

Memories of War 003: Yuriko Hayashi

戦争の記憶

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: Yuriko Hayashi

Interviewed by

Yohei Hayakawa

The BBB: Breakthrough Bandwagon Books

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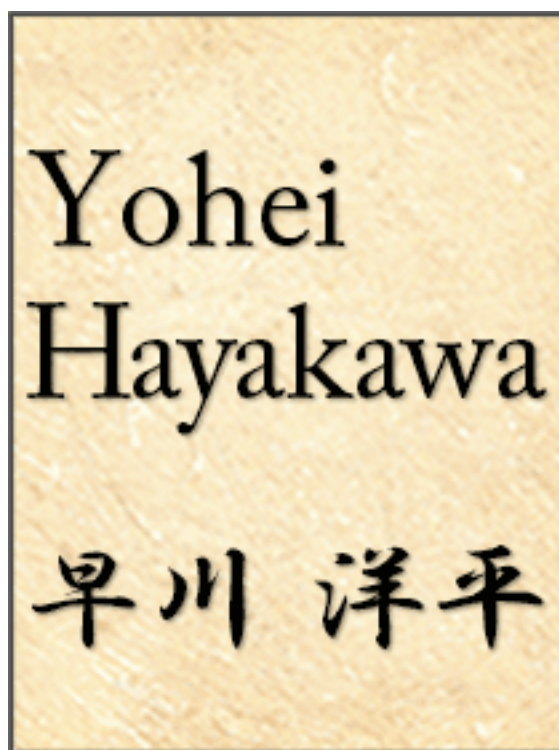
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The BBB website

<http://thebbb.net/>



Yohei Hayakawa Author Page

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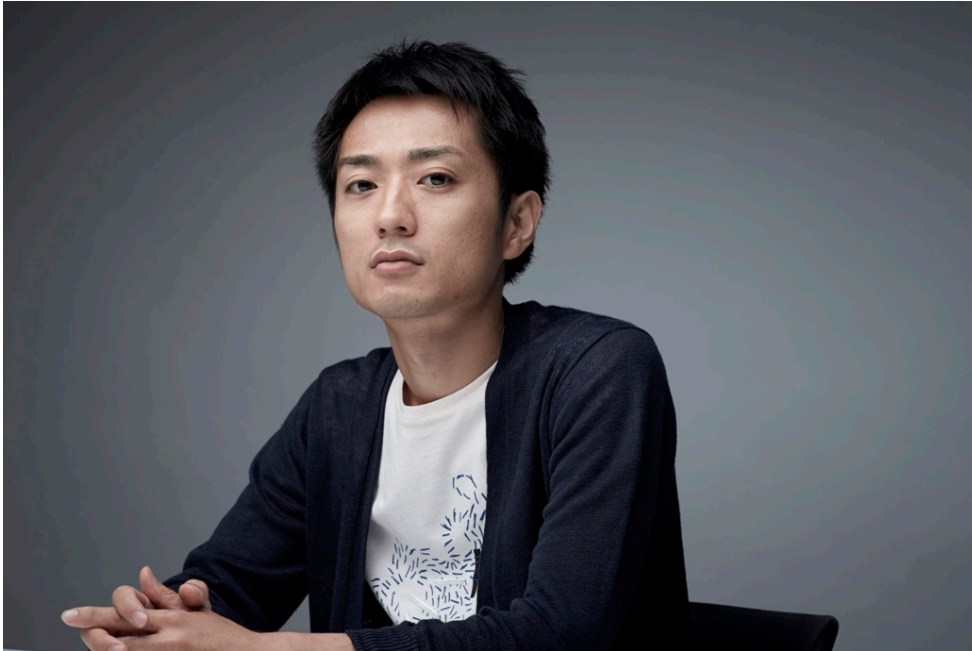
About This Project

Memories of War is a project which leaves voices of the people who survived the war. We are not supporting any specific organization, and we are not agitating any thoughts.

Also, please be consent about the following descriptions.

-The contents of the interview have left the voices and thoughts of the people who survived the war. Moreover, there might be inappropriate expressions but we have left the voices as it was spoken.

-The articles were recorded based on the knowledge and memories during the interview were taken. Therefore, there might be incorrect memories and some ambiguous points.



Every year, at the day of the end of the war watching the media, watching the movie *Grave of the Fireflies*, I decide in my heart 'Not to make a war again. War is cruel.' But another busy day starts from August 16th.

This year 2013, it is not a year of a turning point, but after 68 years from the war, is it just me who feel that we have a lot of movies about war like *The Wind Rises*, *Emperor*, and *The Eternal Zero*.

As an interviewer, living in Hiroshima where we had the first atomic bomb in the world, I had to face this theme. I have been thinking about it for a long time. But I took time in starting this project ...

While it is during this time, a few people told me; I want you to hold interviews with people who experienced the war. Podcast can leave the voices for 50 years, 100 years, for the future.

Almost 70 years after the war, the number of people who survived the war is decreasing every year.

That is why I have to leave their voices.

Memories of War is not a radio program and does not agitate to any specific thoughts.

I just wanted to leave the voices of the people who survived the war, carefully with this interview for our future children, and to all people in the whole world.

I hope that people will start to think what peace is.

Yohei Hayakawa (Media Journalist)

October 1st 2013

About Yuriko Hayashi

How I live and How I think

"Children of Hiroshima", after that



Born in 1936, Hiroshima

"Children of Hiroshima", The head of "Kyochiku Kai"

She published "Children of Hiroshima, After That" in 2013.

(*"Kyochiku kai" is the name of the writers' association.)

She is one of the writers of "Children of Hiroshima" which has been read all over the world. This book consists of the children's experiences of the atomic bomb, which is about a total of 105 notes. Late Emeritus Professor of Hiroshima University Arata Osada edited and published it. At that time, she was 9 years old, and she spent many hard times even after the war ended. Moreover, she said it was also much painful for her to dredge up her memories and write the composition. However, in 2013, 62 years after the book was published, she published "Children of Hiroshima, After That". This book is the collection of notes written by 37 writers of "Children of Hiroshima". "I spent many hard times after the war compared to during the war". What feeling does she wish to portray to us?

The Memory of a 9 year old living with death

Hayakawa: Could you tell us where and what you did on August 6th 1945?

At that time, I was 9 years old and was in the third grade of National Elementary School. I lived in what was known then as Dote-Cho but now Hijiya-Cho with my parents and 2-year-old brother. The place was 1.6km area from the center of the atomic bomb.

Hayakawa: Was "8:15 a.m." the time for you to go to school?

My father and I always left our house but I didn't know why, on that day, my whole family stayed home. If we had spent the time as usual, perhaps some of us would have died. Even though we stayed home, it threw us tens of meters in a direction for a moment. When outside got completely dark and then gradually light, I didn't know where I was.

Right before the explosion, my mother sewed buttons on my clothing at the entrance. My father was about putting on his shoes for going to his company. I felt the light even though I was inside. I felt the strong flash and heard the boom of the bomb a few minutes later. Finally, it plunged into darkness. I didn't feel anything, heat and pain at all. After the silence for a moment, people began to shriek and sound in agony. I clearly remembered the situation as it was yesterday.

Hayakawa: At that moment, it became dark, did you lose your memory?

No, I didn't. The outside got dark. Almost all houses were wooden types, so they became flattened and burned. We usually took refuge in a bomb shelter as soon as B29s appeared and we heard the sound of air-raid sirens. However, at that time, the siren was unlocked therefore we thought it was safe and we stayed home. That may have been one of the reasons the damage got bigger than we imagined. Anyway the bomb was totally different compared to bombs we had already known about.

Hayakawa: I heard you said your daily life was to take a refuge in the bomb shelter as soon as you heard the siren. Could you tell us how conscious you were? Did you think that you would die or not?

I couldn't judge the time of the attack. At that time, all third grade students and older students were forced to do "Shudan-sokai". (The Japanese government ordered children in big cities to move to the countryside places to protect them from the damage of the war. It was called "Shudan-sokai".)

I was also one of the members but my body condition was not good so I stayed home. That is why I got exposed to radiation. My classmate moved to the countryside, so almost all of them weren't exposed directly. I thought that I couldn't live longer so I wanted to stay with my family as long as possible. I told my teacher and parents about my feeling and I was able to remain in Hiroshima. Death seemed to be always with me.

Hayakawa: You weren't able to sleep, right?

Of course not. I put my air-raid hood and necessary things beside my pillow to escape from air-raids.

The atomic bomb and her life after that

Hayakawa: Were you blown up horribly when the atomic bomb was dropped?

Yes, my young brother became crushed under a chest of drawer or something, but my father pulled him out with all his might. Many broken pieces of glass stuck on my mother's body. She was covered in blood

because she was stuck by glass from the door and windows. However, at that time, there were many people injured so I didn't mind it. The pieces of glass remained in her body for a long time, so she suffered from the pain sometimes.

The situation was like hell. We escaped from there to Hijiyama. The next day, we passed over the other side. During the time, I saw innumerable dead bodies. I got desensitized so I wasn't scared, and didn't have any weird feelings. Surrounded by the fire, I didn't feel the heat. The situation was like this: the hotness of the summer, radiation, heat blast, explosion, and furniture with fire falling down to the ground. I really thought I was having a hard time to escape from that. My father gave water, which was rotten but for fire protection, to people while running away from there.

I felt I kept walking for a long time. When I got interviewed before, I walked around the same area. I noticed that it was not far, but at that time, it took much more time for us to walk. I had to walk stepping on the dead bodies. I felt the skins peeling but I didn't have the strength to think about them. I was in over my limitation so I thought god may have helped me not to feel anything. I went to the bomb shelter in Hijiyama, but I wasn't able to enter the place because it was full of people. There was heavy heat, the smell of burned bodies, and many people were groaning. It was such a terrible situation.

Hayakawa: About ten days later, the war ended. Could you tell us how you spent that time?

We evacuated to an unburned place, but we didn't have any home, food, clothes, anything at all. We slept outside at night around berm. When we were evacuating, there was one sweet factory called "Mitsuboshi Seika". My father had a relationship with the company a little, so we picked up burnt hardtack there and ate them. We saw trains which had fallen over on the side of the tracks. Burnt grains of rice were scattered about, so we picked them up and did our best to have them there. We ate grass too.

I can't remember how many days had passed, be it 10 days or 1 month, but I saw many children whose bodies were hideously burnt from the bomb. I didn't know who they were but there were many children under the situation. I called them and gave them food.

Hayakawa: Could you tell us how you felt at that time?

Now, when I think about it, it was radiation sickness. I became bedridden. Although I didn't have anything in my stomach, I couldn't stop feeling like throwing up. I threw up blood from my throat. Even though there was food there, I didn't feel like eating it. I thought I was definitely fated to be dead, the people around me had the same feeling I would die. I was under the condition for months, so I didn't have the strength to think about the end of the war.

My mother tried to make me take something like brown grass. The taste was so bad, but it seemed to be effective. After that, I can't remember much of the next three years of school (4th to 6th grade). I didn't have any pictures too. How was my teacher? How were my friends in the same class? There was nothing I could remember. For many years after being the victim, my memories of the time had gone somewhere else I think.

When I was in the second year of junior high school, "Children of Hiroshima", which is the title of the book, was published. I was also one of the writers who wrote about their experiences at that time and felt everything gradually come back to me. (Children of Hiroshima; Mr. Arata Osada, who was Emeritus Professor of Hiroshima University published the 105 collection of notes as a book in 1951 written by children who were exposed to the atomic bomb.) My teacher asked me to write this. I didn't feel like writing this but remembering the time, I did it. Only two students in this class suffered from the bomb firsthand because almost every student was under "Sokai".

Hayakawa: As you said, did you have your feeling which you didn't want to write that?

Although I never forget that time, I did my best to forget this. I have bad memories not only of that day but also after that. It was so hard for me to remember them, so I took much time to write this. However, I also had another feeling. That is that I should record my experiences for myself. I knew later these notes were published as a book. I realized the book was published the following February of the published year. The 105 children who helped write this book through their notes were gathered and received a copy of the book from the professor Mr. Osada. At that time, I thought I was right to write this. Since then, I was able to act like myself in the school.

I spent many hard times after the war ended

Hayakawa: I read some articles where you were interviewed. "I spent many hard times after the war compared with before the war". I am impressed by what you had been through, so can you tell us how harsh it was for you?

Of course, the truth where the atomic bomb itself was dropped was a misfortune and harsh, but after a few years, I couldn't express into words. Under the lack of clothing, food, and housing, I had too many humiliating feelings mentally as well. My mother also suffered from the bomb and under a bad condition. Hearing someone give her medical treatment, she lined up for the treatment but they just put mercurochrome on her skin. There is no way to heal it. I thought why I must be in this bad situation.

Before the atomic bomb was dropped, my family was rich compared to others. However, after the bomb, the people around us and their attitudes to me changed without scruple. Even in school, I was treated terribly by teachers and friends. I got really frustrated and sad ... About once a year the writers of "Children of Hiroshima" got together. Everybody said the same thing and had the same feeling. Though we had these experiences, we think that we feel happy to have food, houses, and can spend gentle lives. I am always thinking that I want many people who don't have experiences to have chances to hear these things.

Hayakawa: What supported you under the bad situation?

My parents were loving people. We hired some servants. Some of them were from Korea. My father never discriminated against them at all. At that time, it was a rare case. My father, servants, and neighborhood escaped from the bomb together. He treated them equally. That is why, I think I was able to live without depression. Material wise, we were in the pits but many people longed for my father's support. We supported each other. My parents never spoke ill of others. Even though they didn't have much food, they gave the people the food they had. When someone said "Give me food.", they gave the people the food they had. It was a natural thing for my parents to do so. Under that harsh situation, I never hated people.

The request of cooperation from ABCC

Hayakawa: You told us about radiation sickness. Could you tell us how hard it was on you physically wise?

After a period of years, I knew the terror of the radiation. My mother developed thyroid cancer. I also developed breast cancer and the right breast was excised. At that time, I didn't know the word "radiation", so we called it "Gas". I thought that when we breathe gas, we feel like throwing up or the stomach swells up. I saw many dead bodies floating on the river and I noticed that their stomachs were inflated. However, these were the firsthand damages.

6 or 7 years after the end of the war, "ABCC" was established on the top of Mt. Hijiyama by America. (ABCC stands for "Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission". This organization was created to check and research the victims. It was not an organization to treat them.) As soon as this was established, I was brought there and was examined by the staff members. The examination was too humiliating for me. Moreover, they didn't treat me as a human being. In front of many doctors from America, Japan, and the interns, I was stood with my body covered by only thin cloth. I was seen by them from all directions and examined. In the drama of the title "Children of Hiroshima", which was based on these experiences, it has a line "We are used as a guinea pig." It was definitely right. They drained my blood from my body quite a bit. I went there for a few years but when I may have been a high school student, I stopped going there because I couldn't help standing the situation anymore to my shame and unpleasant feelings. However, I began going there again. The staff members said they want me to visit there at any cost. I think they may need the data of the same victim.

Hayakawa: Are there differences on the ways of treatment compared to before?

Yes, there are big differences. At that time, I think the staff members didn't consider us as human beings. They just investigated the influence of the atomic bomb they dropped by themselves. After that, from 1975, since the organization became a cooperative one with Japan, it changed. Women doctors supported us and the organization got us to and from by taxi. I gradually didn't mind going there and I think it was right for me to go as the results helped for something.

Hayakawa: To be honest, I wonder if I could cooperate with the examination or not if I were in your shoes. How do you feel about that?

I have been a head of "Kyochiku-Kai" which consists of the writers of "Children of Hiroshima" for many decades. When we get together every year, I hear many stories from them. They can tell us their own stories here genuinely but they can't do so with their partners or relatives. We have the same harsh experiences, so we can be relieved to stay here. Through their stories, I think this is my role. My experience is a misfortune but it is a real one. To tell people about this, it is not a good way just to say "I got a sadness in my heart." I think it is necessary to tell people both their sadness and after that. It may be our responsibility or mission. There were 140-150 thousand people dead without knowing what happened to them. I hovered between life and death, but I was able to survive. When I collected the notes (The next publication, "Children of Hiroshima After That", was a collection of notes of 37 writers.) , I felt the same feelings as well.

"Children of Hiroshima" has been read and translated all over the world. I think people who read "Children of Hiroshima" may think how the children were after that. How they live, how they think after that. At first, I took video pictures but this way seemed to put a little pressure on them. It was a little hard for them to tell people about their feeling genuinely. I made questionnaires and asked them to fill them out, but their hearts weren't put into it. I finally published this with some bumps and detours for a decade.

Hayakawa: The experiences depend on each person, but do you and your members have the same feeling?

We are filled with happiness and thankfulness to our real lives because of the terrible experiences.

Through "Children of Hiroshima", "Barefoot Gen", the feeling she wants to tell people

Hayakawa: Could you tell us about "Children of Hiroshima, After That" a little bit in detail?

This is the collection of 37 notes out of 105 writers of "Children of Hiroshima". This was a publication released in July 2013. I wish many people read this book as well as "Children of Hiroshima". My main purpose is to get people interested in reading this.

Hayakawa: I think there are differences between feelings you have now and you did before though. Could you tell us how you felt about America, forces, and the Imperial Majesty at that time?

I was a child and I didn't have the specific opinion whether the war is good or not. However, my mother developed radiation sickness, therefore I thought the atomic bomb and Americans were hateful. However, I don't know when... but when I first met Americans, I think each of them is so kind and like them. However, why do wars occur? What makes people crazy? I am thinking about that seriously. "WAR", where people kill people is the worst thing. No one is happy. These days, it is a similar thing, even if something bad occurs, some people tend to say that "That affair didn't exist.", because they want to erase the bad past thing.

In "Barefoot Gen", which was the autographical type of cartoon and based on the writer's atomic bomb experience, many people have their opinions to it. (The writer's name is Keiji Nakazawa). For example, cruel expression, recognitions of history, and so on. I know him well. He has a sense of honesty and his way of thinking is not complicated. He just really wanted to write that; wars make people become an ogre and devil. People think nothing of killing each other, and they feel joy toward it. It was also said that the description of crawling with maggots is cruel. However, actual human beings' bodies were infested with maggots. My mother's case was the same. Around the wound, she was infested with maggots. Even if I took them away from the wound, they appeared again and again. It is unbelievable isn't it? Moreover, inner parts and their eyes were out from their bodies or faces. I can't tell you anymore than that. He said "I moderated the description softly."

It depends on each person how they tell their opinions to others, but the thing they want is that "We don't want anybody to have these harsh memories anymore."

The words I said remain for a long time in my head. When I tell people about my experience, I become ill for about 2 or 3 days. It is not the end because I told my experiences. I feel it is difficult for me when I prepare for the speech, so I fall down on the floor sometimes.

Hayakawa: How do you feel about Japan of today?

I feel it is dangerous. Before the war, I may have been around 5 or 6 years old, so I didn't have clear memories but the atmosphere of Japan of today seems to be similar to that war term. For example, the amendment of constitution and the right of collective defenses. Nuclear already exists in the world, so it may cost too much to eliminate them but it has implications as well, but we should eliminate them. I don't think "just because you have a nuclear weapon, we should have one".

This year, (2013), is 68 years since the end of the war. This year isn't a round number year remembering the end of the war, but exposed people may pass away in 10 years, so people may feel the rush. They seem to be driven by a sense of danger.

Hayakawa: Finally, could you give the listeners your message?

I want everybody to have their strong will where they never go to wars and kill each other anymore. All human beings are fated to die. We shouldn't kill people and we shouldn't be killed by people involuntarily. The cause of wars comes from people's desire, ego, and timidity.

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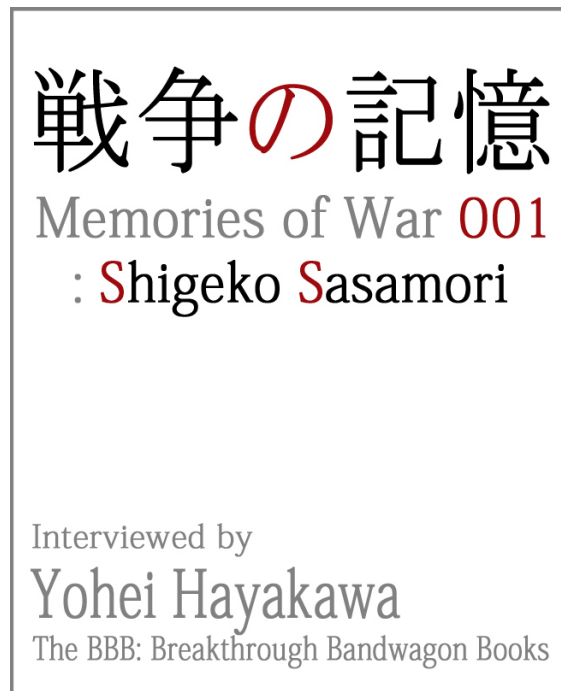
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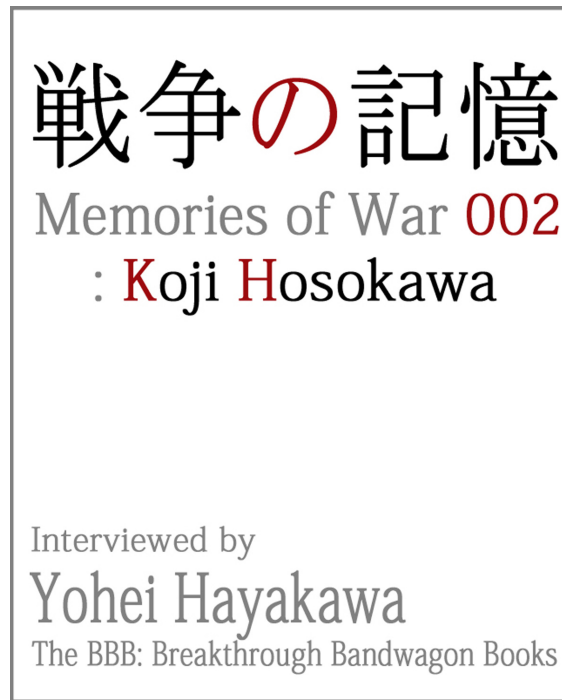
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