stretchers were broken. The carrying out of the injured had to be done by hand. The patients complained, "It hurts." The injured be complained of pain because these people did not know the situation. It took more time to take care of their demands. The work took time.

Somehow, we gathered the injured on the square in front of the entrance. The people came up the hill from the town below. All medical aid supplies were gone.

The hospital burns up

Below, the entire town was burning hard. The occasional west wind was pushing the fire up the hill, closer toward us. The hospital fire itself was becoming fierce. Where was a safe place we could evacuate this great numbers of patients? Reconnaissance scouts were dispatched in every direction. All of them came back and reported that everywhere was a sea of fire, only the rear hill remained untouched. It is common tactical knowledge that refugees will concentrate on getting to the hills in the event of an attack. If the enemy plane came again, it would attack the mountain.

The captain glared at the sky for a while, the wind turned slightly to the north. "Bring up the patients to the rear hill, 100 meters up the farm field," he ordered.

The usual pass was destroyed and blocked. We had to climb rocks. One by one, we brought the patients up by hand. Some died on the way. We cut off their hair as a memento. We gave the patients water. The parents of lost children had to be searched for. We worked on caring for the patients about three hours. All of the patients were evacuated to a safe field on the hill. We looked down at the hospital, we could already see that every window was blowing out fire and black smoke. Everybody said, "Ah, the Treatment Room is burning." "The fire is blowing out of the Exam Room." "My room is finished." "The three channel X-ray equipment

has burned up."

The time had been spent on rescuing patients and lost for saving equipment. We had loved and maintained the equipment as if they were our own babies. And, now, they were going up as fire and smoke in front of us. We members of the Corps looked straight on at this scene in sorrow.

Numerous memories and hopes disappeared in the smoke-"It is the end," the captain whispered in a low voice. The nurses were moved to tears.

Clerk Tomonari brought up prepared emergency food from the basement. It was dry biscuits and canned food. Everybody got together. We ate seated. After eating, our minds became calm. We became energized, rearranged bandages, applied triangular bandages, and gave the patients water. We were busy working.

Evacuation

At 4: 00 in the afternoon, the front half of the hospital was engulfed in flames. It was hopeless. We must evacuate. The captain insisted we should hang a flag. Associate Okura went into the Patient Ward at last and brought back a big sheet. Then, I painted the Hinomaru* with my blood and hoisted it up on the bamboo pole.

Nagai of the medical school pushed it up bravely, his head lapped with a white headband. The captain and his subordinates followed him, left the burning hospital behind, and climbed to the rear hill. Thus, our hospital and our department were totally destroyed.

The national flag, painted red with blood, climbed up through the sea of fire and smoke and the dreary battlefield. White gas clouds and black smoke covered the sky. Here and there, survivors were lying, covered by the grass. We heard no voices. This was a disheartening situation. A member of the medical corps shouted, as we climbed up the hill.

"Be cheerful! Hold on !" we said.

"Oh, we are holding out."

There was a scene of people waving their hands. They must have noticed the Hinomaru. I felt that the sight must have awakened and inspired them on this battlefield.

The university president was lying in the potato field on the hill. Rain dropped on the coat covering him. Associate Professor Osajima and Head Nurse Maeda accompanied Deputy Shi, also working beside him. Professor Shirabe was also in the action.

The captain reported, "The patients are all around the front of the hospital. All evacuation is complete. The staff of the X-ray Department has assembled in the lower valley to prepare for the next step." The Hinomaru flag was planted on the hill.

"Here is the headquarters!" "Our president is okay !" "Everybody, keep your spirits up !" the captain and his staff shouted out all around.

Translator's Note : The rising sun of Japan's national flag, a single red circle on a field of white.

"The Third Medical Corps is here," voiced Associate Professor Egami. He was answered from the middle of Mt. Anakobo.

"Hold on, Otorhinolaryngology Department !" we responded to them.

Looking down, the hospital and town were in a forest of fire. Rome, burned by Nero, could not have looked like this. The buzzing sounds of an enemy plane circled the sky again.

The captain finished the report, went about ten steps, and staggered. There, Umezu was lying, escorted by Tomokiyo and Shi. The captain took his pulse and said, "You are okay Umezu !" and he tried to stand up. His face was cyanotic and completely pale. A big bloody clot hung down from the triangular bandage. Even so, he tried to stand up, but toppled over at the edge of the potato field.

Deputy Shi shouted, "Press the carotid artery !"

The head nurse applied pressure on the artery and tried to ligate the blood vessel, but the blood vessel could not be caught in such a deep wound. Upon hearing of the emergency, Professor Sirabe came up. The artery was tied and the bleeding stopped. Everybody felt relieved.

Kozasa brought back spring water from the top of the mountain and gave us a drink. The captain shouted, "Men make shelter, women cook dinner !" and fell asleep. With injured legs, X-ray Technician Kaneko, of Shirabe's Surgical Department limped in, and took care of me. It was 5 : 00 p.m.

Camping out at night

At 7: 00 p.m., the night camp was prepared. Umezu and the captain were carried into the sick ward, which was prepared with straw scattered onto piles of lumber placed on the edges of a rock wall in the valley. Using a helmet as a cooking pot, pumpkin and wax gourd were cooked deliciously. Associate Okura brought the pumpkin first to the president, he was delighted.

Everybody sat around the fire in the field. The recovered captain looked at each person and said, "Is that all who have survived?" Everybody felt newly perplexed for the first time in their lives (that of horror and amazement).

The sun set down and the crescent moon shone for a while. I was thinking about the samurai Yamanaka Shikanosuke who prayed for the crescent moon when he was in distress. We must bear this indescribable hardship and fight to overcome it. We who have survived are the honorable fighters. We the people still alive look to meet the land of glory.

Mitamiware ikeru shirushiari, Ametsuchino sakayurutokini ayeraku omoeba

The members of the corps sang as loud as they could. For years, this song was chanted in the morning ritual. Now that the members had changed since this morning, only a few were left to sing.

Yamashita... Inouye come back if you hear our singing. If you are dying, go in peace, hearing the voices of fighting friends if you are already

gone from this world... At the end of the song, there was crying.

Then, Professor Seiki of the Pharmacy School appeared, half-naked, walking with a cane, and breathing hard. "Oh you are alive!" "I am the only one," he said. He fell down on his bottom. "I was buried alive, lost consciousness, then came out at last. About twenty students are dying in the bomb shelter of the pharmacy school. Please give them a shot, we cannot let them die." "Please eat some pumpkin," we said.

"No, no, students are dying. Please come right away," he asked.

The deputy, head nurse, Hashimoto, and Kozasa went, carrying the first aid bag.

Professor Seiki was saying, "The university is gone, everybody is dead. It's a disaster." He returned to the sea of fire with the help of the head nurse, walking unsteadily.

Then, the deputy and Kozasa attempted a reconnaissance of the Urakami area. The road leading there was blocked with a screen of fire ; it had changed the road. Wherever we stepped onto empty ground, there were fallen trees. There were groups of corpses.

"Yamashita-kun, Inouye-kun," we were shouting as we went, looking at the faces of each corpse. There were many charred bodies on the playground. Nothing moved in response to our calls. Flames were spreading everywhere. a result, both forward and backward routes were impassable.

They had to stay overnight with mixed groups of refugees in the rear area of the Urakami Cathedral. The cathedral burst into fire in the middle of the night. A palace of God, the biggest in the Far East: it burned up nevertheless. Here and there, Christian prayers were heard from the bushes. It must be the end of the world.

The other site, the valley camp, received injured people. Associate Professor Ishizaki, with burns on his face and hands, was carried in on his back. Fukui, Deputy Director of Student Affairs, also came in, carried by Professor Seiki.

The passerby patients came in, one-by-one. At the rescue site, members stayed over night around the fire. Nagai of the medical school and Tsutsumi passed through dangerous fields to get in touch with the Prefecture Headquarters and brought back hard bread for 500 people at the start of the night.

Twice an enemy plane came, circled above in the sky for a long time, and dropped leaflets.

SECTION 2

The second and third days afterward

Scene in the morning

August 10, the night of bad dreams was over, but yesterday's tragic drama was not a dream. The fire had almost burned out. I felt as if my whole body was limp.

For the morning ritual, we stood on the farm field, bowed eastward, read the imperial proclamation of war, then sang Mitamiware. They read the imperial rescript for the young students, then the captain gave an admonitory speech. Today's duty is to take care of the patients around the Pharmacy School and search for Yamashita and the five others.

The corps moved into action immediately. Helping the injured chief and Umezu, the members went down the mountain pass, then up again and then down again. On the way, dead and wounded victims were scattered in the bottom of ravines, some in the shade of a stone fence.

Finally, we arrived at the Pharmacy School, crossing Ebira Pass. Urakami was totally changed ! The university's Basic Science Building... nothing. There was only an open land of ashes. Urakami was a brown hill without houses, the morning sun skimming above it. The cathedral had just burnt down in that red blaze!

The members of the small rescue team looked for their own houses in silence then looked down again. There was nothing. Their family members must have been totally annihilated.

Rescue around the Pharmacy School

Wounded and dead students were scattered around the inside and outside of the Pharmacy School shelter. The corpses were covered with soil, the living were shaded with boards or sheets from the sunlight.

We let the wounded victims drink water and fed them cooked pumpkin and rice gruel. We let them chew on broiled beans. We asked them, "How is the taste?" We also said, "Hold on, as soon as we can get in touch with the rescue squad, we will send you to the aid station." We tried to keep people's spirits up.

Upon hearing the news of the evacuation of the wounded to Isahaya by train from Ohashi, I sent a team member to keep communication open. He came back to report that the trains were full of wounded and could not transport all of them. The remaining wounded were lying on a grass field. I gave up.

I negotiated with the Prefecture headquarters for transportation of the wounded by car. I was told that would be difficult to arrange that day.

The director of the prefecture's Public Health Department and the president of the Medical Society paid a visit to provide encouragement and to observe the situation. They said, "The army is coming to help,

tonight." Everybody was delighted with joy. It was like meeting Buddah in Hell.

The captain went to the university and saw a newly set up army field hospital in front of the hospital's main entrance, at the Main Building, and brought back some of the team members. I decided that the patients would be transferred to the army early in the morning.

Search for the missing

On the other hand, the search for missing members continued. The head nurse found corpses on the playground believed to be that of the five nurses.

That night, I slept in the shelter of the Pharmacy School. The moaning wounded survivors, friends, both dying and those already dead, all slept together in rows in the narrow shelter. I could not sleep well. I dozed off in a dream. At midnight the head nurse called her friend's name, "Ohyanagi-san, Ohyanagi-san," in her sleep, talking in middle of the night, and everybody was scared.

August 11, the third day, we carried the patients to the army field hospital, which was set up in the front of the hospital entrance. We made instant stretchers with burnt left over pieces of board, but that did not work well. Because we had to carry the patients over knocked down trees or burned up houses, it took over an hour to traverse a 400 meter road. Little-by-little, we finished the evacuation by noon.

Enemy planes constantly circled above in the sky. The heat from burned up debris and the sunlight with no shade made an inferno-like hell.

Burial

In the afternoon, we mourned the corpses of Yamashita and other nurses of our department. We recognized Yamashita instantly ; the skin on her face looked charred. We recognized small pieces of clothing on Inouye's and Yoshida's bodies. The bodies of Kama and Ohyanagi were determined by the size of their corpses. The family of Ohyanagi came and said, "This must be the one." Ohyanagi was cremated instantly and the ashes were given to her family. The four corpses were carried up to the Pharmacy School, and temporarily buried on the grounds.

We had to take shelter several times as we were working on the burials. Everybody cried when covering the bodies with soil. Here we had lost compatriots and friends to this war.

Activities of the headquarters

After the burial, I reported to the headquarters. The president, Dean Takagi, and Professor Yamane were severely wounded and lying in the shelter of the Surgical Department. Professor Sofue, Professor Kunifusa were also severely wounded. Professors Umeda, Ikeda, Okura, Naito, Kiyohara of Basic Science and Superintendent Naito were instantly killed.