

EXTRAORDINARY STORIES: TSUTOMU YAMAGUCHI – TWO TIME A-BOMB SURVIVOR



Tsutomu Yamaguchi was a resident of Nagasaki, Japan in 1945 and worked for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. In the summer of 1945 he was sent to Hiroshima for a business trip. On August 6, he was preparing to leave the city when he realized he had forgotten his *hanko* (a stamp allowing him to travel), and returned to work to retrieve it.

At 8:15, he was walking back towards the docks when the American bomber Enola Gay dropped the atomic bomb “Little Boy” near the center of the city, less than 2 miles from where he was standing. Yamaguchi recalls seeing the bomber and two small parachutes before there was “a great flash in the sky, and I was blown over.” The explosion ruptured his eardrums, blinded him temporarily, and left him with serious burns up and down the left side of his body. He crawled to an air raid shelter where he spent the night with several colleagues

before returning to Nagasaki the following day. In Nagasaki, he received treatment for his wounds and despite being heavily bandaged, he reported for work on August 9.

At 11 am on August 9, Yamaguchi was describing the blast in Hiroshima to his supervisor when an American bomber dropped the “Fat Man” atomic bomb on Nagasaki. His workplace again put him less than 2 miles from ground zero, but this time he was unhurt by the explosion. However, he was unable to seek replacement for his now ruined bandages, and he suffered from a high fever for over a week.

Yamaguchi lost hearing in his left ear as a result of the Hiroshima explosion. He also went bald temporarily and he was constantly covered in bandages for the next several years. Despite this, Yamaguchi went on to lead a healthy life. Late in his life however, he began to suffer from radiation-related ailments, including cataracts and acute leukemia.

His wife also suffered radiation poisoning from the fallout after the Nagasaki explosion and died in 2008 (at 88) of kidney and liver cancer after a lifetime of illness. All three of his children reported that they also suffered from health problems that they thought were inherited from their parents' exposure to deadly radiation.

Yamaguchi eventually became a vocal proponent of nuclear disarmament. In an interview, he said, “The reason that I hate the atomic bomb is because of what it does to the dignity of human beings.” Speaking through his daughter during a telephone interview, he said, “I can't understand why the world does not understand the agony of nuclear bombs. How can they keep developing these weapons?”

He is the only person to have been officially recognized by the government of Japan as surviving both atomic explosions. He died of stomach cancer on January 4, 2010 at the age of 93.



Name _____

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Directions: *After reading the passage, answer each question below in complete sentences.*

1. How did Tsutomu Yamaguchi come to be in both cities when the bombs were dropped?
2. Which bomb was more damaging to Yamaguchi and why?
3. How did the bombs affect Japanese people like Yamaguchi long-term?
4. What was Yamaguchi's reasoning for nuclear disarmament?
5. Do you agree or disagree with his opinion on disarmament? Explain.
6. Do you consider Yamaguchi to be lucky or unlucky? Explain.
7. Do you think history has any relevance to events in the world today? Explain why or why not.