

Introduction

This diary was started on August 9 1945, the day of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. It records in detail the condition of the medical university buildings and students after the bombing, as well as other disaster conditions, and the opening of the Nagasaki Medical University temporary relief station at the Michinoo Iwaya Club. This is not the combined record of many people. I wrote it down in a hurry; therefore, there are a few places where public and personal matters are mixed together. I would be happy if this work contributes to the compilation of formal documents in the future.

Writing started on August 13, 1945
Raisuke Shirabe

The record was started with the intentions described above, but actually it was interrupted four days after the August 9 atomic bombing (pages 21 to 40 were left blank).

Thereafter, it was resumed from September 26 to October 26, 1945 when the university headquarters was moved to Omura Naval Hospital. Therefore, pages 1 to 21 and pages 40 to 79 vividly describe the daily events of that time. Pages 21 to 40 were written from memory between July 5 and July 23, 1970.

Part1

Atomic Devastation

1. Circumstances before and after the bombing

(August 9, 1945)

August 9, 1945. This was the day of the apocalypse which Nagasaki will remember forever. I had been in the hospital for civil defense duty, from noon of the day before. It was uneventful that night. August 8 was the day of the Imperial Proclamation of War. Due to the absence of Takase, the leader, I gave an order to the students on duty to be particularly alert.

At 7 a.m. on August 9, the professors (Associate Professor Kido, Professor Naito (Tatsu), Professor Sugiura of the Pharmacy School and myself) finished breakfast on the second floor of the hospital kitchen, and I returned to my office after chatting for a while. At 8 a.m. I responded to a notification from students and went for morning roll call in front of the hospital's main entrance. An air-raid alert had been sounded at about 6:30a.m. This was changed to an air-raid alarm shortly after 7 a.m. and finally was lifted at 9 o'clock.

I delivered a lecture to the third-year medical school students in the Second Middle Auditorium, then returned to my office to review Tokunaga's thesis [Tokunaga was a graduating student]. Passing by the Middle Auditorium on the way back from the lecture, I saw the university president, Dr. Tsuno'o, still engaged intensively in a lecture even though it was past 10 o'clock.

While I was looking at the thesis, I suddenly heard a loud roaring engine sound. I looked at my watch. It was exactly 11 o'clock. I got up right way, changed from my white lab coat into a suit, and started to rush out of the room. At the door, a bright blue flash shone in my eyes. I felt as if I had been hit directly and crouched down in front of the sink in the corner of the room. At the same time, the building shook with a low pitch sound : bb-b-boom. I quickly hunched down like a shrimp on the floor. The debris was relatively light on my back and I could get up with a little effort. I opened my eyes; there was complete darkness and I could not see anything. Again, I crouched down. I heard a sound resembling heavy rain, perhaps the sound of falling dirt blown up into the sky by the explosion. This sound stopped after I had stayed still awhile.

I cannot describe my thoughts during this period. It was like I had been left alone in the middle of hell.

I stood up again and opened my eyes. This time, it was somewhat brighter, like dawn. I looked around. Everything—desk, cabinet, bed, screen—had been knocked over and covered by the fallen ceiling. There was no room to step.

I went to the front of my desk. The manuscript I had been working on, my bag, watch, books on the desk were blown away, and I knew I would not be able to find them. I found a torn up notebook at my foot so I put it in my pocket. If I delayed I thought, another bomb might fall. I went out of the room in a hurry. The hallway and stairwells were strewn with debris, but I could get downstairs without difficulty, luckily.

At the east entrance, a woman who had undergone surgery for appendicitis just a few days earlier was standing with the support of a man. She did not seem to have any injuries.

"Are you all right? Come with me," I shouted as I ran to a bomb shelter in the back of the hospital kitchen. The boiler was crushed, and I heard the hiss of escaping steam. Two or three people were lying on the concrete floor of the boiler room. There were dead people hanging onto the window frame. I could not understand what was going on.

While I was running, I met Professor Koyano in the corner of the kitchen. He was smiling as usual, even though he was bleeding from his forehead. He had two small lacerations probably caused by flying glass. The wounds were about 2 to 3 cm. in length and were not bleeding badly. After saying, "Nice to see you are okay," I jumped into the air raid shelter. There were many people inside the shelter. Looking around, I saw Nurse Araki from my department. Using a handkerchief as a tourniquet I stopped the bleeding from a 5 cm X 3 cm laceration on her forearm.

I left the shelter and went towards the main building. People were flooding out from the building and I could not get in. I returned and climbed the hill. I had no injuries. I ran looking for friends.

First, I met Sato Katsumi, a temporary graduate of my department, and Nurse Sato. Sato was holding a cane but he didn't seem injured. Nurse Sato's face was stained with blood, and she had a laceration on her hip and torn clothing. But they could walk. I told them to go to the top of the hill. I wanted to go back to my office, by way of the tennis court. There, I met Professor Hasegawa. He was staggering. He had a laceration between his eyebrows, but it didn't look serious. Next, Associate Professor Ishizaki of Koyano Surgical Department came along, burned all over his face and arms. He called to me in a tearful voice, "Dr. Shirabe." His burns were severe, the skin hanging down in shreds.

"Where were you?" I asked.

"I was in my office," he replied weakly.

"You'll be alright," I said. "Wait with Professor Hasegawa."

I ran farther to the East Hospital Ward. When I came near the High South Ward, Dr. Kido came up with a big smile. "Oh, good." As we were celebrating, Head Nurse Murayama came running up with tears, "Dr. Shirabe !" Her face and forearm were burned, but her injuries were not as bad as those suffered by Dr. Ishizaki.

"Yes, good, good, lets go up together."

I heard from Dr. Kido that the nurses from my department were safe. I was relieved. There was no need to go to my office. I climbed the hill,

helping Murayama. The refugees surged as they climbed the hillside of Mt. Konpira. Just yesterday, it had been a green garden of sweet potatoes. Now, it was just barren soil. The plants, stems, and leaves had all been torn out. The trees were broken off at the roots, and not one single leaf was attached to the branches. The reformatory in the middle of the hill had collapsed, and a fire was starting from the building.

Looking back, we saw that the hospital, basic science classrooms, and all the wooden buildings had collapsed and were burning, engulfed in heavy smoke. We heard the voices of friends calling for each other, screaming, and seeking help. The place had turned into a scene of terrible confusion, and it was more than just a gruesome scene. There were burned, naked, blackened faces with staring eyes, tinted red with blood. It was a scene right out of hell.

When I reached the middle of the hill, I heard my name called from the vegetable patch below. It seemed that University President Tsuno'o was wounded and being carried up the hill. I told Murayama to go ahead and ran across the field toward them. The university president was under the care of Associate Professor Sugiyama, Instructor Takahashi, and Head Nurse Maeda, on the lowest terrace. His face was cyanotic, and his shirt was stained with fresh blood. I asked him, "Where are your wounds?" He replied "Yes, my left arm and leg have small injuries." His voice was faint. When I said, "Please hold on," he replied "I will be okay." The wound on his left thigh was a laceration caused by a piece of glass. It was bleeding a little, so I bandaged it with a ready-made triangle cloth. He looked uncomfortable wearing the blood stained shirt, so I changed it for my dress shirt with no neck-tie.

The pillars of fire were flaring upwards. Sparks were flying in the wind. I decided to move the president to the top of the hill, allowing the uninjured Takahashi to carry him on his back. I led them as we climbed the hill. On the way, refugees asked us for help in the chaos: "Mother!" "Give me water!" "Help!" We had to plug our ears from the screaming voices as we climbed the field pass. The president was saying, "I feel nauseated by brain ischemia when moved," and he vomited several times. It took a while to get there. Probably, it was about 1 o'clock by the time we went around the burning reformatory and got to the top of the hill. Because I had lost my watch, I did not know the time.

It was difficult passing through the reformatory because it was already burning. On the way, numerous wounded victims appealed for help: "Doctor, please take a look at me!" It was a very painful scene. Some of them had no clothes. Their clothing had been blown into pieces and was hanging on by threads. Some had whole body burns. Some had fresh red blood over their bodies. Some lay down without strength. Some were walking, staggering, and yet they were climbing the hill, encouraging their friends. This was another grotesque scene. It was nothing less than hell on earth.

We laid the president on the bare ground at the top of the hill. With

the strong wind, he looked cold. Someone brought a piece of quilt and covered him in double sheets. Soon, Dr. Okura, of the Tsuno'o Medicine Department, came up cheerfully and camouflaged him.

About this time, the winds from the mountain changed direction. The smoke cleared up, and we could see down below clearly. The nurses' dormitory, the corridors in the hospital, and the basic science building were burning, engulfed in fire. Flames were spurting from the windows of a patient ward. From time to time, gunpowder exploded at the Ohashi arms factory, echoing in all directions. The town was a sea of fire. The burning sound echoed to the top of the hill. The sun was a hateful brownish color. Our faces were also blackish red as if tinted with sunset colors.

Somebody brought a first aid bag. There was an ample supply of iodine. I used it to treat the president's wounds : two lacerations in the head, four in the left thigh, two in the arm. These were substantial lacerations. His back was bristling with glass fragments. I put iodine over all his wounds. The wounds were not life threatening. He had no more nausea. He was feeling better and regaining his strength. The wounds in his hand were due to pieces of glass. He had two wounds: a 1.5 cm X 0.5 cm. cut on the dorsal aspect of the hand and one on the middle finger. The latter had already been disinfected with mercurochrome by Dr. Ichinose, so I left it the way it was.

Again, the direction of the wind changed, blowing up to the top of the mountain. A shower-like rain started to pour down. The wounded on the top of the hill were all shivering from the rain and wind. I took a break and went to look for my son Koji by way of the valley on the other hill. In the recess of the mountain, Dr. Ishizaki was lying like a corpse covered with a hospital quilt, but I could not carry him. Several patients of my department had escaped without injuries. A few were taking shelter from the rain. When I called to them, they were happy to see me and gave me five cigarettes.

I went to the hill behind the psychiatric department, calling "Koji !" but there was no answer. Perhaps he had been burned to death under the debris of the auditorium. There were several seriously wounded people on the way. Most of them could not even talk. Oku (4th-year medical student) was lying at the bottom of a cliff. He would not answer my calls. He must have lost consciousness. He did not wipe the rain dripping from the grass onto his face. He did not have long to live. Ueno (3rd-year medical student) had his head bandaged and was not cheerful as usual, but he was taking care of his friend diligently. Hidaka of my department was not injured and he assisted me in my search for Koji, but it was to no avail.

After a while I heard a voice calling my name from the summit where the president was lying. "Dr. Nagai's bleeding won't stop, please come," cried the voice. I ran back to the summit. Dr. Nagai had suffered a finger-sized laceration on the right side of his face beside the ear. This

was bleeding profusely. Two assistants from the radiology department had been trying unsuccessfully to stop it. Several pairs of forceps were dangling from the wound. I sensed a kind of godliness in the attitude of Dr. Nagai, who did not as much as frown during the operation without anaesthesia. I took over and tried to apply the forceps, but my attempts were also futile. I had no alternative but to press a tampon firmly into the wound and to suture the laceration over it. This finally brought the bleeding to a stop. When the procedure was over, Dr. Nagai took the radiology assistants and nurses down the hill and over to a stone embankment, where the group began to build a hut to provide shelter at night. Dr. Nagai is a Christian, and, indeed, he looked like Jesus leading his disciples on a pilgrimage.

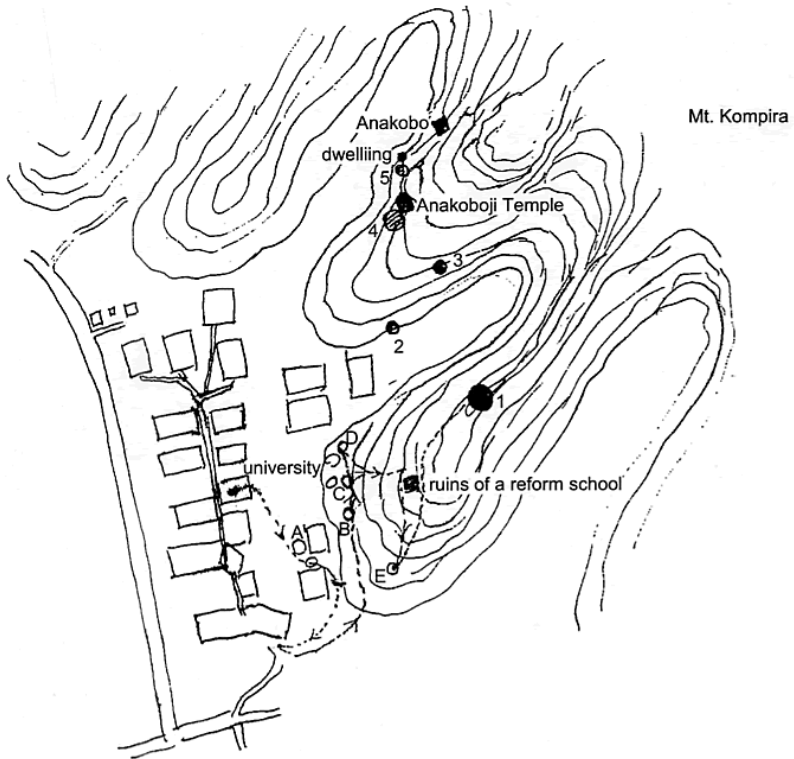
I went back to the president. He was still. Somebody brought a piece of ice in a container made from a pumpkin shell cut in half. The president must have been thirsty. He ate eagerly. I think it was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when Koda (3rd year medical student) climbed up carrying Professor Takagi on his back. Takagi had no wounds, but his face was pale and he had no vitality. He said that he had been in the professors' office of anatomy. Fortunately, he had been able to run out. He crossed the sports field and crawled toward Urakami Cathedral, but fell back down onto the river bank and was rescued by Koda. We put him down beside the president. He had no wounds or broken bones, but complained, saying "it hurts." His pulse was fast and faint. He must have been in shock.

Professor Kiyoki followed. He was wearing only underwear and climbed the hill with the aid of a cane. He had been digging an air-raid shelter when the bomb exploded. He had luckily escaped death because he had been inside the shelter, but he had been struck in the lower back by a flying piece of wood. He had no burns or wounds, but he seemed to be in a lot of pain. Wearing only a pair of briefs, he was lucky not to have suffered any burns.

In the evening, Dr. Egami (associate professor of injury) and Kawamoto (pharmacy) came fully dressed. Both had escaped because they had been in Nameshi. They arrived here after a long trek through the sea of fire. They brought some medical supplies and treated two or three people, but before long I did not see them anymore.

The rain stopped and the area was covered in an evening mist. The wind quieted down a little. The area below was burning more fiercely than ever and increased in redness as the evening went on. There was a sea of fire as far as the eye could see. The number of people crossing over Mt. Kompira dwindled. Probably, quite a few people had climbed the hill but then ascended to heaven before they could reach the top. The people camping in the fields were almost all resting now. At the site of the former reformatory, a goat was lying dead, and in the evening two white goats arrived from somewhere and were scrounging for food.

The president, Professor Takagi and others had no choice but to spend



1. President Tsunoo, Professor Takaki and others
 2. The shack erected by Assistant Professor Nagai and others
 3. Head Nurse Mitsushima and others
 4. Nurses
 5. Students
(Professor Sofue)
- A. I met Professor Koyano here
 - B. I met Professor Hasegawa here
 - C. Assistant Professor Ishizaki
 - D. I met Assistant Professor Kido and Head Nurse Murayama here
 - E. I met President Tsunoo here

the night on the hill above the reformatory. The staff and some of the wounded civilians stayed in the area. Associate Professor Nagai and others were in a small hut below the cliff. The group led by Head Nurse Mitsushima of the dermatology department was in the field right below the Anakoboji Temple. Another group of students and nurses was in the yard of a collapsed house between the Anakoboji Temple and the Anakobo. Everybody made groups and started to cook rice and radish pickles dug out of the ruins with the permission of the house owner.

In the evening, I went around to each camp. I distributed the dry biscuits provided by relief headquarters. When I got to the last camp, I heard that Professor Sofune was alone two or three hundred meters away. I searched for him, calling his name, and brought him back to the group of students at the house.

We cooked rice and made many rice balls with the radish pickles given to us by Anto, a 4th year medical college student, and came back to the place where the president was resting. The president ate one or two rice balls. I was relieved to see that. I was hungry in the afternoon, so I ran up and down the hill, digging and eating sweet potatoes from the vegetable plots. I felt full after eating four or five rice balls in the evening.

Anto's achievement in getting assistance was highly praised. He asked five Mitsubishi Volunteer Corps girls passing by for help, and the girls cooperated cheerfully. This deserves special mention.

After the meal, I assembled the associate professors between the camps of the president and Dr. Nagai and discussed the plan for tomorrow, while keeping warm by the camp fire. The plan was as follows:

1. Early morning : prepare two stretchers, transport the president and Professor Takagi to my house.
2. Make a list of the university staff who are camping.
3. Have Anto prepare breakfast.
4. Organize a communication group and make contact with the city relief headquarters.
5. Report to Professor Koyano.

The night grew late. We decided to sleep. I took Dr. Nagai's advice and laid down on the straw mattress in the makeshift hut made by the radiology department staff. Looking up at the sky, I recalled the day's events quietly. It was like a dream. The world had been thrown into confusion at the moment of the flash. Numerous people were wounded.

They were injured and fallen or had died instantly. We had escaped and had come to the top of this hill, but the hospital and town had all burned up. There is no place to go back to work. What shall I do from tomorrow? And what about the university president, Professor Koyano, Professor Takagi, Professor Hasegawa, and Professor Sofune whom I met today? How are the other professors? Are they alive or dead? Koji was in a lecture at the basic science building. Did he escape? Seiichi, my eldest son, must have gone to the Ohashi ammunition factory. How is

he doing? I hope he is safe. Moreover, my family at the Nameshi evacuation site must be worrying about the rest of us. My mind was revolving like a kaleidoscope. I could not fall asleep.

In the mean time, an enemy plane came and bombed the Michinoo area. It must have been a minor raid. Also, the enemy plane dropped a small bomb which exploded over our heads. I heard later on that it was a bomb spreading propaganda leaflets. I did not know the time because my watch had burned up in my room. I fell asleep at perhaps twelve o'clock, in the middle of the night.

2. Damages to the University

(August 10)

The next day was August 10. It was sunny. No clouds were in the sky. It was quiet compared to yesterday. Dr. Nagai's group got up early in the morning, assembled facing east in the direction of the Emperor's palace, and started the morning ritual. It seems like they do this every morning. Their voices are well harmonized. I did not go to the group's assembly line, but I sat up straight and joined the group in my heart. After that the group, led by Dr. Nagai, went to the tunnel shelter of the Pharmacy School in orderly formation.

I returned to the place where the university president and the others were resting. I planned to wait for a stretcher and then carry the president back to his house, but before I could reach the camp I saw him being carried down the hillside by stretcher toward the university. When I asked the reason, the president replied, "I can't receive treatment for my wounds at home and so I am going to the university." I decided to go ahead of the group and find a suitable sickroom.

I passed the side of the nurses' dormitory, which had burned to the ground, and came out onto the Konan south garden. From there I descended the steps and arrived at the east ward of Shirabe Surgery. This of course had also been destroyed by fire.

I returned alone to the place of the university president. He was in good spirits, unexpectedly. Professor Takagi had no vitality. I told the president again that I wanted to take him home. But he still wanted to go to the university hospital because he thought he could not get treatment for his wounds at home. I decided to bring him down the hill by stretcher.

Then Sato of the dietary department came and asked me, "Shall we cook the rice that was saved from the hospital kitchen fire?" I condoned her proposal and took the president down the hill on a stretcher that somebody had brought up. On the way there, an enemy plane flew over and we had to hide in a cave shelter at the bottom of the valley. Then I went out to look for more suitable shelter and descended toward the totally burned nurses' dormitory.