Fukushima-is-still-news

- vol. 16 –

Books & Films

Odile Girard

Référence bibliographique
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INTRODUCTION

J'ai « découvert » l'écologie au début des années 70, croisant dans le même temps la pollution, les luttes paysannes et la malbouffe, la médecine qui avait (déjà) perdu son âme, les mouvements sociaux et bien sûr le nucléaire qui a occupé une grande partie de ma vie.

Après la catastrophe de mars 2011 au Japon, j'ai suivi chaque jour une partie des grands journaux japonais anglophones pour essayer de sauvegarder un maximum d'articles ayant trait à Fukushima. L'idée était de conserver une sorte d'archive accessible à tous, qu'ils soient écrivains, journalistes ou tout simplement intéressés.

Le blog « Fukushima-is-still-news » a été poursuivi jusqu'en 2019. Ci-dessous, la conclusion parue le jour où j'ai décidé d'arrêter mon blog.

End of March 2019: Time to stop this blog
29 Mars 2019
Rédigé par fukushima-is-still-news et publié depuis Overblog

I have been collecting and spreading information on the Fukushima disaster for more than 8 years.
More than ever I am convinced that the name of my blog « Fukushima-is-still-news » was aptly chosen. Or perhaps i should have called it « Fukushima should still be news ». What i'm getting at is that i know the disaster is going on and we cannot simply forget Fukushima and turn the page. But the mode of action I chose 8 years ago has its limits and it is time for me to stop this blog.
I don't want the contents to be lost, so I will try and publish the lot with the Éditions de Fukushima so that the information remains available online.
Good bye for now. I am not doing a disappearing act. I'm still there tracking what's going on in the world of nukes.

C'est maintenant chose faite. Le blog *fukushima-is-still-news* est désormais disponible aux Éditions de Fukushima. Une fois de plus merci à mon ami Pierre, qui m'a convaincue à l'époque de tenir ce blog et m'a aidée à le lancer.

Odile Girard

Avertissement

La mise en page de dizaines de milliers de pages étant trop fastidieuse, nous avons préféré dans un premier temps éditer les volumes 7 à 16 sans mise en page particulière plutôt que de risquer de ne jamais les éditer. Chacun de ces livres est donc, dans la version présente, constitué des articles du blog copiés de manière brute. Les articles sont disposés a priori chronologiquement. Nous nous excusons donc pour l'absence de table des matières. La recherche peut toutefois facilement être effectuée par mot clé avec la fonction CRTL + F

Le présent volume est le dernier d'une collection de 16 ouvrages dont voici les titres :

Vol. 1 : Daiichi Nuclear Plant (2012-2014)

Vol. 2 : Daiichi Nuclear Plant (2015-2019)

Vol. 3 : Radioactive Fallout And Waste,
No.4 Fuel Removal,
Nuclear Workers,
and UN Conference

Vol. 4 : Nuke Safety (2012-2015)

Vol. 5 : Nuke Safety (2016-2019)

Vol. 6 : Reprocessing,
Storage Nuclear Waste,
and Decommissioning

Vol. 7 : Practical Problems For The Japanese Population
2012-2014

Vol. 8 : Practical Problems For The Japanese Population
2015-2017

Vol. 9 : Practical Problems For The Japanese Population
2018-2019

Vol. 10 : Health Effects Of Radiation
and Collateral Effects

Vol. 11 : Anti-Nuclear Activity-Opinion

Vol. 12 : Vested Interests - Transparency - Corruption (1)

Vol. 13 : Vested Interests - Transparency - Corruption (2)
and Olympics

Vol. 14 : Nuclear Weapons

Vol. 15 : Nuclear Future,
Start Again,
and New Techniques - Alternatives & Renewables

Vol. 16 : Books & Films

Akira Onoda films Fukushima

March 6, 2015

FOUR YEARS AFTER: For filmmaker, everything changed in Fukushima hometown

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201503060010

By TAKESHI TERUYA/ Starff Writer

FUTABA, Fukushima Prefecture--Akira Onoda's video footage of his hometown runs 350 hours, but it does not contain a single shot of his favorite scene--the sunrise over the coastal village.

That is because residents can enter Futaba only 15 times a year and only between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Futaba co-hosts the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, and four years after disaster struck the facility, most areas of Futaba remain largely off-limits to residents.

When he can, Onoda, a 24-year-old graduate student at Ibaraki University, uses his video camera to capture the deterioration of the uninhibited houses and infrastructure in Futaba.

He has also recorded interviews with about 150 Futaba evacuees at their new homes, from northern Miyagi Prefecture to southern Shimane Prefecture.

"There is a lot to be seen in the current Futaba aside from the footage recorded by the mass media," Onoda said.

Growing up in Futaba, Onoda only had good memories of the quiet and peaceful town. He once wanted to become a town official to serve the residents.

When he was a sophomore at college, the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami struck on March 11, 2011, triggering the nuclear accident that completely changed the sleepy rural town.

TV news coverage showed his desperate-looking acquaintances furiously criticizing Futaba officials and Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the plant, for bringing misery to the town.

Onoda felt he had lost Futaba.

During a soul-searching period in April 2012, he traveled to Britain on a study program.

But even on the far side of the planet, Onoda always thought of Fukushima. When he took part in a theater play with the nuclear disaster as the theme, an audience member asked him how his hometown has changed since the triple meltdown.

Upon his return to Japan in December that year, Onoda decided to record the conditions of his hometown and his interviews with Futaba evacuees. But the obstacles were high for the documentary production.

All residents were forced to evacuate after the nuclear disaster started. Access is limited for most Futaba areas, which are still designated as "difficult-to-return zones," with annual radiation doses of 50 millisieverts or more.

Onoda has also had a difficult time accepting the drastic changes in the characters of many of his acquaintances from the town.

One of his neighbors was known for his cheerful personality before the disaster. Onoda said he was surprised to see a new side of the neighbor that was full of resentment and bitterness toward TEPCO.

Onoda also interviewed a neighbor whose son was killed in the tsunami, as well as TEPCO employees assigned to work in highly contaminated areas.

He has already created a 30-minute documentary from footage he recorded before November 2013. It has been shown at disaster-related events in Saitama and Tochigi prefectures.
Onoda plans to produce a sequel from materials he is currently shooting and give away the DVDs to evacuees from Futaba.
“I don’t believe that Futaba can become the peaceful place that it once was before the disaster anytime soon,” Onoda said. “For now, I only hope that it becomes a town that we can freely visit at any moment.”

Do they deserve it?

March 4, 2015

In the cinematic wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/03/04/films/cinematic-wake-fukushima-nuclear-disaster/#.VPgblC51Cos

by Mark Schilling
Special To The Japan Times

In January 2013 Eiga Geijutsu magazine released its annual "Best 10 and Worst 10" lists. The two worst films of 2012, as chosen by the magazine's panel of critics, were Sion Sono's "Himizu" and "Kibo no Kuni (Land of Hope)." The former is about a teenage boy (Shota Sometani) driven to violence by his abusive father, but Sono rewrote the script — which was based on a manga by Minoru Furuya — to reflect the human cost of the Great East Japan Earthquake and resulting disasters of March 11, 2011. One addition in the rewrite was an elderly disaster victim (Tetsu Watanabe) who has lost everything but still tries to help the troubled young hero.

For "Land of Hope," Sono wrote a story set in a near-future Japan that has learned nothing from the reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. When a similar catastrophe occurs, hazmat-suited men set up a fence around a no-go zone, dividing two neighboring families in a rural community — to devastating results.

Why the bashing from Eiga Geijutsu? "Sono is a good director, but . . . making such films so soon after such a big, shocking disaster is just shallow," said critic Ken Terawaki in explaining his thumbs-down verdict. He didn't, however, similarly condemn the many documentary filmmakers who had streamed north after 3/11 and rushed out films, including the 29 that the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival screened in October 2011 — or, for that matter, the hundreds of 3/11-themed programs made by NHK and other broadcasters local, national and foreign.

Why not leave the immediate reporting of this national tragedy to the nonfiction professionals and wait a decent interval until weighing in with a fiction film? Sono's answer to me, in an interview timed for the October 2012 release of "Land of Hope," was that the Japanese media reported the public face of the victims, but not their private reality.

"When the camera was on, they said something different from what they had told me," he explained. "I realized that they would be more honest if I didn't film them and just listened sincerely."

He told me he had talked to dozens of victims before fictionalizing their stories. That didn't sound so shallow to me.

It will soon be the fourth anniversary of the worst calamity in Japan since the atomic bombings of World War II struck Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Has enough time passed to begin making fiction films about 3/11? In fact, films have been made, but none have received the critical drubbing that Sono's got from Eiga Geijutsu. (Truth be told, the magazine's critics regularly dump on Sono's non-3/11 films as well, with the exception of "Ai no Mukidashi [Love Exposure]," which was listed as one of the "Best 10" films from 2009.)

One was "Itai: Asu e no Tokakan (Reunion)," Ryoichi Kimizuka's docudrama based on the true story of an elderly volunteer (Toshiyuki Nishida) who cares for the dead and their grieving loved ones at a temporary morgue in Kamaishi, Iwate Prefecture. The film, with its starkly realistic scenes of corpses and rescue workers, was hardly a typical project for Kimizuka and executive producer (now president and COO of

Fuji TV) Chihiro Kameyama, who had previously worked together on the megahit “Odoru Daisosasen (Bayside Shakedown)” cop thriller series. Despite the participation of these hit-makers, “Reunion” earned only ¥370 million following its February 2012 release.

Another was “Arekara (Since Then),” Makoto Shinozaki’s indie drama about a couple torn apart in the 3/11 aftermath, with the woman stranded in Tokyo and the man suffering a nervous breakdown in the affected Tohoku region. Released in theaters in March 2013, the film captured the anxious mood in Tokyo immediately after the disaster in Fukushima, when everyone was waiting for the nuclear shoe to drop.

Still another was Nao Kubota’s “Ieji (Homeland),” which opened in March 2014. As documentarian Kubota’s fiction-feature debut, the film mixed evocative footage of abandoned towns and fields in Fukushima with the story of a farming family living in temporary housing who are slowly going to pieces. Then a long-missing son (Kenichi Matsuyama) returns with a quixotic plan to plant the irradiated family fields. Though the film touches on sensitive topics, such as the long-term dependence of working-age nuclear refugees on government money, its stance is finally closer to resigned acceptance than Sono’s outspoken resistance to the powers that be.

Meanwhile, 3/11-themed documentaries continue to be made, such as “Futaba Kara Toku Hanarete Dainibu (Nuclear Nation II),” Atsushi Funahashi’s recently released follow-up to his hard-hitting 2012 documentary on a Fukushima town that once embraced the nuclear plant in its neighborhood, but is now dealing with the disaster’s lasting damage to the local economy and social fabric.

Also, NHK veteran Atsunori Kawamura has made “Otsunami 3.11 Mirai e no Kioku (The Great 3.11 Tsunami: Remembering for the Future),” a 3-D documentary opening on March 21 that records tsunami survivors and their communities over a three-year period. And Mayu Nakamura has shot “Naoto Hitorikkiri (Alone in Fukushima),” a documentary about a man caring for abandoned animals in the shadow of the Fukushima nuclear reactors, set for release on April 18.

Fiction films, however, remain thin on the ground, which strikes me as unfortunate. The entire 3/11 story is replete with drama, from the story of the “Fukushima 50” who tirelessly battled — at the risk of their lives — to keep the crippled reactors from blowing sky high to the political, bureaucratic and corporate finagling, and bumbling surrounding the Fukushima plant debacle, from construction to cleanup. Instead of a major film about 3/11, however, the local industry is churning out the usual mysteries and teenage romances, as well as WWII dramas to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of the conflict in August. The story of Japanese victimization in that long-ago tragedy never grows old.

“The theme of nuclear power is still taboo in Japan,” Sono told me two years ago. “Investors here said to me, ‘You can make a movie on anything you want, we’ll finance it,’ but when I mentioned nuclear power, they went, ‘Ah, no, we can’t do that.’ ” Waiting for a “suitable” amount of time to pass, as Terawaki suggested, would hardly soften that resistance. Instead, as the current administration pushes for the restart of nuclear plants and the memories of 3/11 fade, it has, if anything, become stronger.

I would love for Toho or any other studio to prove me wrong.

Watanabe's stories of Fukushima

March 9, 2015

FOUR YEARS AFTER: Raw voices from Fukushima's aftermath heard in Tokyo

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201503090059

By LOUIS TEMPLADO/ AJW Staff Writer

Essayist Ichie Watanabe has heard dozens of life stories from people impacted by the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear accident that followed, but she has done more than simply writing them down. Instead she has brought the narrators themselves to Tokyo, creating a forum where their raw voices can reach across the growing void between life in the disaster-stricken areas and how it is seen by outsiders.

“For many people here in the city, the disaster is beginning to seem like something that happened long ago and far away,” says Watanabe, 70. “But for those in Fukushima and other stricken areas, it’s still going on every day, even as people pay less attention."

She hosted the first “Fukushima no koe wo kiko!” (I'll hear Fukushima's voice) Tokyo talk session in March 2012. This month marked the 14th gathering.

Among those she has introduced in the past sessions is Shigeki Ota, a Tokyo native who moved to the Hippo district in Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture, in 1995 to run a farm with his family.

“The event gives us a chance to speak directly and give our view of what is happening, which is not always the same as what they learn from the news,” Ota says.

Watanabe, who at times works with her husband, the writer Makoto Shiina, first went to Fukushima in July 2011 as a volunteer, working with survivors mainly around the Minami-Soma area.

Because of her age, she says, elderly victims--especially women who found themselves living alone in temporary shelters--opened up more easily to her, and their stories resonated with experiences in her own life.

Born in Manchuria in 1945, Watanabe and her mother were repatriated at war's end to Japan, where the pair found it difficult to settle down in any one place. After she decided to become a writer, Watanabe spent nearly 20 years traveling to Tibet, depicting the lives of Tibetans struggling to maintain their identity while living under Chinese rule.

What she has seen in Fukushima, she says, is not very different from what she has seen in Tibet.

"In both places the people are being told that their lives are being improved, that progress has come and things are moving forward. To a certain extent that's true, but not everyone can walk at the same pace, and those who can't are being left behind," says Watanabe.

In Fukushima, she first set up an e-mail magazine so that residents scattered into temporary housing facilities could read her stories and learn about each others’ struggles.

But she felt there was more in her encounters than she could put into words.

“With each article I wrote, I became more aware that I could only express the residents’ experiences with words of my choice, and not really deliver what it is I felt directly from their presence,” says Watanabe.

"Over the past couple of years, residents have begun to feel abandoned and forgotten, and increasingly have no way of delivering their feelings to the outside world. There are some people whom the media have focused on, but many of the speakers who come here come because they have no other forum."

Among those invited to those sessions are elderly women who to this day live in temporary shelters, increasingly isolated as other residents move out; evacuees who have had to leave their homes but started new lives nearby; and farmers determined to stay where they are.

Ota, 43, has spoken at Fukushima no koe wo kiko! twice.

"When I contacted a pediatrician I knew in Tokyo to ask about how he was reacting to the news 'concerning the effects of the nuclear power plant accident on agricultural products,' I expected to hear him say that there was no need to worry," Ota told the audience when he first spoke at the event. "Instead I learned that he was trying to get his food elsewhere and to not touch our products. On one level I could understand their desire for safety, but at the same time, I was saddened by the call to refuse food from our region."

Looking back on his appearance in Tokyo, Ota adds that mixed feelings remain unresolved even today.

“There are many people in Tokyo who can’t understand why we stay where we are. Many say we should leave," says Ota, whose farm is located about 50 kilometers from the reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant damaged during the quake and tsunami. He makes miso, which is sold at the event, and is working to turn a disused school in his locale into a senior care facility for his community.

"I want to tell people that we accept the dangers and contradictions of our situation, and also need to feel hope and look forward with our everyday lives. Many people still don’t realize that they are responsible for what has happened, and the talk is a chance to remind them.”

Often there’s a dissonance between what the survivors say and what those far away want to hear, says Watanabe.

“In Tokyo, people believe that they are thinking about the people affected by the disaster when they are actually listening to what they want to hear,” she says.

“People ask the question, ‘Why aren’t you more vocal about your views on nuclear power? You are the ones most affected by the disaster and have the right to speak the loudest.’ They can’t answer because their feelings are so much more complicated than we can imagine. **For them continuing to live in the area is their statement--it is their form of protest.”**

Airi's book

March 13, 2015

Airi Sato, who was killed in the tsunami on March 11, 2011 (Provided by Mika Sato)

FOUR YEARS AFTER: Girl killed in tsunami lives on in picture book

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/life_and_death/AJ201503130013

By YOSHINOBU MOTEGI/ Staff Writer

ISHINOMAKI, Miyagi Prefecture--Keiko Sekiguchi came up with a project to share in the sorrow of a grieving mother whose young daughter was killed in the 2011 disaster.

Sekiguchi wrote a letter to the mother, “I know I won’t be able to heal your grief, but please let me stand by your side.”

The mother, Mika Sato, was hesitant. But she eventually overcame her reluctance, resulting in a recently published 56-page picture book created in part by nearly two dozen children and Sato’s younger daughter.

The main character of “I want to call you my Mom--Girl comes down from heaven” is Airi Sato, who was 6 years old when she was killed in the tsunami that struck the Tohoku region on March 11, 2011.

Although the book revolves around the tragedy, it has uplifting moments of Airi’s happy days with her family, her bravery in the face of disaster, and her words of encouragement.

“She has lived the six years to the fullest,” the book says. “She has lived her life with all her strength.”

Sekiguchi, a Maebashi-based children's book author, produced the picture book under the pen name of Fatima Coo.

After seeing Sato, 40, on TV in March 2014, Sekiguchi, 52, sent Sato the eight-page letter along with 11 of her illustrated books on the theme of life and love.

The mother had expressed concerns that she might appear brazen in requesting a book about her daughter. But six months later, Sato entrusted Sekiguchi to create the picture book about Airi's life.

"I want educators to read this book so the same grief won't be repeated," Sato said. "I hope the book will convey the preciousness of life through the story of Airi, who wanted to live but could not."

Kindergarten pupils, including Airi, were in a bus moving downhill from their school toward the coast of Ishinomaki after the magnitude-9.0 earthquake struck.

According to survivors of the disaster, children started crying, prompting Airi to tell them: "It will be OK. You mustn't be scared."

The children practiced the songs they had planned to sing at a thank-you party for teachers after the kindergarten commencement ceremony in four days' time. Airi had practiced the songs with her mother.

The bus was engulfed by the tsunami and caught fire. Airi and four other children were killed.

In the book, Airi smiles to an angel in heaven. "I was able to call Mom a lot," she says.

She also describes her favorite dishes--curry rice, meat and potato stew, and hamburg steak--and her love of drawing rainbows and hearts.

Airi also notes that the kimono she wore at a children's festival and the backpack she planned to use at elementary school were both in her favorite color of light blue.

The girl says her six years were filled with happy memories surrounded by her family, and the book says that death cannot tear apart love.

The front cover illustration of Airi was created by Sekiguchi's 11-year-old daughter. Twenty-two pictures in the book were drawn by children in Maebashi.

The back cover art was drawn by Juri, Airi's younger sister, who is now 7. The illustration shows the two sisters walking hand in hand.

"The book is filled with warmth," Sekiguchi said. "Airi continues to live in the book."

Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster

Invisible enemy: A resident of Fukushima Prefecture briefly returns to her irradiated home in the no-go zone near the power plant." | Kyodo

A tragic story of red tape and fatal ineptitude

by Stephen Mansfield
Special To The Japan Times

At 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, a 9-magnitude megathrust earthquake triggered a tsunami that slammed into the aging Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant along the country's northeastern coastline, less than 250 km north of the capital. In the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl, the plant's power systems failed, causing cooling units to shut down and sending reactor cores into meltdown.

Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster, by David Lochbaum, Edwin Lyman, Susan Q. Stranahan and The Union of Concerned Scientists

320 pages.

The new press, Nonfiction.

As radiation began spreading over a landscape of rice paddies, dairy farms and fishing villages, Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s efforts at containment involved not only the plant under their management, but limiting access to procedural records, downplaying vulnerabilities and disseminating misinformation. If the Fukushima disaster is a tale of transparency and deceit — of heroism matched by fatal ineptitude — it is also, as the writers of "Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster" characterize it, a "saga of a technology promoted through the careful nurturing of a myth: the myth of safety."

This detailed account is a collaboration between scientists and a senior journalist who covered the Three Mile Island accident — these are voices worth paying heed to. The chronological structure of the book replicates the events as they unfolded on March 2011, events that were broadcast almost live as they

happened at the time thanks to technological advances such as remote cameras placed at ports and other critical locations, cellphones, webcams, YouTube and Twitter. The Fukushima disaster was, at the time, the world's most accurately monitored calamity.

In Japan, economics not only trumps heritage, nature and the state of the environment, but also safety. As the authors explain, the reasons for constructing nuclear reactors in Fukushima Prefecture were understandable, given the region's underdeveloped coastline and progressive depopulation. But even in this instance, duplicity is revealed. Suspecting that some locals might object to the planned nuclear plant, meetings between local officials and Tepco were held in secret. When the electric company sent female employees to accompany utility engineers on inspection trips, they disguised them as vacationing hikers to avoid identification.

The Japanese public, as the authors point out, were not entirely blameless. Mollified by improvements in the economy and an apparently efficient electrical delivery system, they ignored the signs: minor nuclear accidents, warnings from professional bodies about the risks of constructing reactors on the world's most seismically volatile terrain and press reports about reactor managers falsifying accident reports and other cover-ups. On the rare occasions when lawsuits challenging nuclear safety made it to the courts, they were routinely dismissed. In many cases, independent specialists were dependent upon the very industry they were examining for their livelihoods and research funding. Some of that cozy complacency would be shattered, but not broken, with the triple shock of a megaquake, tsunami and the hydrogen explosions that took place in buildings at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

The same refusal to entertain scenarios that might challenge the assumption of nuclear safety was responsible for many of the statements made as the disaster unfurled. On March 11, government spokesman Yukio Edano asserted, without a trace of doubt, that "there is no radiation leak, nor will there be a leak."

The book is notable for including little reported, but telling, incidents and details. We learn, for example, that a geological survey estimated that the amount of surface energy displaced by the seismic rupture, was enough to power the city of Los Angeles for one year; that the tsunami approaching Japan's eastern coast possessed enough power to snap off over 60 km of the Antarctic ice shelf. In a desperate effort to reboot the failed electric grid, Tepco headquarters ordered 1,000 spare car batteries to be sent to the plant. The subsequent delivery was held up for long, crucial hours by delays in securing the government permits necessary to approve the transport of the batteries along expressways. The story serves as a salutary metaphor for Japanese red tape and obstructionism.

While the focus of the book is determinedly on the Fukushima disaster, the authors, in their wider analysis of nuclear issues, are at pains to point out that what occurred in the Tohoku region was an accident that just *happened* to take place in Japan. They suggest that the weaknesses in design and regulatory oversights, and the shortcomings in operating the systems — all of which this particular disaster highlighted — exist wherever nuclear reactors operate.

Sadly, Fukushima is not a redemptive story, but one of tumescent venality and passionate ignorance. With the current government hell-bent on nuclear restarts, Japan's historic cycles of destruction and costly renewal are all but set to be re-enacted.

U.S. urbanologist Charles Beard, reflecting on the failure of the reconstruction plan for Tokyo following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, expressed doubts about the ability of the authorities to carry out a "comprehensive scheme of city planning in the face of organized, short-sighted private interests and political ineptitude." Almost a century on, many of the dispossessed victims of the March 11 catastrophe might legitimately ask if anything has really changed.

Fukushima no koe wo kiko!

March 09, 2015

FOUR YEARS AFTER: Raw voices from Fukushima's aftermath heard in Tokyo

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201503090059

By LOUIS TEMPLADO/ AJW Staff Writer

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Among those she has introduced in the past sessions is Shigeki Ota, a Tokyo native who moved to the Hippo district in Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture, in 1995 to run a farm with his family.

“The event gives us a chance to speak directly and give our view of what is happening, which is not always the same as what they learn from the news,” Ota says.

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Among those invited to those sessions are elderly women who to this day live in temporary shelters, increasingly isolated as other residents move out; evacuees who have had to leave their homes but started new lives nearby; and farmers determined to stay where they are.

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Looking back on his appearance in Tokyo, Ota adds that mixed feelings remain unresolved even today.

“There are many people in Tokyo who can’t understand why we stay where we are. Many say we should leave," says Ota, whose farm is located about 50 kilometers from the reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant damaged during the quake and tsunami. He makes miso, which is sold at the event, and is working to turn a disused school in his locale into a senior care facility for his community.

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Often there’s a dissonance between what the survivors say and what those far away want to hear, says Watanabe.

“In Tokyo, people believe that they are thinking about the people affected by the disaster when they are actually listening to what they want to hear,” she says.

“People ask the question, ‘Why aren’t you more vocal about your views on nuclear power? You are the ones most affected by the disaster and have the right to speak the loudest.’ They can’t answer because their feelings are so much more complicated than we can imagine. For them continuing to live in the area is their statement--it is their form of protest.”

The "10 lessons from Fukushima"

April 1, 2015

Fukushima crisis was a hard lesson but one vital to share, groups say

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/01/national/fukushima-crisis-hard-lesson-one-vital-share-groups-say/#.VRvtiuHwmos

by Megan Rowling
Thomson Reuters Foundation
SENDAI – When professional boxer and model Tomomi Takano heard that children in Fukushima Prefecture were becoming unfit and overweight because the 2011 nuclear crisis limited the time they could play outside, she decided to use her skills to help.
Last month, the glamorous 27-year-old taught some 200 junior high school students in the village of Otama an indoor workout based on boxing moves.
"They really concentrated on the boxing and tried hard," she said at a recent U.N. conference hosted in Sendai about disaster risks. The boxer hopes to run more sessions in Fukushima to improve children's agility and provide an outlet for their emotions.
Takano and social activists in Sendai said they wanted to communicate to the world the human impacts of the crisis sparked when the huge 3/11 earthquake and tsunami caused nuclear reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 plant to experience three core meltdowns.
The nuclear disaster was a sensitive subject at the U.N. summit, where 187 governments adopted a new 15-year plan to reduce the risk of disasters around the world.
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made only passing reference to the nuclear catastrophe in his opening speech at the conference. But groups representing citizens affected by the crisis acknowledged in Sendai that tentative progress was being made.
Masaaki Ohashi, co-chair of JCC2015, a coalition of humanitarian nongovernmental organizations formed ahead of the summit, praised the new Sendai disaster mitigation framework for stating clearly that it applies to man-made and technological hazards, which cover nuclear power, as well as natural hazards.
He and others also noted the importance of an official presentation made at the conference about the lessons learned from the Fukushima crisis.
"The Japanese government, represented by the Cabinet Office, has clearly indicated that they are breaking away from the 'safety' myth around nuclear power plants, so we're seeing a step forward," said Takeshi Komino, general secretary of the aid agency CWS Japan.
At a session on technological hazards, which also covered the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Tetsuya Yamamoto, deputy director general of Japan's Nuclear Disaster Management Bureau, said the government was strengthening plans both to prevent and to respond to nuclear emergencies.
"Our preparedness (for Fukushima) was totally inefficient; we assumed the incident would affect a 10-km radius from the plant, but it was more than 30 km," he said.
The operation to evacuate people living in the danger zone was confused and not enough support was provided, he said. Failings meant that some hospital patients died at evacuation centers, he noted.

A disaster prevention and evacuation plan has since been drawn up for 550,000 people, Yamamoto said.
The government is continuing with its decontamination work and is monitoring people's health in Fukushima, offering tests for thyroid cancer to those aged 18 and under, he added.
Civil society groups supporting Fukushima residents still struggling with the ongoing crisis released a booklet at the Sendai conference containing key lessons from the disaster. The "10 Lessons from Fukushima" is available in several languages including English.
It provides information on the effects of exposure to radiation, and how at-risk people can better protect their health, homes and livelihoods in the event of a nuclear crisis.
The booklet also describes how nuclear power was promoted through advertising and other methods by the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Co. starting in the 1960s as a safe, clean form of energy that would benefit regional economies.
Komino of CWS Japan said it should be up to countries and communities to decide whether they want nuclear power, but added, "We are against the creation of the safety myth.
"Proactive risk identification and risk disclosure to the communities prior to the installation of such facilities is critical," he emphasized.
Ohashi of JCC2015 said that, as the central government aims to export nuclear energy technology to developing countries, it bears a "producer's responsibility" to share its knowledge about the risks and how to deal with them.
"Japan has the ability to help us to learn as an international community what some of the critical issues are," said Marcus Oxley, executive director of the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR).
This is particularly important as climate change increases the pressure to move from fossil fuel use to alternative sources of energy, including nuclear power, he added.
Toshiyuki Takeuchi of the Fukushima Beacon for Global Citizens Network (FUKUDEN), a small organization that wrote much of the booklet launched in Sendai and led study tours of the affected areas, pointed to the need to adapt Japan's experience to different contexts.
For example, in countries that have shown interest in nuclear power, including Bangladesh and Thailand, it may be difficult for people to shut themselves inside concrete buildings in the event of a disaster. And in others, low literacy levels make written public education materials less useful than comic strip explanations.
Takeuchi questioned the legitimacy of suggesting that nuclear emergencies can really be prevented.
"Even if you can put risk-reduction measures in place, it would cost a ridiculous amount," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in Fukushima.
The "10 Lessons from Fukushima" booklet highlights the longer-term social and economic consequences of the crisis, including families splitting apart. It tells the story of a 29-year-old mother who decided to take her young daughter to live in a neighboring prefecture due to health fears, while her husband stayed behind to work.
Of the 160,000 people who left their homes after the nuclear disaster started, around 120,000 are still classified as evacuees. Some remain in cramped temporary accommodations, in prefabricated buildings erected in parks and other public land.
In places like Iwaki, south of the evacuation zone, the influx of displaced people seeking new homes and jobs has stirred resentment among residents, according to FUKUDEN.
Even though local-level officials have made preparations in efforts to revitalize evacuated towns and villages once they are decreed safe to return to, there is concern that only older generations will want to return, raising questions about their future viability.

“When you have these long-term persistent shocks . . . resilience starts to break down within a society,” GNDR’s Oxley said.

Both activists and United Nations officials said the memory of disasters must be preserved so that knowledge can be shared and used to improve protection.

“People are reluctant to talk about the nuclear issue . . . so gradually we are going to forget about it,” said Ohashi of JCC2015.

Initiatives by Japanese groups, including their booklet, are aimed at ensuring “people know the reality” of a nuclear crisis, he said. “Maybe Fukushima could become a mecca for (learning about) nuclear disasters in the future.”

Radiation and one's hometown

April 1, 2015 + books and films

Picture book about Fukushima nuclear crisis serves as education tool at schools

http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150401p2a00m0na015000c.html

A picture book has become a popular tool in classrooms in Japan to illustrate the loss and sorrow that people are facing in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear crisis to help prevent memories of the disaster from fading.

The book, titled "Todoke minna no omoi: hoshano to furusato" (To reach you: radiation and one's hometown), portrays Myasa the cat as the protagonist that lives near the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Myasa and its human family are forced to evacuate far from home in the wake of the nuclear meltdown, and the cat often thinks about its fellow animals such as cows, pigs and chickens that were left behind in radiation contaminated areas. Myasa promises to pass down stories about the nuclear disaster in hopes that such a tragedy is never repeated.

Mika Muraoka, the author of the book, hopes that the story of the feline will help readers think back on problems regarding the nuclear plant and its surrounding areas as people are beginning to lose interest in the issue.

Muraoka began writing children's books about life in 2007 after she lost her friend to suicide and traveled across the country to read her stories to children. She had visited a junior high school in the city of Fukushima six months before the nuclear meltdown and came to know students and their parents there. The author decided to write the Fukushima-themed book after hearing about hardships local residents faced while living as evacuees in the fear of radiation.

"I wanted this book to not pose questions over the pros and cons of nuclear power, but rather to be a story by which readers have a fresh look at the importance of their families and hometowns and think about what they can do (to protect them)," Muraoka said.

Muraoka wrote the feline story to have a positive message for the future, and the book was completed in February 2014. The drawings for the book were done by painter Akio Watanabe, 65, native to Miharu, Fukushima Prefecture. Also, an endorsement comment from actor Toshiyuki Nishida, 67, who was born in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, is included on the book band.

In a year since the book was released, elementary and junior high schools, as well as childcare centers in Hokkaido, Miyagi and Kagoshima prefectures that host nuclear power stations and also schools in other parts of the country, have introduced story reading time for children using Muraoka's picture book. Muraoka herself continues to visit schools mainly in the Tokyo metropolitan area to read the book to children. She has traveled to schools in farther locations from her home in Tokyo, including Shizuoka and Kagawa prefectures to read the story.

The author has received various feedback from children, as well as teachers in emails and letters, such as, "I'll never forget the incident" and "I hope to protect my family and my hometown."

"The nuclear accident is something we all should remember. I would like not just children but also adults to read the book," Muraoka commented.

The picture book is published by Shin-Nihon Shuppan Sha and on sale at 1,500 yen (before tax).

April 01, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Onoda's video footage of Futaba

Collapsed houses remain in the town center of Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, on Feb. 22. (Takeshi Teruya)

FOUR YEARS AFTER: For filmmaker, everything changed in Fukushima hometown

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201503060010

March 06, 2015
By TAKESHI TERUYA/ Starff Writer
FUTABA, Fukushima Prefecture--Akira Onoda's video footage of his hometown runs 350 hours, but it does not contain a single shot of his favorite scene--the sunrise over the coastal village.
That is because residents can enter Futaba only 15 times a year and only between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.
Futaba co-hosts the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, and four years after disaster struck the facility, most areas of Futaba remain largely off-limits to residents.
When he can, Onoda, a 24-year-old graduate student at Ibaraki University, uses his video camera to capture the deterioration of the uninhibited houses and infrastructure in Futaba.
He has also recorded interviews with about 150 Futaba evacuees at their new homes, from northern Miyagi Prefecture to southern Shimane Prefecture.
"There is a lot to be seen in the current Futaba aside from the footage recorded by the mass media," Onoda said.

Growing up in Futaba, Onoda only had good memories of the quiet and peaceful town. He once wanted to become a town official to serve the residents.

When he was a sophomore at college, the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami struck on March 11, 2011, triggering the nuclear accident that completely changed the sleepy rural town.

TV news coverage showed his desperate-looking acquaintances furiously criticizing Futaba officials and Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the plant, for bringing misery to the town.

Onoda felt he had lost Futaba.

During a soul-searching period in April 2012, he traveled to Britain on a study program.

But even on the far side of the planet, Onoda always thought of Fukushima. When he took part in a theater play with the nuclear disaster as the theme, an audience member asked him how his hometown has changed since the triple meltdown.

Upon his return to Japan in December that year, Onoda decided to record the conditions of his hometown and his interviews with Futaba evacuees. But the obstacles were high for the documentary production.

All residents were forced to evacuate after the nuclear disaster started. Access is limited for most Futaba areas, which are still designated as "difficult-to-return zones," with annual radiation doses of 50 millisieverts or more.

Onoda has also had a difficult time accepting the drastic changes in the characters of many of his acquaintances from the town.

One of his neighbors was known for his cheerful personality before the disaster. Onoda said he was surprised to see a new side of the neighbor that was full of resentment and bitterness toward TEPCO.

Onoda also interviewed a neighbor whose son was killed in the tsunami, as well as TEPCO employees assigned to work in highly contaminated areas.

He has already created a 30-minute documentary from footage he recorded before November 2013. It has been shown at disaster-related events in Saitama and Tochigi prefectures.

Onoda plans to produce a sequel from materials he is currently shooting and give away the DVDs to evacuees from Futaba.

"I don't believe that Futaba can become the peaceful place that it once was before the disaster anytime soon," Onoda said. "For now, I only hope that it becomes a town that we can freely visit at any moment."

No nukes: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima

April 17, 2015

Celebrities send 'no more Fukushimas' message in book to commemorate A-bombings

April 17, 2015
http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201504170079

By HIDEKI SOEJIMA/ Staff Writer

A nuclear-free world is the theme of a book that expresses the thoughts of Japanese celebrities and others that will be released to commemorate the 70th anniversaries of the 1945 atomic bombings.

The 128-page book, titled "No Nukes: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima," contains messages from 52 people, including such renowned artists as musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, actor Ken Watanabe and actress Sayuri Yoshinaga.

It is being published by Kodansha Ltd. and will go on sale April 20.

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Toshihide Maskawa and writer Kiyoshi Shigematsu also present their thoughts along with messages from survivors of the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which occurred on Aug. 6 and Aug. 9, 1945, respectively.

In the book, Sakamoto, who became actively involved in the anti-nuclear movement following the March 2011 crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, writes, "Declaring to the entire world that mankind cannot coexist with nuclear arms and power should be Japan's responsibility and way of contributing to global society as the only nation that has suffered from nuclear damage three times."

Watanabe writes, "Now that we have tasted the fear generated by nuclear power, a substance that cannot be fully controlled by humans, I feel that we will be unable to give our children a future if we do not make a drastic shift to renewable energy sources."

For her part, Yoshinaga said, "I wish for the Japanese to always have an allergy-like resistance toward nuclear weapons and energy."

Ichiro Ozawa, 57, an employee at Kodansha, who was in charge of the book's publication, was inspired to join the anti-nuclear movement in the summer 2013 after hearing Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue read that year's Nagasaki Peace Declaration.

The mayor stated, "I call on the Japanese government to consider once again that Japan is the only country to have suffered from a nuclear bombing."

Ozawa joined the Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons that autumn where he conceived the idea for the collaborative effort.

Ozawa asked Yuji Shimamoto, the editor behind Shogakukan Inc.'s "Nihonkoku Kenpo" (Constitution of Japan), a bestseller that sold almost a million copies, to collaborate on the project. They were joined by seven students from Hiroshima University, Nagasaki University and Fukushima University.

"We are hoping that the message of 'no nukes' one day becomes a standalone phrase as common as the term 'barrier-free,' " Ozawa said.

Release of tsunami-ravaged area

Central Kesennuma, Miyagi Prefecture, on March 12, 2011, a day after the earthquake and tsunami disaster (Provided by the Great East Japan Earthquake digital archives support center)

April 22, 2015

Tsunami-ravaged city releases 10,000 images of disaster, reconstruction

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/quake_tsunami/AJ201504220040

By TAKESHI AOSE/ Staff Writer

KESENNUMA, Miyagi Prefecture--This tsunami-ravaged northeastern city has released 10,500 images online of the destruction caused by the 2011 disaster and subsequent reconstruction work.

The city made the photos and video footage available in the hope that they will assist in enhancing disaster preparedness and prevention. There are no restrictions on using the images on other websites or publications.

The images, mostly taken by local residents and volunteers from outside the city, cover the immediate aftermath of the disaster triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake through to 2014.

City officials added data to the materials, such as when and where the images were recorded. The project cost around 1.3 million yen ($11,000).

Many come with local scenery prior to the disaster to compare how the areas changed afterward.

The images were originally kept by the Great East Japan Earthquake digital archives support center.

The Japanese-language website is at (http://kesennuma-da.jp/).

To make a query, users can enter keywords such as "tsunami," "fire" and "volunteer," or combine them with place names like "Shishiori Elementary School district" or "Koizumi Junior High School."

Yutaka Hoshide with Nagasaki opera in Tokyo

May 24, 2015

Nagasaki atomic bombing-themed opera coming to Tokyo

http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20150524p2a00m0et004000c.html

Japan Opera Foundation conductor Yutaka Hoshide is looking forward to picking up his baton in July when he will direct an atomic bombing-themed opera written by the Nagasaki Opera Association, as the country commemorates the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki this summer.

"As a member of the generation that was born during World War II, I want to express the meaning of peace through opera as a composite art," the 73-year-old conductor told the Mainichi Shimbun about the theatrical program "Inochi" (life) in which he has taken multiple roles, from writing script to taking up roles as artistic and technical director.

The opera, which features an A-bomb survivor nurse in Nagasaki in a three-act structure, will be played at New National Theatre in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward on July 25 and 26. The theater invites successful theatrical performances from across the country and has a joint showcase every one or two years.

Hoshide was born in Tokyo and completed courses on opera at the predecessor of Showa University of Music. He then moved to Germany in 1969 and served as vice conductor at the Nuremberg State Theater. While continuing his musical performances in European nations, including former East and West Germany, Hoshide moved the main base of his career to Japan and has been mentoring local opera companies in the country.

He's worked with the Nagasaki Opera Association for 30 years. It took Hoshide and the opera company over 10 years to complete "Inochi," whose music was composed by Kayoko Nishiki. The script for the program was written based on personal notes by A-bomb survivors and interviews with them.

"There isn't a single line in scenes of the bombing that I made up," Hoshide explains.

The opera was first played in Nagasaki two years ago, and then in Mie Prefecture. The performance in Tokyo, which will be its third showcase, will feature 40 members in an orchestra with some 80 performers from children as young as third-graders to those in their 70s. Most of the performing members are second or third generations of A-bomb survivors with different backgrounds -- some are music teachers, graduates of music schools and some used to sing in glee clubs. Members include A-bomb survivors as well.

Hoshide added, "Nagasaki is a city of prayers where bells from churches and temples ring at the same time. We'll perform to convey the value of life through the city's historical background and the ways characters in the opera choose to live."

Special website

Website shares photos, memories of evacuated Fukushima town

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201505220010

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

TSUKUBA, Ibaraki Prefecture--Once home to more than 6,000 people, the northeastern coastal town of Futaba today remains completely evacuated following the nuclear accident triggered by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.

The tragedy and tribulations that have befallen Futaba and its residents can now be revisited on a special website dedicated to the town (http://www.slis.tsukuba.ac.jp/futaba-archives/).

Online since April, the website was set up by a team led by University of Tsukuba professor Tetsuya Shirai. Shirai received the go-ahead for the project from the Futaba board of education to collect, examine and conserve thousands of items related to the disaster to share memories of the calamity with a wider audience.

Photos of the items that appear on the website include goodbye messages from students that were left on a blackboard in a classroom at Futaba Junior High School, and strings of origami cranes sent from across Japan and abroad to an evacuation shelter for town residents in the former Kisai Senior High School in Kazo, Saitama Prefecture.

"When I saw the website, it reminded me of the tragedy of the nuclear accident and the hardships that followed," Atsushi Hangai, head of the town's board of education said at a news conference at the university. "I think it will spur people to learn and think about the accident."

There are no prospects for lifting the evacuation order in Futaba. Ninety-six percent of the town remains uninhabitable due to dangerously high levels of radiation

Cesium to Shojo

May 23, 2015

Theater owner makes directorial debut with anti-nuclear fantasy/adventure offering

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/movies/AJ201505230019

A scene from "Cesium to Shojo" (Provided by Ryo Saitani)

By ATSUSHI OHARA/ Staff Writer

Ryo Saitani, owner-operator of a small theater, made his directorial debut when he was past the age of 60 to deliver an anti-nuclear message in fantasy/adventure format.

"Cesium to Shojo" (Cesium and the girl) relies on animation and musical scenes to tell a story that transcends time and space.

"Nothing was expected of me as a film director, so I threw in everything that I liked and made it in the way I liked," Saitani said.

Saitani operates Laputa Asagaya cinema in Tokyo. The film is based on his original screenplay.

The story centers around a 17-year-old high school student named Mimi-chan (played by Kaira Shirahase), who lives with her parents in the capital's Asagaya district. While walking home from school one day, Mimi-chan is hit by lightning and meets Raijin Ra San (God of Lightning). Through Raijin Ra San,

she meets seven other deities (played by Yusuke Kawazu, Hatsuo Yamaya and others). Mimi-chan and the deities soon undertake an adventure together, finding cesium hot spots and traveling back in time to visit Asagaya in the 1940s to see poet Hakushu Kitahara (1885-1942).

"After the 2011 nuclear accident, a 'science fiction-like' reality occurred with cesium contaminating the land in Tokyo. Yet, we had to go on with our day-to-day lives. I felt like I couldn't understand what was going on," Saitani said.

Although the director is angry with the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the stricken Fukushima No 1 nuclear power plant, he decided to infuse the film with an easy-going mood.

"No matter how angry you get or cry out, you can't do anything about the reality you face," Saitani said. "Besides, movies should be fun."

As a student, Saitani worked under film director Kihachi Okamoto. He went on to set up his own publishing company and also a movie theater, in addition to working as a producer for a film by Russian director Alexander Sokurov and opening an art-oriented animation school.

Saitani's vision for his film reflects his long-time devotion to cinema and animation. Another highlight is the animation sequences created by a wide variety of animation artists ranging from veteran Yoji Kuri to up-and-coming creator Manabu Himeda.

"I want to make two more films to make a 'cesium trilogy,'" Saitani said, breaking out in a smile. "I came to realize that it is more fun to make movies than making movie theaters."

"Cesium to Shojo" is currently showing at Yujiku Asagaya, a sister movie house of Laputa Asagaya until May 25. It is also showing at the Yokohama New Theater until June 5.

Visit the film's official website at (http://cesium-to-shyoujyo.com/).

Author Yu Miri moves to Minami-Soma

June 4, 2015

Away from home but where the heart is--novelist moves to Fukushima

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201506040003

By MASAKAZU HONDA/ Staff Writer

MINAMI-SOMA, Fukushima Prefecture--"Many people who know me think this is another abrupt and off-the-wall act," said award-winning author Yu Miri. "But it's not. I have been planning this for a long time."

The award-winning novelist moved her stuff, including 150 cardboard boxes packed with books, into Minami-Soma in April.

So why has the popular writer, who won the prestigious Akutagawa Literary Prize, decided to settle in the city, which is just 25 kilometers north of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant?

Yu, 46, has a personal history combined with artistic ideas that are linked to the town. That's why.

The Odaka district in southern Minami-Soma, which is 20 km from the Fukushima plant, was designated an evacuation zone on April 22, 2011. Yu entered it the day before without protective gear.

She remembered her mother, who had lived in the Oku-Aizu area in the prefecture, telling her a story of a "Xanadu"--a community that had disappeared, sinking beneath a lake.

Yu, who is of Korean descent, linked this to the Odaka district, which would soon be an empty ghost town after the evacuation.

She made the trip there thinking it might be the last time she could visit the place.

Since then she has continued to visit Minami-Soma.

In 2012, she started working as a host on a radio talk show there, which was part of a city-sponsored disaster-preparedness effort.

With help from local guests on the show, Yu was able to locate the site of the pinball parlor operated by her grandfather, who had fled from his home country during the Korean War.

The research bore fruit in the form of the novel "JR Ueno Eki Koen Guchi" (JR Ueno Station park exit), and also in another book, "Keikai Kuiki" (Caution zone), which is expected to be published by the end of the year.

Both books feature people who are forced to live away from their loved ones or the community where they were raised, losing a place to call home.

Among such people are her Korean grandfather, who abandoned his homeland, the lake community her mother told her a story about, and the evacuees from the Fukushima nuclear disaster who cannot, even now, return home.

"What is home for me, a third-generation Korean resident in Japan?" she keeps asking herself.

One reason she moved to Minami-Soma, she said, was to think.

"I want to continue to think (about home) by settling here, not by commuting here," Yu explained.

She has now sold her house in the tranquil town of Kamakura in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Godzilla game avoids controversial issue of radiation

June 3, 2015

PS4 Godzilla game steers clear of radiation, atomic weapons

AP

Godzillas galore, including last year's Hollywood version, stomp on buildings, thrashing about and breathing fire, in a video game going on sale globally in mid-July. But don't expect any references to radiation, the mutant reptile's trademark affliction.

Simply named "Godzilla," it's the first video game devoted to the radioactive creature in a decade. It's also the first such game for the Sony Corp. PlayStation 4 home machine, ensuring dazzling digital graphics.

Producer Shunsuke Fujita of Bandai Namco Entertainment is flush with excitement when he speaks about how he and his team are true Godzilla believers, having grown up on the movies. They were very careful to render what he calls its "totally cool" ferocity.

In the original 1954 movie, Toho Co. studios concocted the giant animal that arose as a mutation from nuclear testing in the Pacific. That had special resonance in Japan as the only nation to have been attacked with nuclear weapons.

Gareth Edwards, the director of the 2014 Hollywood Godzilla, also made a point to include backdrop references to atomic weapons and radiation.

But the game steers clear of the horror of both topics and Fujita is reluctant to explain why. What substitutes for radiation in the game is a reference to "energy," which Godzilla sucks up to gain strength.

"We realize radiation is something that can never be disassociated with Godzilla," is all Fujita would say on the topic.

Nuclear issues have become particularly contentious in Japan after the March 2011 tsunami set off three reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant and the surrounding areas were hit with radioactive fallout and thousands of residents were forced to evacuate.

Fukushima people face latent prejudice in Japan because of fears, some unfounded, about radiation.

Nuclear experts say the levels of exposure were not high or sustained enough to cause widespread health problems but there are some risks, including thyroid cancer in youngsters, that are being monitored.

Japan's 48 nuclear power reactors are now offline for a new regime of safety checks. The government wants to restart them but faces opposition from communities and others worried about radiation.

"We aimed for something that was as close to the original interpretations as possible," said Fujita, 29, proudly showing how the 1980s Godzilla can be pitted against the Hollywood Godzilla in a demonstration version of the game.

The fascination for game developers lay in an arty duplication of the shapes and movements of the various Godzillas, and in recreating the rival monsters in the films, such as the dragon-like King Ghidora, Mothra, which resembles a moth, and the obscure Jet Jaguar, according to Fujita.

"Godzilla is not just a villain, it's also a hero everyone adores, and so this game allows the player to be Godzilla and control Godzilla," he said.

Toho Co. made 28 films in the Godzilla series, starting from the 1954 classic, until it pulled the plug in 2004. The new game allows players to manipulate the various kinds of Godzillas, including the robotic Mechagodzilla, which was first featured in the 1974 film.

Meanwhile, a resurgence of Godzilla worship has been increasingly visible in Japan, thanks to the Hollywood film. A new hotel in downtown Tokyo with a Godzilla head perched on it, for instance, is growing into a tourist attraction.

Man Izawa, 56, a sales clerk and Godzilla fan who believes Godzilla is “the biggest star to come out of Japan,” wonders how the sensitive themes will get addressed when Toho releases a new Godzilla film next year.

“It will be the first Japanese Godzilla after 3/11,” he said, using the widely used term for the Fukushima disaster.

Decommissioning the Fukushima reactors is expected to take about half a century, and scientists are only starting to examine what state the melted cores might be in.

He doesn’t blame people wanting to avoid controversy in a game, which could crimp sales, but he marvels at **the courage of the first Godzilla film, which wasn’t afraid to take a stand on nuclear weapons, barely a decade after the end of World War II and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.**

“The appeal of Godzilla can’t be easily explained in words. It’s not just about being scary and strong. It’s also about its ambience, its shape, its beauty, like being in awe of a samurai castle,” Izawa said.

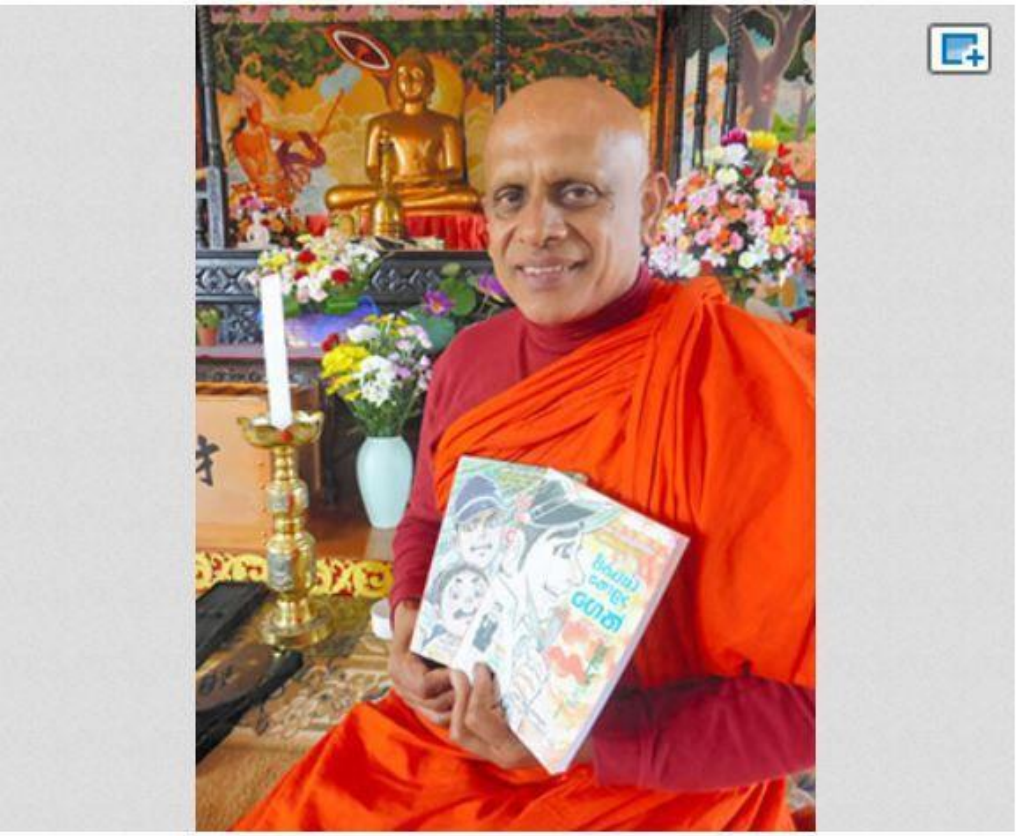
Fujita is confident the game will be a hit with fans.

“This is a game, made by people who love Godzilla, in which the love for Godzilla has gone wild. I know people who love Godzilla will feel that love,” he said.

Hadashi no Gen in Shinhalese

Buddhist monk promotes peace through release of anti-nuclear manga in Sri Lanka

June 29, 2015
http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201506290007



Sri Lankan monk Thalangalle Somasiri shows the Shinhalese version of volumes 1 and 2 of "Hadashi no Gen" (Barefoot Gen) at Lankaji temple in Katori, Chiba Prefecture. (Ko Iwaki)

By KO IWAKI/ Staff Writer

With his home country of Sri Lanka having been embroiled in decades-long conflicts, Thalangalle Somasiri felt moved after reading the manga series "Hadashi no Gen" (Barefoot Gen), which depicts the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

The peace-loving Buddhist monk released volumes 1 and 2 of "Hadashi no Gen" in Sri Lanka this spring after translating them into Shinhalese, one of the country's widely spoken languages.

Somasiri, 55, is the chief priest of one of the most famous temples in Sri Lanka called Sama Maha Viharaya, known as "Heiwa dera" (peace temple) in Japanese, in the suburb of Colombo, the former capital of the country.

He visits Japan a few times a year and participates in Buddhist missionary outreach to compatriots at Lankaji temple in Katori, Chiba Prefecture, located near Narita International Airport.

At age 12, Somasiri entered the Buddhist priesthood. He came to Japan for the first time in 1988 to study at Taisho University in Tokyo. He has published Japanese textbooks and books about old Japanese tales in Sri Lanka. Somasiri is also a member of the Japan P.E.N. Club, a gathering of writers seeking peace and championing freedom of expression.

Last summer, Yoko Matsubayashi, a 76-year-old Buddhist nun living in Yokohama whom Somasiri has long known and calls his “mother,” introduced him to the "Hadashi no Gen" series.

Somasiri soon finished reading the manga, written by Keiji Nakazawa (1939-2012), which is about the author’s own experiences depicted through the protagonist, Gen, as a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945.

“The attitude of Gen trying hard in his life teaches us the significance of peace and courage,” said Somasiri.

Conflicts in his home country persisted for about 25 years up until six years ago. More than 70,000 people are reported to have been killed in the combat and terrorism, and Somasiri’s temple provided a temporary shelter to about 20 children orphaned by the violence, and other victims of the chaos.

Moved by the manga series, Somasiri revisited the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima last autumn. Those experiences cemented his determination to translate the series to make it available in Sri Lanka.

To do so, Somasiri awoke two hours earlier in the morning than usual and worked on the translation of the manga until 5 a.m., when he performs Buddhist chants as a daily service. Somasiri said he asked Matsubayashi the meaning of words expressed in a Hiroshima dialect and Japanese slang in the manga via an Internet call.

At the end of March, Somasiri was celebrated for the first publication of the Shinhalese editions of "Hadashi no Gen" at the Lankaji temple. Matsubayashi also joined the celebration there.

The monk set a goal of publishing all 10 volumes of the series in Sri Lanka within five years.

He also plans to translate “Nagasaki no Kane” (The Bells of Nagasaki), written by Takashi Nagai (1908-1951), a doctor, about his experiences as a survivor of the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945.

“It is a duty for a religious person, like myself, to pray for peace,” said Somasiri.

Torao Sasaki "Kaiki" donated to Ninoshima

July 16, 2015

Hiroshima painting hands down warning of man who collected bodies for A-bomb research

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201507160008

By GEN OKAMOTO/ Staff Writer

HIROSHIMA--A masterpiece by an artist who painted many works themed on the 1945 atomic bombing of this city while collecting victims' bodies for a U.S. research institute will be donated to the city.

Reiko Sasaki, the 75-year-old widow of Torao Sasaki, who did more than 100 compositions on the agony of "hibakusha" survivors of the world's first nuclear bombing, decided to present the 1982 work titled "Kaiki" (Recursion) for public display.

The abstract piece was inspired by a 1971 excavation of skeletal remains of A-bomb victims.

"I hope this painting will hand down a warning by my husband for posterity," said Reiko, whose husband died seven years ago at age 70.

In 1960, Torao Sasaki obtained a job at the Hiroshima branch of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC), which was established by the U.S. government to research the effects of radiation on A-bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

His task at the organization was to ask the bereaved families of the deceased A-bomb survivors to donate the bodies for autopsies to investigate the effects of radiation exposure.

While he often faced rejection and verbal insults from surviving family members, he helped collect about 10,000 bodies for the organization while working there for two decades. What kept him committed to his task was his conviction that it would help future generations, Reiko said.

As an amateur painter, Sasaki was initially fond of drawing flowers and other still life, but his interests gradually shifted to the sorrows of hibakusha and their anxiety of the consequences of radiation exposure.

In 1971, Sasaki participated in an excavation to retrieve victims' remains on Ninoshima island, off Hiroshima, where about 10,000 affected people were transported shortly after the A-bomb was detonated over the city on Aug. 6, 1945.

During the project, he found skeletal remains and mementos of many victims. The experience inspired him to paint "Kaiki," which measures 120 centimeters in height and 90 cm in width.

After Sasaki's death in 2008, Reiko visited Ninoshima and learned that the excavation site had become a "memorial ground" for atomic bomb victims. At a nearby city-run "seaside nature youth house," children are educated about peace. She decided to donate her husband's work to the city to have it displayed at the youth house.

"I hope that the painting will help stop the memories of hibakusha's anxiety and agony, which my husband was always concerned about, from fading away," Reiko said.

Haha to Kuraseba

July 13, 2015

Film heavyweight takes megaphone in Nagasaki to complete 'war trilogy'

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/movies/AJ201507130022

By SHINICHI KOIZUMI/ Senior Staff Writer

NAGASAKI--Veteran filmmaker Yoji Yamada is producing a movie about the atomic bombing of Nagasaki to fulfill a playwright's last wish to complete a trilogy on three Japanese regions devastated during World War II.

Told from a family's perspective, the quasi-fantasy drama titled "Haha to Kuraseba" (If I live with my mother) is the story of a mother who loses her beloved son when the atomic bomb detonates over Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945.

On the third anniversary of the bombing on the western Japanese city, the ghost of her son returns to the midwife, played by veteran actress Sayuri Yoshinaga, and the son reveals a fact about his former girlfriend.

"This is my 83rd movie, and I am determined to make it the most important film that I will ever create in my entire life," Yamada, 83, said. "The memories of the war are rapidly fading away, and now I'd like to ask again why we shouldn't continue efforts to hand down for posterity the fact that Japan is the only country in the world that has been victimized by atomic bombings."

Yamada became convinced it was his "destiny" to write and direct the film after the daughter of popular playwright Hisashi Inoue explained her late father's unachieved desire to produce a trilogy on the experiences of ordinary citizens in Hiroshima, the target of the first atomic bombing, Okinawa, site of the bloody Battle of Okinawa, and Nagasaki.

Inoue wrote and produced "Chichi to Kuraseba" (The Face of Jizo), a play about a father and daughter in Hiroshima, in 1994. A film adaptation was released in 2004.

After the playwright died of lung cancer in 2010, the Komatsuza theater troupe, which exclusively performs stage dramas penned by Inoue, put on a play titled "Kino Ueno Guntai" (Troops on trees) in 2013.

The drama, themed on the 1945 Battle of Okinawa, was produced based conceptual materials left by Inoue. But for the Nagasaki episode, Inoue had only come up with the title, "Haha to Kuraseba."

Yamada repeatedly visited Nagasaki to write the script and began shooting in April.

"I heard Inoue visited Hiroshima to write 'Chichi to Kuraseba' and penned the accounts of hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) word by word," Yamada said. "And I did the same thing in Nagasaki, writing down victims' accounts in my notebooks with an ink pen.

"Just like Inoue would have thought, I believed it would be rude to hibakusha not to do so."

Yoshinaga, who was born in 1945, has devoted her later career to peace activism, including her project of reading poems about the atomic bombings since 1986.

During filming at the Kurosaki church in Nagasaki on July 10, Yoshinaga told reporters she hopes the film will help Japanese people "learn even a little about Nagasaki people's sentiments."

Kazuya Ninomiya, a 32-year-old member of the popular boy group Arashi, who plays the protagonist's son in the film, said he hopes he was "able to portray the agony and solitude that an ordinary family would feel."

"Haha to Kuraseba" will hit the screens in Japan on Dec. 12.

A Dictionary of Mutual Understanding

July 18, 2015

Dictionary of Mutual Understanding' frames the universal horror of atomic weapons

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/07/18/books/book-reviews/dictionary-mutual-understanding-frames-universal-horror-atomic-weapons/#.VauJnvnwmic

by Iain Maloney
Special To The Japan Times

HutchinsonNagasaki is a popular setting for novels about Japan. During the years when Japan shut itself off from the world, the port town became a door left ajar, and some of the appeal for novelists is the enduring frontier myth the city has cultivated, with its easy blend of East and West.

A Dictionary of Mutual Understanding, Jackie Copleton
304 pages
Fiction

The Nagasaki in Jackie Copleton's debut novel, "A Dictionary of Mutual Understanding," is a lost city — one that disappeared on Aug. 9, 1945, the day it was bombed.

Amaterasu Takahashi's daughter, Yuko, and grandson, Hideo, died when the atomic bomb exploded above Urakami Cathedral. Unable to come to terms with the loss, she escapes the devastated city with her husband, Kenzo, eventually settling on the East Coast of America. Now an old widow with little but whiskey for company, she is forced to retread the pathways of her memories when a man arrives at her door claiming to be her grandson, Hideo.

Copleton has clearly done extensive research, and prewar Nagasaki comes alive in the well-observed descriptions and sensual prose. The salty scent of the sea is vivid, as are the colors of the kimonos in the city's pleasure quarter. The vitality of the world she conjures serves to highlight the brutality of the war and the personal tragedies that Amaterasu must relive. The story she tells is heartbreaking.

The horror of the atomic bombing speaks for itself and it's to Copleton's credit that she avoids both sentimentality and didactic outrage.

By unravelling the twisted mass of causes that led Yuko to Urakami Cathedral at the moment the bomb detonated, Copleton allows the personal grief of an old woman to blossom into something more universal.

Itsuro Yamaguchi & the 58th Peace March

July 27, 2015

Producer comes out of 26-year hiatus to film peace documentary

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201507270032

By MUTSUMI MITOBE/ Staff Writer

Itsuro Yamaguchi first became involved in producing movies about the terrors and tragedies caused by nuclear weapons when he was in his 20s.

But with ticket sales for his films dwindling, Yamaguchi was forced to retire from filmmaking after racking up debts of 40 million yen ($324,000).

This year, the 70th anniversary of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, the 83-year-old is making a comeback after a 26-year hiatus.

Yamaguchi has been tagged to produce a film documenting the 58th National Peace March against A and H Bombs.

Organized by the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo), the annual event took to the road from Hokkaido in early May, Okinawa in mid-June and elsewhere between May and June. It will land in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August.

Yamaguchi and his movie camera are currently traveling with the marchers.

"It is still a noble job to depict people's desire for peace (through making movies), even today," Yamaguchi said during a recent interview.

The Tokyo native was the producer of a film about the march four decades ago, and people around Yamaguchi encouraged him to film the march again on such a landmark occasion.

Yamaguchi grew up in the capital's "shitamachi" downtown area, where he first became fascinated with war films on the silver screen before the outbreak of war and throughout the conflict. At one point, he even applied for the Imperial Army's cadet school.

After the end of World War II, he attended an academy that trained workers for the film industry and became an assistant director at an independent film production company.

During those years, he wielded the megaphone for the production of commercial films, from comedies and historical dramas to even anime works.

When he was in his late 20s, Yamaguchi participated in the production of a drama directed by filmmaker Sotoji Kimura, which was inspired by the life of a girl who was exposed to radiation in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as a 2-year-old. The girl, Sadako Sasaki, died from illness caused by radiation exposure 10 years later.

"Although it is invisible to us, radiation can claim the lives of people, and I found it far scarier than the massive fires I saw as a kid during the Tokyo air raids," Yamaguchi said.

Since then, Yamaguchi has worked on the production of many films with anti-nuclear messages, including a 1982 film about U.S. hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini Atoll, a 1989 drama that depicted the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and other works that documented the horrendous consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

Yamaguchi says he doesn't expect his new project to be a moneymaker, but for the peace-minded filmmaker who spent a decade paying off his 40 million yen debt, it's a labor of love.

“I know this film is going to make a loss, but I must make a movie on the march,” he said. “Just like these people need to walk (to express their hope for peace).”

Susan Southard's book on postwar Nagasaki (2)

August 8, 2015

Memories of those marked by nuclear war

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/08/08/books/book-reviews/memories-marked-nuclear-war/#.VcdkEPnwmot

by Stephen Mansfield
Special To The Japan Times

August, 2015. This is a month of great testimonials: outpourings of guilt, grief, consternation, remorse, atonement and, for those whose ends are not served by an honest reckoning of the past, evasion.
Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War, by Susan Southard.
416 pages
Viking, Nonfiction.
It was, arguably, Emperor Hirohito, who is posthumously called Emperor Showa, who first practiced the appropriation of grief and tragedy to deflect responsibility when he made his surrender speech to the Japanese public at the end of World War II.
Talking of the enemy having deployed a "new and most cruel bomb," the Emperor depicted Japan's surrender, in author Susan Southard's words, as "a heroic and humane act," calculated to save civilization from total extinction.
The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 followed rampages by Japanese soldiers, who, "tore through Shanghai, Nanjing, and other Chinese cities, slaughtering, mutilating, and torturing millions of Chinese soldiers and civilians," writes Southard in her new book "Nagasaki: Living with Nuclear War." In the postwar years, Japanese school children did not grow up learning about such incidents as the Rape of Manila, or the 1938 terror bombing of residential districts in Chongqing.
Southard's book addresses the destruction of Nagasaki and its consequences, and she deftly reconstructs a detailed profile of the city before the bomb, outlining the political climate of the era as Japan entered a period retrospectively known as *kurotani* (literally, "the dark valley").
Even before the bomb was dropped on the morning of Aug. 9, 1945, many residents of Nagasaki were suffering from malnutrition, reduced to subsisting on meals made from, "acorns, sawdust, soybean grinds, potato stems, peanut shells and pumpkin gruel, with protein sources from bugs, worms, rodent flesh, and snakes."
In readiness for an invasion, anemic civilians were still expected to participate in war drills using bamboo spears. The absurdity of pitting hand-held wooden weapons against a 5-ton plutonium bomb with the impact of 21,000 tons of TNT and with infrared heat rays that instantly, "carbonized human and animal flesh and vaporized internal organs," underlines the delusional state of the Japanese authorities, who were already fully cognizant of the attack on Hiroshima.
Southard examines wartime propaganda from both Japan and the U.S. — campaigns designed in both instances to dehumanize the enemy. The resulting climate of irrationality and bloodlust helped to condone the unthinkable: mass evisceration of civilians. Assessing the character of the Japanese, the author quotes from a contemporary Time magazine article: "Perhaps he is human. Nothing … indicates it."

An example is given of just how determined and how utterly fixated the U.S. War Department was on unleashing the bomb on Nagasaki. Even when informed of a POW camp near the city's center, the information failed to stall the release of the bomb. Little stock was taken of the fate of atomic bomb victims. American scientists neglected to conduct studies into the possible effects of high radiation exposure, nor were medical treatments for potential victims explored.

As it happened, radiation toxicity would cause, among a myriad of other reactions, skin, blood, liver and endocrine diseases, leukemia, internal bleeding, low blood cell counts, nausea and permanent keloid scars. Many babies exposed to radiation in the uterus would experience brain damage, retardation and other disabilities. Those who survived would have to cope with the memory of what psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, quoted in this book, termed the "suddenness and totality of their death saturation."

Southard's credentials as a writer on this topic are unimpeachable. Already fluent in Japanese, she visited Nagasaki for the first time during a trip with her high school senior class. Making numerous trips to Nagasaki as an adult, she was able to conduct extensive interviews with several *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors), whose physical traumas and erosion of health have not diminished their memories.

Having survived the nuclear furnace, the victims of Nagasaki should have become icons of hope and fortitude. As it turned out, they represented, in the eyes of many Japanese, objects of embarrassment and even public derision. In a supreme irony, these victims of a grotesque scientific experiment were now treated by their own countrymen as grotesqueries. Even more reprehensible is the existence, decades after the event, of discrimination against the children and grandchildren of hibakusha, who, if they were to speak openly, may be denied employment or have their marriage prospects scuttled.

Despite the gravity of her subject, Southard writes in an engaging narrative style that propels the reader through the phantasmagoric horrors of nuclear extermination and its aftermath. Given the nature of the topic, however, readers should steel themselves for her unsparing account. In one instance, Southard describes a young woman wandering amid the ruins after the explosion, carrying, "a bucket holding the decapitated head of a young girl, all that the woman had been able to find of her husband, son, and daughter."

I asked Southard about how she coped emotionally with the traumatic testimonies of her subjects. "Often I had to take breaks in order to get through a segment of work," she explained, adding that one of the things that sustained her was, "the thought that these stories needed to be told, and if the survivors could live through it, I would find a way to write about it."

This reminded me of a comment made by war correspondent Emma Daly, searching for the meaning of her own work reporting from the front line: "the purpose is to record these scenes so that no-one … would have an excuse to say: 'I did not know.'"

If I had a pencil

August 9, 2015

The song that dealt with the atomic bombs

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/08/09/music/song-dealt-atomic-bombs/#.VcdlOPnwmot

by Dustin Wong
Special To The Japan Times

My own feelings toward the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II — and the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in particular — are complicated.

I grew up in Japan. My grandmother was Japanese and my grandfather was American. In fact, he was in the United States Air Force at the time of the war. I've had to grapple with guilt, rage and victimization — all before the age of 18.

My friends didn't help much (but I don't hold that against them). When I claimed my Japanese side here, my friends would quickly point out I was American. When I was in the States, my friends there would point out my Japanese heritage. In either case, I was always on the other side.

There have been a lot of songs about Japan's disasters, and a good deal of them come from "the other side": Wanda Jackson's "Fujiyama Mama," Kate Bush's "Breathing" and Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's "Enola Gay" to name a few.

Many Japanese artists have tackled the subject, too. One song that has always had an effect on me is Hibari Misora's 1974 ballad "Ippon no Enpitsu" ("One Pencil"). While non-Japanese artists tended to use the bomb to deal with larger fears of the Cold War, "One Pencil" focuses on one woman's final moments as the Aug. 6 bombing happens. It never gets overly political, a quality that has earned it fans in Japan.

The music was written by composer Masaru Sato, who often scored films. He presents a simple structure consisting of two distinct parts that are lyrically separated by a farewell to an absent lover and a message to the wider world. The orchestration builds on a very simple rhythm that crescendos for each section of the song. It's dramatic, yet effective.

Misora's voice is what really ties everything together. It is kind, soft and casual, and in a way it reminded me a bit of Edith Piaf's French chanson style.

The lyrics to "One Pencil" were written by filmmaker Zenzo Matsuyama in 1974 and they detail the thoughts one woman has before dying. She wants to leave a message to a lover, but she doesn't have the means to do so:

If I had a pencil,
I'd write of my love for you.
If I had a pencil,
I'd write that I don't want war.
If I had a piece of paper,
I'd write how I wish I'd had kids.
If I had a piece of paper,

I'd write that I want you back.

The simplicity of conveying the things that are going through someone's head during a pivotal moment of their lives can be very effective. Tori Amos used the same approach when describing her own sexual assault in the song "Me and a Gun."

I think what really hits me about "One Pencil" is that this kind of confession is rare in Japan. When I spoke to music critic Masahisa Segawa for the first installment of this column, I asked him if he wanted to share any of his own experiences from the war. However, he pursed his mouth and remained silent. This isn't an unusual response when asking many elderly people in Japan about the war.

According to reports, rocker Eikichi Yazawa originally pushed back at the idea of releasing his 1987 song "Flash in Japan," which deals with the atomic bombings. The track was supposedly part of a plan to break him in the American market Warner Records hoped to evoke the image of a Japanese Bruce Springsteen who sang political songs.

Yazawa is from Hiroshima and his father died from radiation poisoning, so when asked to sing a song about the atomic bomb for an American audience, Yazawa worried that it was exploitative. In the end, however, he released it.

The track is a stadium-rock ballad that makes interesting use of MIDI sequencing and distorted power chords, with Yazawa singing lyrics written by American Michael Lunn.

Songs that dealt with the atomic bombings were rare following the actual events of 1945. As time has passed, musicians have tackled the subject more often — particularly after the 1986 Chernobyl and 2011 Fukushima nuclear disasters. Many of these songs have served as arguments against nuclear power, but Misora, who eloquently relays a human account of the bombing, may have provided the strongest argument of all of them.

"Tsunami" in Miami

September 5, 2015

Play based on Tohoku tsunami survivors' accounts set to open in Miami

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201509050013

By MASAKAZU HIGASHINO/ Senior Staff Writer

When Michiko Kitayama and Nilo Cruz went to the devastated Tohoku region to work on a script for a play in May 2012, they planned to focus on local conflicts in building sea walls.

But the pair were strongly moved by the positive attitudes of locals to overcome their difficulties in the aftermath of the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

So, their play, titled "Tsunami," tells the accounts of survivors of Otsuchi and Kamaishi, the municipalities in Iwate Prefecture, both heavily damaged in the twin disaster.

It will be staged in Miami, Fla., from Sept. 12 in English with a cast of American and other actors.

"Tsunami" conveys the affected people's efforts to find hope amid tragic circumstances where they lost loved ones. "Facts cannot escape from being forgotten. But by making them an artwork, we can convey them to people more strongly and long-lasting," said Kitayama, 42, associate professor of costume design at the University of Miami.

The script was jointly written by Kitayama and Cruz, 55, a playwright and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Kitayama, whose mother is from Iwate Prefecture, asked Cruz to collaborate with her on the play.

Kitayama and Cruz stayed in Otsuchi and Kamaishi for a week, during which the pair interviewed more than 20 local people. They included a young man who started a tourism-related job to realize the dream of his fiancee, who died in the tsunami, and survivors who are continuing on in the local performing arts despite the loss of fellow members or their homes.

While hearing their accounts, Kitayama and Cruz thought that the survivors were still connected to those who died in the tsunami.

The two also heard the stories about a mother whose small child was washed away by the tsunami in front of her, and a volunteer firefighter who died while trying to rescue an elderly person. The pair were impressed by the interviewees' strong personalities.

Over three years, Kitayama translated their accounts into English, and the two wrote the script.

In "Tsunami," six actors perform the roles of a total of 20 men and women, including a fisherman and a mayor. Dialogue was written from the actual words spoken by the interviewees. The stage set is an abstract representation of the devastated areas utilizing fabric and poles. The actors move about like dancers to stir the imagination of the audience.

One of the interviewees was Kazuyuki Usuzawa, 31, who lost his fiancee in the tsunami.

"I want people overseas to know what happened here. Though our experiences are bitter ones, I am happy if those experiences remain in the form (of a theatrical play)," he said.

In July 2014, "Tsunami" was performed on a trial basis at the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center in Miami. The facility was built to mourn the victims of a horrific hurricane in 1992 that devastated the area. After the play, many people with tears in their eyes said that they were moved by it.

"They probably sympathized (with the victims of the 2011 tsunami) as their area also suffered destruction (from the 1992 hurricane)," Kitayama said.

"Tsunami" will be performed in the center 13 times until Oct. 3. Future performances and locales have yet to be decided.

"We hope that we will have opportunities to perform the play in Japan in Japanese," Kitayama said.

"Tell the Prime Minister"

September 8, 2015

Sociologist documents post-3/11 anti-nuclear mass protests on film

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201509080009

A scene from "Tell the Prime Minister," a documentary on anti-nuclear protest rallies

By HARUKA TAKASHIGE/ Staff Writer

In group-oriented Japan, where it has long been said the nail that sticks out is hammered down, mass protests involving people of all ages no longer come across as unusual.

Huge gatherings involving the elderly, mothers with children, salaried workers and students now feature regularly in front of the prime minister's office, the Diet building and other prominent venues.

The catharsis for this was the nation's worst nuclear accident in 2011, when the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant went into triple meltdown following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

In the aftermath of the disaster, activists and citizens began hitting the streets to drum up support for a nuclear-free Japan.

What started as a trickle became a flood after a wave of rallies swept Japanese cities to become one of the nation's largest popular movements in decades.

A documentary on the phenomenon titled "Shusho Kantei no Mae de" (Tell the Prime Minister) will open in Tokyo and elsewhere from Sept. 19.

The 109-minute film focuses on rallies in 2011 and 2012, many of them in front of the prime minister's office. It also zooms in on the climax of those protests, a meeting between representatives of the

Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a group of anti-nuclear organizations, and then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of the Democratic Party of Japan in August 2012.

The film was funded and directed by Eiji Oguma, a professor of historical sociology at Tokyo's Keio University, who began taking part in anti-nuclear protest rallies a month after the Fukushima disaster unfolded.

Oguma realized that a new way of making a political statement had taken root in Japan, one that was almost nonexistent before.

"Protesters who assembled on their own created, after groping for a way to have their voices heard, a new political culture in which they stand on a sidewalk in front of the prime minister's office and shout out what is on their mind," said Oguma, 53. "People's intrinsic power was exposed in a crisis that leaves them feeling helpless with the traditional order."

Shunichi Ishizaki, 31, shot and edited the film.

The pair also used footage of demonstrations released on the Internet by participants.

The documentary contains scenes of a nervous-looking woman before a microphone giving her first speech in public in a quavering voice as well as the agitated expressions of other demonstrators who cannot contain anger despite their best efforts to do so. These powerful scenes convey the seriousness with which the protesters are making their demands.

It also features interviews with eight people, whose ages and social status differ.

Among them are a key figure who led massive rallies, a man who has a clerical job at a hospital, a Dutch woman who has lived in Japan for many years and a woman from Fukushima who was forced to flee her home and live as an evacuee due to high radiation levels in her community.

The documentary depicts how they felt after the nuclear accident and what drove them to participate in the mass protests.

Oguma directed the film out of a desire to leave a record on mass movements for future generations and audiences abroad.

The film screens with English subtitles.

The mass protests against nuclear power segued into civic demonstrations opposing legislation on protecting state secrets and national security.

Aki Okuda, a core member of Tokyo-based Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s, or SEALDs, hailed the participants of the anti-nuclear rallies for paving the way for his group to stage its own demonstrations after being given a sneak preview of the documentary.

SEALDs, set up in May, has been staging protest rallies against the security legislation on Fridays.

"Because we saw those mass protests, we are staging ours weekly in front of the Diet building," said Okuda, a 23-year-old student at Meiji Gakuin University. "The younger generation who see our demonstrations may start something on their own and take theirs to the next stage of mass protests."

The film will screen at the theater of Uplink Co., a film distributor in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, starting from 10:30 a.m. between Sept. 19 and Sept. 25.

Show schedules from Sept. 26 at the Uplink theater and other venues will be available at (http://www.uplink.co.jp/kanteimae/)

Not so easy to look at what we should look at

September 8, 2015

INSIGHT: Failing to see dangers of nuclear power right under one's nose

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201509080001

By EMIKO INAGAKI/ Senior Staff Writer

Fifty-three months after the fateful nuclear disaster, the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture has become the first in Japan to resume after all were taken offline for safety inspections.

But the restart callously disregards the lives of so many people who were uprooted from their irreplaceable ancestral land, jobs, families and friends by the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011.

Inspections of nuclear facilities certainly became more stringent after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. But that is no guarantee of their safety. An "unforeseeable" event may occur at any moment, and the cost will be too tragically enormous for anyone to grasp.

Why does the government not want to face up to that fact in earnest? And what about the public, which is allowing the government to move in that direction? While I was furious about these issues, I had the chance to attend a preview of a movie. Seeing it was like getting smacked up the side of the head.

Titled "Tenku no Hachi" (The Big Bee), the action epic, which features an act of terrorism on a nuclear plant, is based on a work of fiction by Keigo Higashino, a best-selling author.

To my surprise, the work both fully and scrupulously presented all the major problems of nuclear power generation that came under the public spotlight after the Fukushima disaster, such as the vulnerability of spent nuclear fuel storage pools, the fictional nature of the safety myth about nuclear power and the merciless way nuclear plants are being forced on depopulated communities in exchange for subsidies.

The original book was written 20 years ago.

Higashino has commented on the work as follows: After his initial plan for it, he spent five years conducting a lot of research on the issue. He was filled with confidence when he finished writing the novel, but received no reaction at all. He thought that, obviously, his work was being ignored on purpose.

If somebody was purposefully "ignoring" the work, who was it?

I WAS PART OF 'NUCLEAR VILLAGE'

I encountered the issue of nuclear power generation for the first time 27 years ago, when I was a reporter based in The Asahi Shimbun's Takamatsu bureau in Kagawa Prefecture.

An "output modulation test" was staged at Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture.

A nuclear reactor continues to generate electric power at constant levels day and night, so there is a nighttime surplus of electricity. The test was conducted to raise and lower output levels to enhance efficiency.

Opponents of nuclear power generation reacted angrily to what they argued was a "dangerous" experiment. Thousands of people arrived from all parts of Japan to stage a boisterous protest outside Shikoku Electric's head office in Takamatsu on the day of the test.

A senior colleague of mine, who had been engaged in a student movement, appeared excited, as he said he was seeing a protest for the first time in a long while. However, local residents gave a chilly reception to the abrupt emergence of the hippie-like band of protesters, which was an uncommon sight.

"What are we supposed to do when all these outsiders suddenly show up and tell us this and that?" went the typical refrain.
I was, frankly, also fed up with the protesters.
The general thinking at the time was: "Japan has great technology. Speaking of possible accidents won't get you anywhere. After all, modern life is impossible without nuclear power. "
The anti-nuclear agenda was an unrealistic argument being made by only a few, and was less than catchy as far as news reporting was concerned.
No sooner did I write a halfhearted article about the protest than I returned to covering the police beat--making morning and evening calls to the homes of police detectives in a desperate bid to learn about hidden cases they were pursuing.
That was the way to scoop the competition and enhance my standing at the newspaper. I never attempted, then or afterward, to look into the dilemma of nuclear power generation, although I would have had access to, if only I had sought, a trove of public documents and other materials.
I didn't even know how many nuclear reactors Japan had, and in which parts of the country, when I was confronted by the Fukushima disaster.
If our eyes are clouded and we are only eager to read the situation and act smartly, we don't see anything even if something important is hanging right under our noses or if hints are tossed out in our direction.
We use the phrase "nuclear village" to refer to a community of people who rely on benefits generated by the nuclear power industry, which actually represents a major national project. It is exactly those people that created the safety myth and ended up causing the latest disaster. Higashino may have had the nuclear village in mind as the culprit for ignoring the presence of his book.
After all, I was also possibly a member of the nuclear village. I relied on the safety myth as an excuse for looking away from the sorrow and dilemma of those whom nuclear plants were being forced upon, taking the convenient availability of electric power for granted and continuing to scoff at a deluge of alarms.
I was part of the group of people who ignored Higashino's work, which he had produced with all his might and competence.

LOOKING AT WHAT I SHOULD LOOK AT

One phrase has long stuck in my mind.
I visited a community last year that lies about a 10-kilometer radius from the disaster site. Its deserted landscapes that were frozen in time and were silently tumbling away appeared so eerie that a lump formed in my throat as I realized the exorbitant price of an affluent life.
I blurted out to a local resident who was guiding me around, "Can you forgive Japan for moving to restart its nuclear reactors, oblivious of a disaster of this magnitude?"
The resident remained silent for a while and then muttered, "If nobody changes, nothing will probably ever change."
Will I be able to change? Will I be able to keep myself separate from the popular sentiment of the time, refuse to conform to the general trend, look at what I should look at and say what I should say?

Fukushima preservation project

September 24, 2015

Evacuees, students help empty Fukushima town preserve its history

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201509240003

By MAKOTO TAKADA/ Staff Writer

KORIYAMA, Fukushima Prefecture--Local government officials, evacuees and students are saving personal documents and other historical materials from destruction in a municipality rendered a virtual "ghost town" by the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The Tomioka town government, which now operates from Koriyama in Fukushima Prefecture, has asked residents for help in the preservation project, saying materials kept at a museum alone cannot show the entire picture and history of local people's lives.

Although they now live in other municipalities, Tomioka residents have so far provided the town government nearly 10,000 historical materials, including many from the late Edo Period (1603-1867) to the Showa Era (1926-1989).

Handwritten letters, a book on women's morals, traditional Japanese "kacchu" armor and a photo of a ceremony celebrating the renovation of a local school in the Meiji Era (1868-1912) are among the personal materials that have been offered.

Many items were kept at warehouses of long-established families or merchants in Tomioka.

"We want our citizens to know anew the history and culture of our town," said Hidefumi Sanpei, 36, a member of the town preservation project team.

The entire town of Tomioka, which had around 16,000 residents in 2010, was evacuated after the disaster unfolded at the nearby Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

Since then, many empty houses in Tomioka have fallen into disrepair or been demolished.

Fearing the loss of precious historical materials at these homes, the town government formed the project team in June 2014.

In August this year, the town government concluded an agreement with Fukushima University to preserve the materials. Students at the university had been engaged in the preservation activities since November 2014.

On Sept. 16, researchers and 15 students from Fukushima University gathered in a branch facility of the town government's temporary office in Koriyama for their third meeting.

The students numbered the materials, took digital photos and created catalogs.

"This is a valuable experience," said Naoki Yamaoka, 22, a senior at the university who hopes to become a public servant after graduation.

"Our students can implement what they learned in their classes, including one on archiving," said Tsuyoshi Tokutake, a 35-year-old associate professor of local history at the university. "They can also contribute to the local society."

Grandson of A-bomb crewman writes about hibakusha

September 30, 2015

Grandson of atomic bomb crewman writes of hibakusha horrors

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/30/national/grandson-atomic-bomb-crewman-writes-hibakusha-horrors/#.VgvgBpfwmic

by Tomoko Otake
Staff Writer

The grandson of a U.S. serviceman who flew on both planes that dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 has devoted himself to a project almost unimaginable 70 years ago: spreading the stories of horror experienced by the hibakusha.

Freelance photographer Ari Beser, 27, has documented the voices of the survivors since 2011, when he first visited Japan on a research grant to write a book on his connections to both sides of the atomic bombings. Beser's grandfather, Jacob, was an army lieutenant and radar specialist who became the only man in the world to fly on both of the B-29s carrying the "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" atomic bombs.

The Baltimore native also had family connections to the niece of an atomic bomb survivor living in Japan. The survivor, a woman from Hiroshima, was friends with his grandfather on his mother's side and underwent reconstructive surgeries on her keloid-scarred face in the U.S. after the war, and later lived in Baltimore through her marriage.

When he first came to Japan in 2011, Beser was planning to write about Jacob and the Japanese survivor. But the scope of his project expanded after he met the victim's niece, who lives in the Kansai region, and was told to listen directly to the stories of other survivors "before it's too late."

Since then, Beser has been interviewing the survivors at length and deepening his understanding of — and friendship with — the hibakusha.

The fruits of his four-year labor are in "The Nuclear Family," a book he self-published through Amazon.com in August.

In the 246-page book, Beser, currently based in Japan as a Fulbright-National Geographic fellow, introduces more than 10 survivors, with each given a chapter to tell their story.

Each tale is preceded by a brief introduction on how Beser met them. In a chapter titled "Keiko Ogura, Eight Years Old," Beser details how Ogura, as a schoolgirl on the outskirts of Hiroshima, saw a sudden flash in the sky on the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, followed by fires spreading all around her and a huge gust of wind that knocked her out.

Ogura's story includes grim descriptions of what happened under the mushroom cloud, with victims passing by "like ghosts, bleeding all over, skin peeling off and hanging from the tips of their fingers," according to the book.

Between the chapters devoted to the survivors' testimonies is a detailed account of how his Jewish grandfather Jacob Beser, burning to fight the Nazis, enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and became part of the top-secret mission to test what insiders called the "gimmick" — the atomic bombs — against the Japanese.

Beser, a graduate of the University of Colorado, Boulder, said he never had a chance to speak about the war directly with Jacob, who passed away when he was only a toddler. But there was a lot of material to work with, as the older Beser gave tons of media interviews and public speeches after the war. Beser depicts his grandfather as a committed military engineer who never regretted what he did but believed war should never happen again.

It's a perspective Beser himself appears to have acquired.

"There wasn't like a right thing that happened in Word War II," Beser said during a recent interview in Tokyo. "Everyone was committing crimes. So I don't think he appreciated the fact that people singled out the atomic bomb as the only, one wrong thing in WWII. I think all of it was wrong. I think he did, too. So he wouldn't talk too much about the past feelings, but he was really concerned about the future."

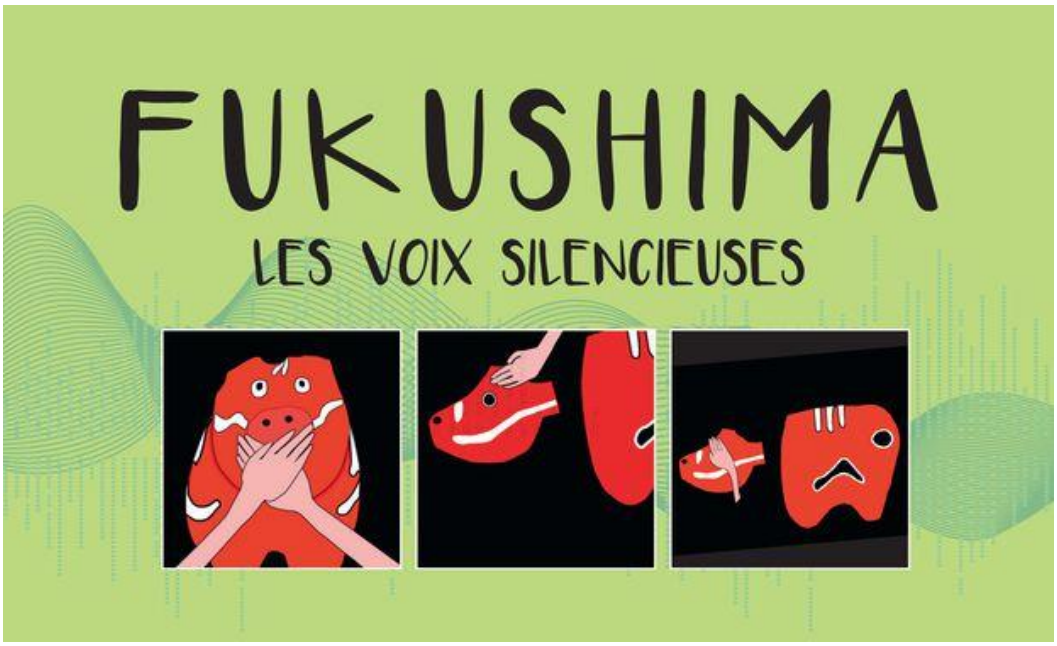
The Japanese survivors Beser approached were willing to share their stories, regardless of his personal background, he said, acknowledging that he has met only a fraction of the 200,000 survivors of the two nuclear bombs.

Now that he has completed the book, Beser said he felt happy fulfilling "a promise" he made to the survivors, to send a message of peace. But he said it was important for everybody in America and Japan — not just those who were directly involved in the war — to find a way to reconcile the tragic past and stem the tide of oblivion.

"For any American who wants to understand the history of atomic bombs, they (the survivors) would be happy to talk to you," he said.

"I do feel that reconciliation doesn't come just from people involved (but also) from everyday citizens," he added. "I think it's important, of course, that people involved and their family descendants are coming to hear their stories. That's amazing that we are allowed to, because, 70 years ago, we couldn't come here."

Silent voices (2)



FUKUSHIMA : les voix silencieuses

http://www.kisskissbankbank.com/en/projects/fukushima-les-voix-silencieuses

My home : FUKUSHIMA – If one day, you live in a radioactive zone, how will you react ?

The project

My name is Chiho SATO, I live in France since 2010. I was born and raised in FUKUSHIMA. My whole family lives only 60 km away from FUKUSHIMA DAI-ICHI nuclear plant in an area called : “The Voluntary Evacuation Zone”. More than four years after the disaster, the invisible radioactivity is still omnipresent, but gradually vanishing from the locals 's mind.

Unlike the apocalyptic and anxiety-provoking images often shown in Europe, I'd like to make an intimate documentary with genuine stories coming from the people who live in one of the most radioactive places on earth.
My aim is to reignite a debate regarding Fukushima's situation including the voices of the locals.

...
[More on Chiho's site]

Japan's first dictionary of disarmament published

October 25, 2015

Japan's first full-fledged reference work on disarmament hits the shelves

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201510250018

By HIDEKI SOEJIMA/ Staff Writer

Japan's first complete dictionary of disarmament has been published after two years of work, coming in the year marking the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The 531-page Disarmament Dictionary was written by 124 authors, most of them members with the **Japan Association of Disarmament Studies (JADS),** a group of academics established in 2009.

"This is the culmination of an all-out effort by Japanese experts," said Mitsuru Kurosawa, professor of disarmament law at Osaka Jogakuin College, who served as the first chairman of the JADS and led the compilation. "We hope that the public will obtain accurate information about disarmament through this dictionary, and that discussions on the topic will be promoted based on shared understanding."

Compiling and publishing the disarmament reference work was one of the projects envisioned by the JADS.

The association set up working groups on six themes--nuclear disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation, biological and chemical weapons, missiles and space, conventional weapons and exports control.

The dictionary was completed following seven work sessions for its compilation.

Included in the work are authors expounding on the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, in light of the global trend focusing on the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons in efforts to reduce stockpiles of nuclear arms.

The dictionary also touches on nuclear power and drones.

The entries are also available in English.

The reference work, published by Shinzansha Publisher Co., is priced at a tax-inclusive 5,400 yen ($45).

Nothing is more important than thorough safety

October 22, 2015

VOX POPULI: Lessons from Chernobyl: Put safety first in cleaning up Fukushima disaster

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/vox/AJ201510220027

he No. 3 reactor at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant was damaged by an xplosion in March 2011. (Provided by Tokyo Electric Power Co.)

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a daily column that runs on Page 1 of The Asahi Shimbun.

Belarusian journalist Svetlana Alexievich, the recipient of this year's Nobel Prize in Literature, is the author of "Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster."

First published in Russian in 1997, it consists of monologues by her interview subjects.

I decided to read a Japanese translation of this book.

My heart went out to a widow whose account begins, "I was very happy until recently." Her husband, a scaffolder, stood nearly 2 meters tall and weighed 90 kilograms. "Who could kill a man like that?"

But he worked at the crippled Chernobyl plant six months after the nuclear disaster and died as a result of radiation exposure. He was 45. "Who took my husband away from me?"

The stark truth, as recounted by this widow and other eyewitnesses, weighs heavily in my heart.

In the book, Alexievich also "interviews" herself. Her monologue goes: "After Chernobyl, we are living in a different world. The world we had before Chernobyl no longer exists. But people don't want to think about this ... People want to just forget, convincing themselves it's something that happened in the past." Alexievich concludes, "I am chronicling the future." The fact that she wrote this more than 10 years before the Fukushima nuclear disaster indicates the extraordinary depth of her insight, which is a bit unnerving, too.

At Fukushima, the daunting task of dismantling the crippled nuclear reactors continues. On Oct. 20, a welder who developed leukemia became the first post-disaster worker at the plant to be awarded worker's compensation.

It has been four and a half years since the disaster. We should all ask ourselves this question: Have we already forgotten about the desperate struggle still going on at the site of the nuclear power plant, thinking that it's someone else's responsibility?

The government is set on restarting nuclear reactors, so it wants to let the Fukushima disaster fall into oblivion, the sooner the better.

There can be no simple comparison of Chernobyl to Fukushima, but the last thing I want is for Fukushima cleanup workers and their families to go through the sort of anguish experienced by the widow in Alexievich's book.

Nothing is more important than thorough safety measures and genuine respect for the humanity of every worker.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Oct. 22

* * *

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a popular daily column that takes up a wide range of topics, including culture, arts and social trends and developments. Written by veteran Asahi Shimbun writers, the column provides useful perspectives on and insights into contemporary Japan and its culture.

Exhibit on Fukushima animals

October 29, 2015

Photo exhibit profiles lives of animals in Fukushima nuclear no-go zone

http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20151029p2a00m0na012000c.html

Once domesticated animals such as pigs and cows still roam free in the no-go zone along the coast near the disaster-stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, and an upcoming photo exhibit will offer visitors a glimpse of these animals' lives without their human masters.

The photos -- on display Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 at Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University in Musashino, Tokyo -- were snapped by Kumiko Otani, a member of a veterinarians' and farmers' group that cares for and does research on cows in the nuclear accident evacuation zone. Otani, who works for a Tokyo advertising agency, has been helping care for animals in the zone and doing other support work since just after the reactor meltdowns in March 2011, taking photos all the while.

The 26 images include the skeletons of cows left in their paddocks and pigs wandering through deserted residential neighborhoods, each photo reminding the viewer of the nuclear accident's harsh realities.

"I share the frustrations of the farmers, and want to continue to participate in the research being done" in the evacuation zone, Otani commented.

The exhibition will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both days, and admission is free.

Cancers after 3/11: But who to trust?

October 31, 2015

Cancer and Fukushima: Who to trust?

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/31/national/media-national/cancer-fukushima-trust/#.VjTiCit1BLN

by Philip Brasor
Special To The Japan Times

South Korean director Kim Ki-duk is a noted provocateur. His latest movie, "Stop," is about a Japanese couple who were living near the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant when it suffered a meltdown in March 2011.

They evacuate to Tokyo, where the wife is pestered by an underground cult that insists she abort her presumably irradiated fetus, and she becomes convinced she should. Her husband is equally convinced there is nothing wrong with the baby and ties his wife up to prevent her from doing anything. Kim's point seems to be that whichever position you take on the nuclear accident, it will invariably drive you insane.

But these positions do divide families. In an interview that appeared Oct. 20 on Norikoe Net TV, writer Minori Kitahara remarks to filmmaker Hitomi Kamanaka that there are no men in her latest documentary, "Little Voices from Fukushima," which centers on a group of mothers trying to gain more information about the effects of radiation on their children's health, because the authorities give them none. Kamanaka says these women's husbands refused to appear on camera "even though they support what their wives are doing."

There are even more mothers involved in the movement whose spouses forbade them to participate in the filming. Because of their jobs, these men gravitate toward the establishment stance, which in this case holds that there is no solid evidence showing that the radioactivity released by the Fukushima accident has had a harmful effect on area residents, including children. Public health in Fukushima is, according to Kamanaka, a gender-identified issue. **"The nuclear industry is very much a man's world,"** she says.

The male-dominated media augments the confusion by throwing out stories related to radiation in Fukushima filled with unexplained statistics: three Fukushima hospitals ran tests on 2,700 children and discovered no radioactive cesium in their bodies; the International Atomic Energy Agency says an increase in the incidence of thyroid cancer in Fukushima is "unlikely." Then Toshihide Tsuda, a professor at Okayama University, contradicts the purport of these stories by publishing a study in the journal of the International Society of Environmental Epidemiology that found thyroid cancer incidence rates of Fukushima residents "under the age of 19" was 20 to 50 times the national level. News items that mention the study also point out that Tsuda's conclusions are questioned by experts who call them "premature" or indicative of a "screening surge," meaning that since so many people were tested more cancers than normal were bound to be found and these cancers may not have been caused by radiation.

Tsuda addressed these doubts last month during a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, explaining that even if a screening surge is factored in, the incidence rate for thyroid cancer is well above the norm. Moreover, the rate of cancer incidence four years after the accident is comparable to the rate of thyroid cancer incidence in Belarus four years after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and that led

to 6,000 children undergoing surgery. He called on the authorities to undertake "better and broader" screenings and implement measures to address this probable increase in cancer cases.

The operative word here is "cancer," which dominates the conversation because of its terrifying overtones. However, it is treated by both sides as a quantitative matter: How many children will get cancer and how much of it was caused by radioactivity?

What's missing is the qualitative dimension. Katsuya Kodama, a medical researcher whose specialty is the effects of radiation on cells, pointed out during a recent discussion on the Internet news channel DemocraTV that DNA strands are always being damaged and repair themselves as a matter of course. Radiation above a certain level, however, can cause more permanent damage, which may lead to cancerous cell growth.

But all cancers aren't the same, and according to his research, the type of cell mutations found in the children in Fukushima don't usually lead to "shortened life spans." The small nodules found on the subjects' thyroid glands are cancerous but that doesn't mean they're fatal. Thyroid cancer develops very slowly, but once a parent hears from a doctor that his or her child "has cancer," the reaction is to have it removed immediately, even though it may not be necessary. Fifteen Chernobyl children diagnosed with thyroid cancer eventually died, but Kodama believes death was due to the effects of surgery and not the cancer itself. Though the number of thyroid cancer diagnoses has risen in the United States in recent decades, the number of annual deaths from the disease has remained unchanged. In Kodama's view, the argument has less to do with the effects of radiation than with how the medical community addresses cancer.

He isn't saying that radioactivity isn't dangerous or that people living in the area shouldn't be screened; he's saying the matter should be explained medically and not just statistically. Strangely enough, his research, like Tsuda's, has been rejected by the establishment. When he presented his findings to the Nuclear Regulation Authority, they told him they were afraid people would "misunderstand." I**n accordance with the official line regarding the possible health crisis in Fukushima, it's better not to talk about it *at all*.**

This attitude only exacerbates the situation. Two years ago the government set up an advisory system for the regions affected by the nuclear accident. Residents could talk to experts about safety and relief measures. Last week, Tokyo Shimbun reported that the program has been a bust, since residents don't trust anyone representing the authorities to give them straight answers. As one person involved in the program told the paper, "Everyone has different opinions about the effects of radiation, and it always leads to conflicts."

Filmmakers and radiation

May 13, 2015

Filmmakers Ash and Kamanaka discuss radiation, secrets and lives

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2015/05/13/issues/filmmakers-ash-kamanaka-discuss-radiation-secrets-lives/#.VjTn5yt1BLN

Ian Thomas Ash and Hitomi Kamanaka are perhaps the two most widely viewed filmmakers who have produced documentaries about the effects of radioactivity in Fukushima since the March 11, 2011, disaster. Ash's commitment to the subject arose after the multiple nuclear meltdown. Kamanaka, on the other hand, has been Japan's designated nuclear documentarian for nearly two decades.

In a number of ways, they are each the other's mirror image. Ash is a foreign filmmaker who produces films in Japanese. Kamanaka also made her first widely distributed film about radiation exposure by traveling abroad: She went to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington state and to Iraq, where she documented the effects of depleted uranium on Iraqi citizens after the first Gulf War. She has continued to travel since, making films in Sweden and, most recently, Belarus.

Kamanaka has considered herself an activist filmmaker from nearly the beginning, and her films are consciously critical of the nuclear energy industry. Ash's films, however, are narrative in nature. His camera stays firmly planted in the lives of his individual subjects.

In this way, as well, the two filmmakers' careers have converged: Kamanaka's new film, "Little Voices from Fukushima," eschews a commentary structure in favor of a larger cast of subjects and a similarly narrative style. The film's subject matter — the effects of radiation on the thyroid glands of children following nuclear meltdowns — also brings Kamanaka into alignment with Ash, whose two post-Fukushima documentaries address this issue exclusively.

Neither filmmaker is unfamiliar with the polarized nature of public discussion about nuclear energy: Kamanaka has lost government-administered funding for her films as a result of their content, and during a period of particularly heated media debate surrounding Ash's films, his distributor was dissolved by its parent company in an attempt to avoid involvement in any potential controversies.

We asked the two filmmakers — American and Japanese, storyteller and activist — to discuss their work and their films, and to consider the notion of "being a 'foreign' filmmaker." Below is an edited version of their discussion at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. **(Dreux Richard)**

Ian Thomas Ash: Let's talk about that now: being a "foreign filmmaker" and how much that affects the work.

I have a few questions about language. I am also a foreign filmmaker. I make films in Japanese in Japan. And you make films in Japan, but you go abroad to make films and you do that in English. You said maybe people feel disarmed by the fact that you are foreign, that it's a little bit easier for you.

Hitomi Kamanaka: They're not protective. They become relaxed.

ITA: Your English is not perfect, nor is my Japanese perfect. So I think on some level people sense that they have to speak more straight. They can't bull—-t, because it won't work.

HK: In Japanese society, in our culture, we have a sophisticated, indirect way of communicating.

ITA: One of the things in my film "A2-B-C" is "*Tadachi ni eikyō wa arimasen to omowaremasu*." It means—

HK: Nothing.
ITA: Yeah: "I believe that at this point in time there will probably be no health effects." That doesn't mean anything. You're just playing with words.
HK: It's bull—-t.
ITA: Exactly. It's bull—-t. In 10 years, 20 years, we don't know. So it's using language as a weapon — to try to cover things up. But when you are speaking with a foreign person, you can't do that so much.
HK: (miming confusion) "What? What?"
ITA: I often pretend I don't understand. People ask me about being a foreign filmmaker, and to be honest, I am not always conscious of the fact that I am foreign. I don't think all the time, "I'm foreign. I'm foreign." And how do you feel? When you go abroad, do you always feel like a foreigner? I don't. Until someone says to me, "Ah, you are a foreigner."
HK: I think since I was small, I see everyone — American people, Iraqi people or people from any other country — as the same. It's just a problem of language.
ITA: To prepare for this discussion, I watched "Hibakusha: At the End of the World." You went to Iraq, and you have been to America. What was that like? Because when you go to Iraq, not only are you foreign, but you are a woman.
HK: I think images about Iraq have been exaggerated and distorted by the mass media, especially the United States mass media — that Iraqis are stubborn people, or narrow-minded. But when I met them, they were warm and kind and full of love for their families. And they were open-minded toward foreign people. Everyone was, from normal citizens to bureaucrats.
ITA: In the movie, there's a farmer [in Washington state] named Tom, who is leading this group of downwinders who are—
HK: Plaintiffs. In a trial.
ITA: There is a scene in the film where he is making a joke about the fact the government is saying, "It's all right, it's all right." He says, "I'm just a farmer." He says, "I'm not supposed to say anything. The government says it's all right, so it must be all right." You're in the back of the car, laughing. It's a really funny moment. He's saying, "The government says the radiation stops at the barbed wire fence."
HK: It's a kind of black joke. He knows everything. But what he's saying is the reality, how he sees the reality going on around the Hanford area. The farmers are pretending.
ITA: Then Dr. Shuntaro Hida, who is a hibakusha from Hiroshima, at that time he is 85. He talks about compensation only being for people within a 2 km radius. That is true for Fukushima as well, where they had zones. Initially it was 10 km and then it was 20 km, 30 km. If you live outside of 20 km, no compensation.
HK: Society has a different way of facing the truth, I think. Physics says it is impossible to stop radiation, and that anywhere you draw a line, there will be no difference between the two sides. But you must draw the line somewhere. In between, people are trapped.
ITA: In your film "Rokkasho Rhapsody," there is a woman, Kikukawa-san. Her friend is growing organic foods. I want to read you her quote, because I think it's important. She says, "There's no proof that it is OK. But if you don't like something, you shouldn't do it. I can't offer an explanation. It's only the way I feel. The decision comes down to me, not some university professor." She, as a farmer, just has this sense.
HK: When I had a press conference and screening for that film, maybe 30 journalists came. I was waiting outside the door [during the screening]. And they came out, and I expected somebody — anybody —to talk about the contents of the film. Everybody was silent. And then they just left. Nobody stopped to talk to me. Nobody.

ITA: I had the same experience with both of my films. I made "In the Grey Zone" in 2012, and it came out one year after the nuclear meltdown. Looking back, I think maybe it was too early. Then I did "A2-B-C," and again I had a lot of trouble finding a distributor. I decided, "OK, I'm going to show it around the world and then bring it back to Japan," which is what I did. Now "A2-B-C" is better-known and people say, "Can we see 'In the Grey Zone?' Can we see the other film?"
HK: In "A2-B-C" you begin with Yamashita-san. I wondered how you could do that shooting. That is very difficult, to access Yamashita-san. He was so protected.
ITA: Dr. Shunichi Yamashita was an adviser to the government who helped after the nuclear meltdown to create policy. He is from Nagasaki and his parents were hibakusha in Nagasaki. He had been doing research in Chernobyl.
HK: He is a very famous researcher of Chernobyl. Internationally.
ITA: So he came here to the [Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan] press club about 12 days after the nuclear meltdown and he gave a press conference. He gave the press conference in English, which I think is very important, because his English is not very good. I have to tell you that Dr. Yamashita's English is not very good. This is important.
HK: Why did he not have a translator?
ITA: It's part of his act. He gives this speech, and of course none of the Japanese journalists understand what he is saying. So all of the foreign journalists leave the room and they go write their articles. Only the Japanese reporters remain in the room. He was still at the table. All the Japanese reporters stayed and he gave an off-record press conference in Japanese. But it's all off-record. I was there. He looks at me and I am the only white person in the room. He thinks I don't speak Japanese, and I am sitting there recording the whole thing.
HK: That's how you could do it.
ITA: This goes back to the thing about being a foreign filmmaker. I want to make a connection between Dr. Yamashita, and Dr. [Michael] Fox, who you interviewed, who works at the Hanford nuclear facility. And one of the things he says is—
HK: "Evidence. Scientific evidence."
ITA: Exactly. "I'm a scientist. I sort things out based on data. Data should decide these issues. Not propaganda. Not fear." It really reminded me of Dr. Yamashita. This way of thinking: that it is only about numbers, it's only about data. When you talk about any of these issues — when you talk about Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Iraq, Fukushima — if we only talk about numbers, we forget that each number represents a person. People say things like, "Only one person will become sick." But to that one person, it's 100 percent.
HK: That kind of sensitivity is always missing in those kind of scientists. But with Dr. Fox, I made a mistake. I had read the history of Hanford. A whistleblower had said they were doing bad things there. They are polluting the area and people. But [Hanford employees] had pride. They were working for a national purpose, protecting the United States from communism, or something. So they had pride, and then their pride had been broken. They became so protective, and that is why I pushed a kind of button when I—
ITA: I don't think you made a mistake.
HK: But I made him angry about it.
ITA: I made Dr. Yamashita angry. You have to break through that sometimes. That's why you're a good filmmaker. I mean, if you don't break through that, then we have no film.
HK: When I want to ask something, I ask.

ITA: I think of so many things. One is my own struggle when people refer to me as an activist filmmaker. I have not been able to embrace the word 'activist' yet. What I am doing, I hope that it can help people. But I feel like if I am only an activist filmmaker, then only other activists will watch the films.
HK: That's the problem.
ITA: There are people in America who need to see "Hibakusha: At the End of the World," but the people who need to see this film are not going to seek it out. The people who do seek it out already know there is a problem. I feel this is true for my films as well.
HK: I've been thinking about the same thing for a long time. If people think, "Oh, this is my story" or "He is like me," it will make people interested in seeing this kind of film. The people who are in my new film are very, very ordinary people. They are not activists. The only thing in their mind is "We need to protect children."
ITA: In your films, you often go to different places and you make connections. When you edit, you don't give the audience any chance to adjust: We're in Iraq and now we're in Hanford, and in Hanford you've brought someone with you from Hiroshima. In your new film, is it only filmed in Fukushima or did you go to other places?
HK: The film ["Little Voices from Fukushima"] is about mothers who want to protect their children from radiation exposure, which has occurred in Fukushima. And the other place is Belarus. So I combined two places in one film. I expect a kind of chemical reaction.
ITA: Among the audience?
HK: Yes. After you watch the film. This is a 25-year delay — 1986 and 2011. Twenty-five years separate Fukushima and Belarus.
ITA: I remember now what I was going to ask you. In this world of documentary film in Japan, and especially films that deal with nuclear issues, you are quite well-known.
HK: Because nobody was making these films.
ITA: How does that affect your ability to make another film? When I went somewhere while I was making "A2-B-C," for example, people didn't know who I was. It was easy. Now if I go back to make another film: "Ah, you're the guy that made 'A2-B-C'. " You made "Hibakusha," you made "Rokkasho Rhapsody."
HK: For "Rokkasho Rhapsody," Madarame-san [Haruki Madarame] is in it.
ITA: He's the geneticist, or the University of Tokyo professor.
HK: And also the head of the [now-defunct] Nuclear [Safety] Committee in Japan. So he doesn't know me. He just thought I was a small woman bringing a small camera. He could speak freely. But now the [trade ministry]—
ITA: Know who you are.
HK: They hate me.
ITA: Because you got some cultural funding from the Japanese government to make your films.
HK: That's why they were angry. Later, when my film got famous, then they thought, "This film got a grant from the government? Who gave it?" I guess they were angry with the ministry of culture. Since then, I can't get this kind of grant. People develop an image about you. It's difficult.
ITA: Interesting. We were just talking about professor Madarame. He says something like—
HK: "It's money."
ITA: Exactly. He says, "Regardless of whether the path we are on is the right one, this is the path that we have chosen. And it all comes down to money."
HK: Documentary film production in Japan is not easy. Mass media is taking over whole fields and people believe what mass media says, even after March 11. So we are making a smaller type of media. But this media only can tell the things that mass media doesn't talk about. That's why I think it's important.

Ian Thomas Ash is currently touring in Japan and abroad to support his latest film "-1287," about a late friend's terminal cancer. He is also in production for two feature documentary films: The first is about a rarely explored niche in Japan's sex industry; the other is the third installment in his series about Fukushima. More information on his films can be found at www.documentingian.com*.*

*Hitomi Kamanaka's most recent documentary "Little Voices from Fukushima" is now showing in theaters (*www.kamanaka.com/canon*). A screening with English subtitles will be at 10:45 a.m. on 20 May at Uplink in Shibuya, Tokyo (www.uplink.co.jp).*

Special thanks to Dreux Richard. Your comments and story ideas: community@japantimes.co.jp

NHK Hiroshima manga

November 5, 2015

Manga tells tale of Hiroshima radio station's struggle to stay on air after atomic bombing

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/style/AJ201511050001

Produced by NHK Hiroshima, the "Shodo no Hosokyoku" manga tells how the radio station resumed broadcasting a day after the 1945 atomic bombing of the city. (Provided by NHK Hiroshima)

By GEN OKAMOTO/ Staff Writer

HIROSHIMA--On the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, a news reporter for radio station Hiroshima Chuo Hosokyoku prepared to announce over the airwaves a warning about a possible air raid.

But before the announcement could be read, a U.S. B-29 bomber dropped an atomic bomb, destroying most of the city and knocking the radio station off the air.

To mark the 70th anniversary of the catastrophe, Japan Broadcasting Corp.'s Hiroshima Broadcasting Station (NHK Hiroshima)--Hiroshima Chuo Hosokyoku's successor--has published a manga booklet describing how the station's surviving employees valiantly struggled to resume broadcasting a day after the bomb was dropped.

Based on an employee's diary and other materials, "Shodo no Hosokyoku" (Broadcasting station on the scorched ground), tells how the employees made their way through ferocious fires to get to Hara

Transmitting Station to broadcast an official announcement from the Hiroshima governor the next morning.

The employees recount their experiences in the manga, with one saying, "We could have saved tens of thousands of lives if we had put out the air raid alert one minute earlier."

Hiroshima Chuo Hosokyoku began broadcasting in the city in 1928. Its programs included news, radio calisthenics, cooking, music and other shows. After the war began, the station frequently provided air raid warnings and other war-related information, according to NHK Hiroshima.

Observing the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing, NHK Hiroshima confirmed the course of events and said the desperate attempts to continue broadcasting during an emergency was its "starting point in journalism."

NHK Hiroshima has also published "Genbaku Hisaishi" (The chronicle of damages caused by the atomic bomb) and other printed materials, but it decided to release the A4-size, eight-page manga booklet to make it easy to understand for students visiting Hiroshima on school field trips.

"I was moved because I felt as if my father had returned home," said Takaaki Morikawa, 76, whose father was a technical expert at the radio station and is featured in the manga. “I hope young people will take a look it."

A copy "Shodo no Hosokyoku" can be picked up at the NHK Hiroshima station offices. The broadcaster published 5,000 copies for free distribution.

Glows in the dark

November 13, 2015

Nuclear power — an issue so prominent, it glows in the dark

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/11/13/arts/nuclear-power-an-issue-so-prominent-it-glows-in-the-dark/#.VkXSzL8R-ot

by Melynie Yoneda
Special To The Japan Times

Walking into Ken + Julia Yonetani's "Wishes" is like stepping into a bad dream. The room is illuminated by hanging chandeliers, their green light eerily flickering against black walls, as Disney's "It's a Small World" repeatedly plays in the background. This first Tokyo solo show for the husband-and-wife team Ken and Julia Yonetani is a visual comment on nuclear power that invites visitors to tread the fine line between fear and beauty.

Ken + Julia Yonetani's past works have explored a number of environmental and political issues — including climate change-induced coral bleaching ("Sweet Barrier Reef," 2009), the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute ("Senkaku," 2013) and unsustainable agricultural practices ("The Last Supper," 2014) — and their viewpoint and unusual installations have gained acclaim overseas, having exhibited in Australia, Germany and France.

"Wishes" at the Mizuma Art Gallery, however, focuses on an issue closer to home and is the duo's first solo show in their native Tokyo. The couple were in Australia when the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami hit, having to watch the disaster unfold via new bulletins on television. They vividly remember watching an Australian news network and seeing Emperor Akihito making his unprecedented televised national address. His speech, the Yonetanis say, evoked the first time an emperor spoke to entire nation — Hirohito's World War II radio announcement of defeat.

Julia mentions how Ken became neurotic about radiation following the disaster, constantly checking the Internet for news.

"When Fukushima happened we were creating artworks with salt, but we wondered if we could make a work as a kind of healing process for our neuroses, and what kind of material we could use," says Julia, as she explains how Ken, who became obsessed with radiation levels, would keep checking the Internet for news.

Finding the kind of chandeliers that are often seen in high-end shops in London as an intriguing medium, Ken + Julia Yonetani began putting together "Crystal Palace: The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nuclear Nations," which debuted at the Singapore Biennale in 2013. The piece's 31 chandeliers represent the 31 countries that were relying on nuclear power at the time of the Fukushima No. 1 power plant disaster, with the size of each chandelier corresponding to the number of operating nuclear plants in that country. Refitted with uranium glass beads, the light fittings glow when lit by ultra-violet light.

Several of these chandeliers make the main exhibit for "Wishes," at the center of which sprawls the spider-like "U.S.A.," which is followed in size by "Japan." The other accompanying chandeliers were chosen for their corresponding countries' proximity to Japan, such as China and Taiwan, or because they represent nations that visitors may be surprised to learn house nuclear power plants.

Other works in the show include a newer piece titled "Three Wishes." This features three rotating glass figurines modeled after Disney's Tinkerbell. The fairy's wings, however, have been replaced by real Zizeeria macha butterflies, which were collected as a part of a lab study on the biological impact of the nuclear disaster.

The exhibition opened in October, as talks in Japan about nuclear power raised critical points, and less than a week later, the Ministry of Labor announced that a cancer case had been linked to the Fukushima accident. For Julia, that announcement made her think of Sellafield, where Britain's worst nuclear accident took place in 1957 and local families have been fighting ever since to prove a link between the radiation and leukemia.

"The irony is, the more that link is washed over, the more people will fear," says Julia. "They can't gauge what can be determined as safe and what is harmful. Our work is mainly an expression of our own anxieties and neuroses in this context."

Both Ken and Julia believe such issues won't be going away anytime soon, either: "It seems sometimes like we are on a merry-go-round. In a similar way to our work 'Wishes,' we keep rotating as the lights flicker around us."

Ken + Julia Yonetani's "Wishes" at Mizuma Art Gallery runs until Nov. 14; 1 p.m.-7 p.m. The duo will also be exhibiting their work at the autumn Kenpoku Art 2016 festival in Ibaraki Prefecture. For more information, visit: kenpoku-art.jp

Koji Ueda: Collecting stories of A-bomb victims

November 15, 2015

A-bomb survivor works to get anti-nuke message to nuclear powers

http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20151115p2a00m0na004000c.html

A survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bombing is trying to get the anti-nuclear message to nuclear-armed countries through translating and publishing the stories of those who lived through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

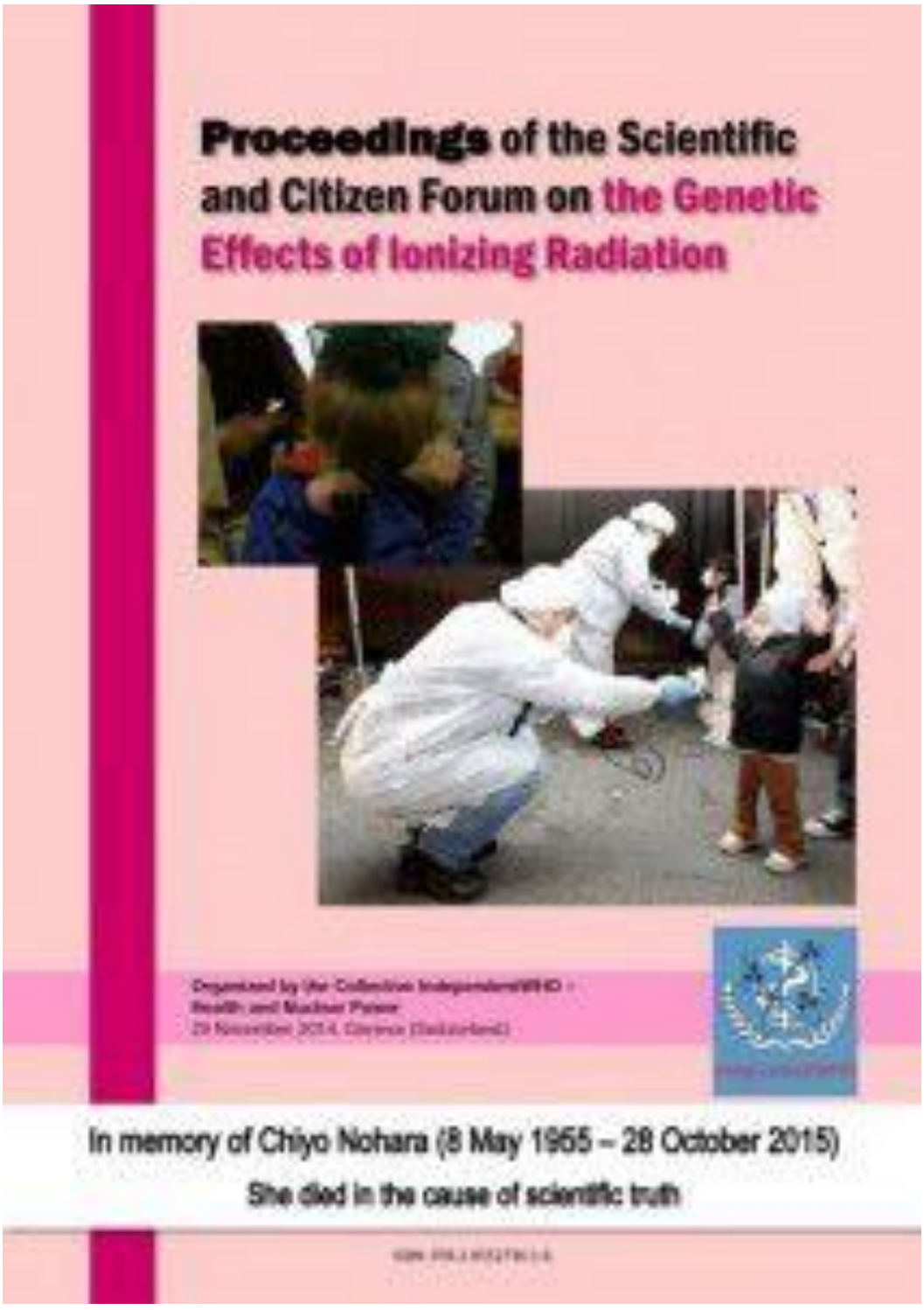
Koji Ueda, 73, was formerly the vice-head of the secretariat of Toyukai, a Tokyo organization of A-bomb survivors. He is collecting stories from a variety of sources, including Shuntaro Hida, 98, a doctor who treated A-bomb victims.

Ueda himself was exposed to the radiation of the Hiroshima bomb when he returned with his mother to check on their house near the blast hypocenter. Though he doesn't have memories from that time, he has spread the stories of the A-bomb survivors both within and outside of Japan. Last year, with the help from a Bangladeshi friend, Ueda self-published stories in Bengali, a language that is also spoken in India -- one of the nuclear powers.

At the Review Conference for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in May this year, a call for leaders around the world to visit the bombing sites in Japan was removed from an agreement document due to opposition from China. This led Ueda to believe that nuclear-armed countries need to hear the voices of A-bomb survivors.

Ueda now seeks to publish these stories in Chinese, and is raising funds through the website : https://www.makuake.com/project/hiroshima-nagasaki-peace/ (in Japanese).

Independent WHO: Genetic effects of radiation



Proceedings of the Forum on the Genetic Effects of Ionizing Radiation

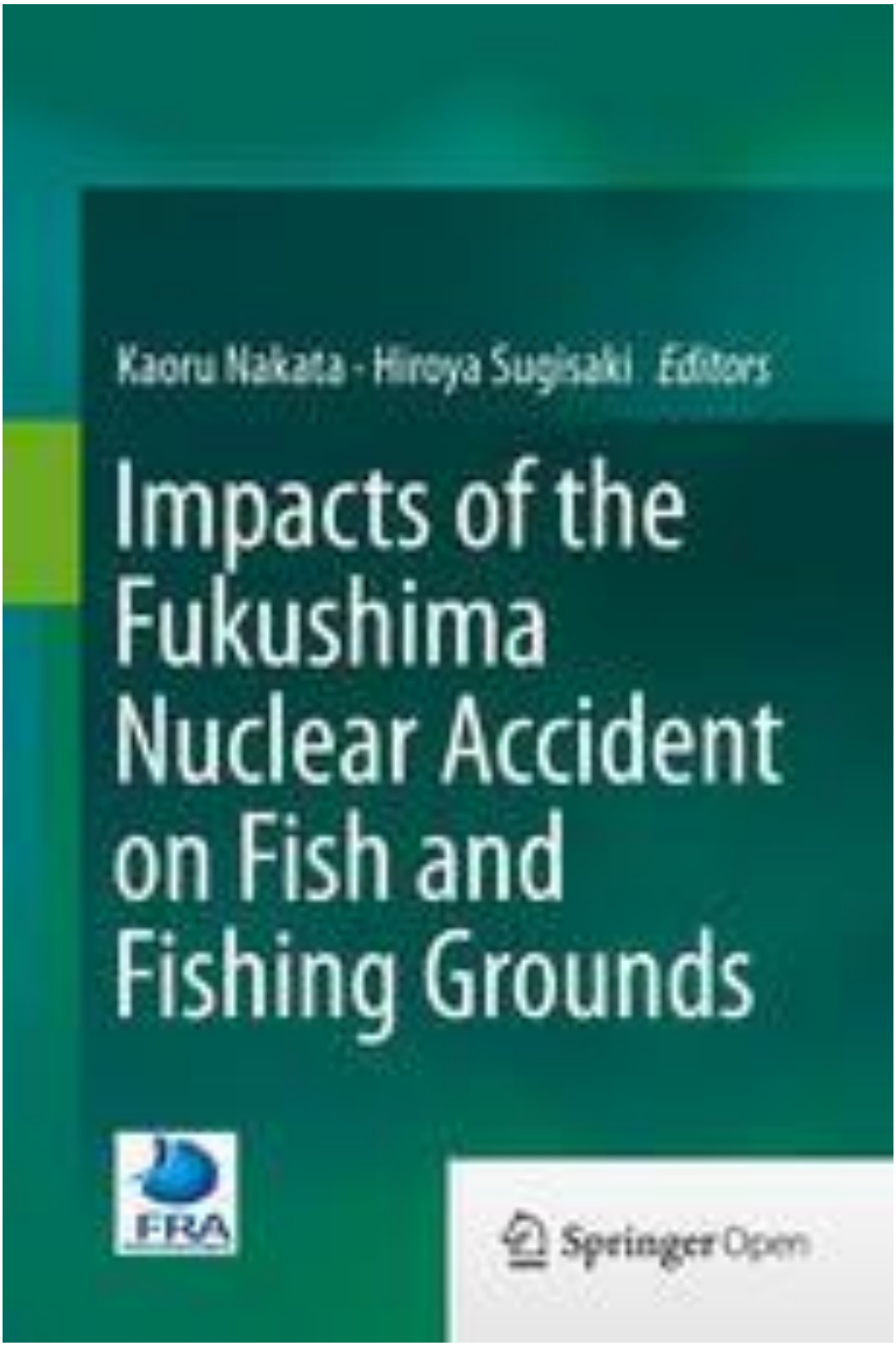
http://independentwho.org/en/2015/11/05/proceedings-forum-2014/

“IndependentWHO – Health and Nuclear Power” organized a “Scientific and Citizen Forum on the Genetic Effects of Ionizing Radiation” on Saturday, November 29, 2014 in Geneva, with the participation of six international experts (Japan, USA, Finland, England, Germany).
The Proceedings of this forum have now been published.
These Proceedings can be read or downloaded here on this page or, if you

prefer a hard copy, you can buy the Proceedings of the Forum on the Genetic Effects of Ionizing Radiation by ordering a printed copy directly from “Lulu.com”.
“Read or download the Proceedings”
“Compressed version” (for faster opening but slightly lower quality)
“Buy a copy of the Proceedings”

A French version of these Proceedings also exists.
“Go to the French version of the Proceedings”

Book on impacts of 3/11 on fish



http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-4-431-55537-7

Impacts of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident on Fish and Fishing Grounds

Editors:

- Kaoru Nakata,
- Hiroya Sugisaki

ISBN: 978-4-431-55536-0 (Print) 978-4-431-55537-7 (Online)
Download Book (PDF, 10866 KB) Download Book (ePub, 4894 KB)
In open access

Abstract

As a result of the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in March 2011, a large volume of radionuclides was released into the environment, thus contaminating marine and freshwater systems. The Fisheries Research Agency has conducted research beginning soon after the accident. Our research addressed the contamination processes of radionuclides (mainly radiocesium) through water, sediments, and food chains, in both marine and freshwater systems, based on a large volume of original in situ data. Our research has also provided important information on when and how marine fish have been contaminated. This chapter gives an overview of our research.

Ichiefu: A manga reportage about Fukushima

December 29, 2015

'Ichiefu,' manga by Fukushima nuke plant worker, to hit shelves abroad

http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20151229/p2a/00m/0na/018000c

Three volumes of the manga "Ichiefu" are seen. (Mainichi)

"Ichiefu," a manga-cum-reportage series about the disaster-stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant by an artist who actually works there, is set to be published in France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Taiwan.

A total of some 20,000 copies of the "Ichiefu" series -- a dispassionate account of operations at the plant based on the day-to-day working experiences of 50-year-old author Kazuto Tatsuta (a penname) -- will hit shelves in the foreign markets. The question now is: How will the manga be received abroad?

"Ichiefu" debuted in 2013 in the manga weekly "Morning," published by Kodansha Ltd., and has appeared on an irregular basis since. In autumn this year, it was also released as a three-volume book series with a total of some 350,000 copies in print. Morning's editorial department asked Kodansha to find foreign publishers for the popular work, and the firm found five. The most interested party came from France, where the partner publishing house is set to print 8,000 copies of "Ichiefu" in French.

Stephane Beaujean, editor-in-chief of the French magazine Kaboom, a critical quarterly about the world of comics, and Christel Hoolans, executive general manager at Belgium-based manga publisher Kana, visited Japan in mid-November this year to record an interview with Tatsuta. Both Beaujean and Hoolans came away thinking that "Ichiefu" had real news value as a work of manga reportage on the aftermath of the Fukushima meltdowns.

According to Beaujean, an expert in both Japanese manga and foreign comics, comics-as-reportage is a distinct genre in France. He went on to say that Japanese manga has a devoted following in France, and

there's a good chance "Ichiefu" will be well received there. Hoolans pointed out that there are many nuclear plants in France, so there is also a lot of interest in the Fukushima crisis. People who don't usually read manga but are curious about the nuclear disaster could pick up a copy of "Ichiefu," she continued. For Tatsuta's part, he told the Mainichi Shimbun, "I wanted to communicate from the point of view of a regular worker how the (Fukushima plant) site and Fukushima Prefecture itself are constantly changing. I suspect that there's less news on the nuclear disaster abroad than there is in Japan, so I'm very happy to get the chance to tell foreign readers about it."

Ugaya Hirochimi

http://queenmobs.com/2015/06/an-interview-with-hiromichi-ugaya-a-photojournalist-documenting-fukushima/
A 25-minute interview (in English) with Ugaya Hirochimi, a photojournalist who has visited Fukushima many times since the disaster. https://youtu.be/EbUUhk4uoAc

Ugaya has also published a book of photographs, to try and fight the growing oblivion surrounding the aftermath of 3/11:
Portrait of Fukushima: 2011-2015: Life After Meltdown **can be purchased** here**.**

Anime shorts for 5th anniversary of Fukushima disaster

A still from an episode set in the Fukushima Prefecture village of Kawauchi (Provided by Fukushima Gainax Co.)

January 14, 2016

Collection of anime shorts to mark 5th anniversary of Fukushima disaster

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201601140056

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

MIHARU, Fukushima Prefecture--The studio that produced the famed Evangelion TV anime series is working on an omnibus of shorts that depicts the recovery and struggles that residents of Fukushima Prefecture face five years after the 2011 disaster.

Titled “Miraieno Tegami--Kono Michi no Tochukara” (A letter to the future--From the road halfway there), the 10 episodes, each 2 minutes long, are being produced by anime studio Gainax Co. and its Fukushima subsidiary.

The project was commissioned by the Fukushima prefectural government in the hope the films would help people to remember the Fukushima nuclear accident and mitigate negative publicity lingering from the disaster.

The episodes are based on real-life stories to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that triggered a nuclear emergency.

The episodes are set in different parts of Fukushima Prefecture, from evacuation zones around the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant to further inland.

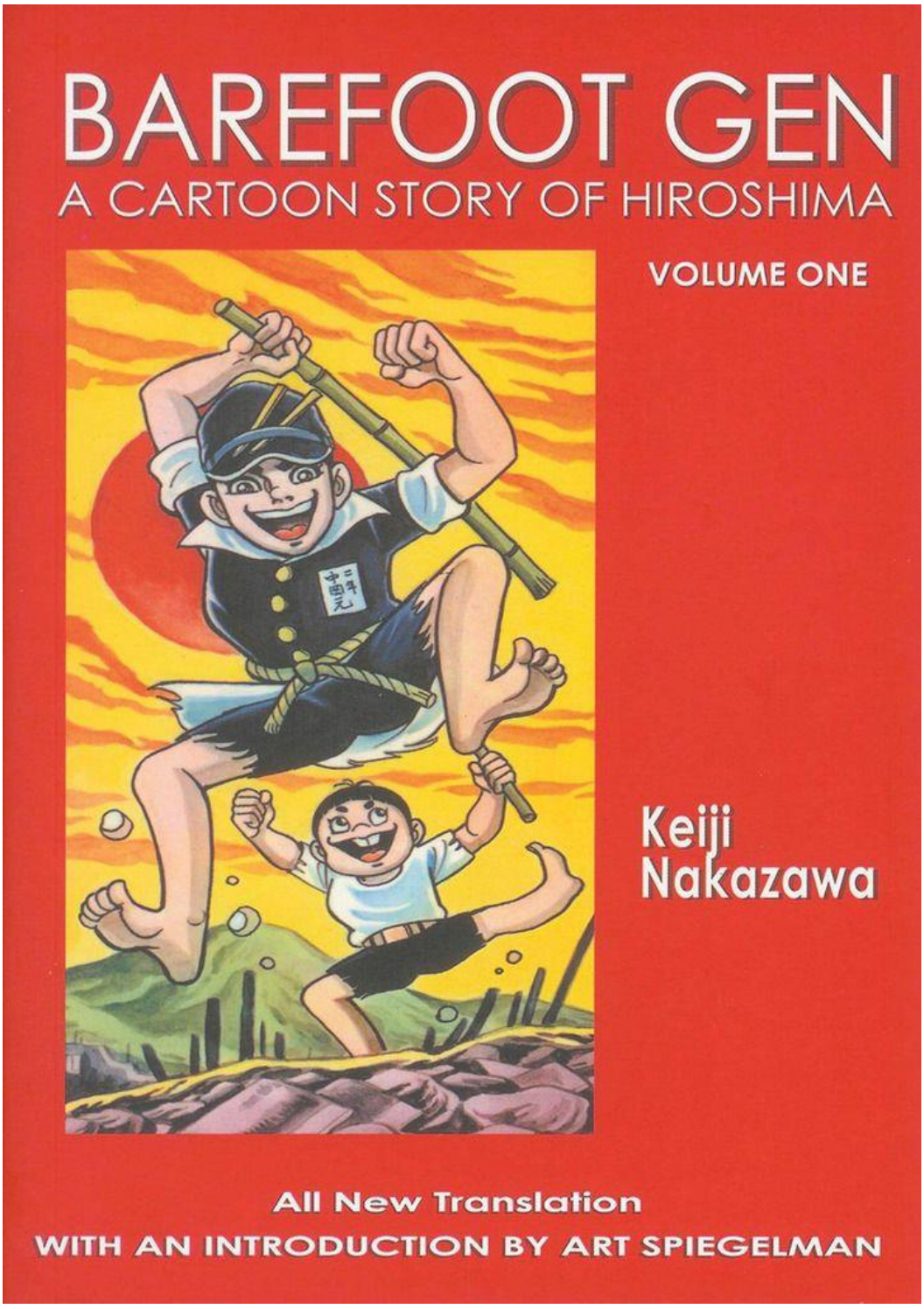
At a Jan. 8 news conference in Miharu a month ahead of the preview screenings, the production team showed several scenes from an episode about a woman who moved to Kawauchi after the disaster and her interactions with the village's residents.

“I hope the charms of Fukushima come across so viewers will visit the locations featured in the series,” said Yoshinori Asao, Fukushima Gainax Co. president and general director of the series.

Creative director Michihiko Yanai added, “It is an opportunity to tell people what is changing rapidly (compared with how Fukushima was right after the disaster) and what cannot be changed so easily here.”

Preview screenings around Japan are scheduled from the middle of February. The shorts will be also available to watch online on the project's website at (miraitegami.jp).

New English translation of Barefoot Gen



January 23, 2016
Barefoot Gen

by Kris Kosaka
Special To The Japan Times

With the recent announcement by North Korean authorities that they had successfully tested a hydrogen bomb, Keiji Nakazawa's classic anti-nuclear manga, "Barefoot Gen," once again deserves a full reading — both for newcomers or for those revisiting its brilliance.

Barefoot Gen, by Keiji Nakazawa.
10 volumes
Last Gasp, Manga.

Nakazawa vividly records how communities will both unite and divide during war and its aftermath, and he left a legacy as poignant and potent now — with Syria's starving cities and fear-mongering in Europe and America — as it was in the aftermath of World War II.

Beginning in the final months leading up to the bombing of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, and ending in 1953, "Barefoot Gen" takes us inside war from the civilians' view with none of the propaganda and all of the flawed and frabjous potential of humanity. There's discrimination and greed, compassion and sacrifice; drunken fathers resisting war and traumatized children seeking to grow strong "like wheat," as people of all nationalities struggle to survive in horrific conditions — one memorable character is a kind Korean, sharing food while facing prejudice.

Loosely autobiographical, the 10-part tale ends with Gen, now a talented artist and sign painter, moving to Tokyo to pursue work as an artist. Last Gasp Books published a new English translation of all 10 volumes between 2004 and 2010, with an introduction by the modern graphic novelist Art Spiegelman. Today, it's **a timely reminder to give peace a chance.**

Read archived reviews of Japanese classics at jtimes.jp/essential.

"Fukushima, mon amour"

A still shot of "Fukushima, mon Amour" (Mathias Bothor) (c) Majestic

February 20, 2016

Film on Fukushima nuclear disaster wins Berlin film festival award

http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160220/p2g/00m/0et/011000c

BERLIN (Kyodo) -- A film set in northeastern Japan's Fukushima Prefecture in the wake of the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant disaster was awarded the Heiner Carow Prize at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival Friday.

"Fukushima, mon Amour," which stars Japanese actress Kaori Momoi, won the prize awarded to German-produced films in the festival's diverse "Panorama" category.

German director Doris Doerrie shot the film in the city of Minamisoma last spring.

It tells the story of the connection between Momoi's character, a displaced resident living in temporary housing, and a young German woman who sympathizes with Fukushima's plight after the disaster.

The award is named after renowned German director Heiner Carow.

February 15, 2016

German-directed Fukushima drama plays at Berlin film festival

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201602150044

By ERINA ITO/ Staff Writer

BERLIN--A film staged and shot in post-disaster Fukushima Prefecture spotlighting the unlikely friendship between a young German woman and an elderly geisha was screened at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival on Feb. 13.

“Fukushima, mon Amour,” directed by German Doris Doerrie, stars German actress Rosalie Thomass as the woman who visits Fukushima after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident in March 2011. Japanese actress Kaori Momoi portrays Fukushima’s last geisha, who has been living in temporary housing after the disaster.

The black-and-white film focuses on the healing process to overcome what the two women have lost in their respective pasts, through their exchanges and the building of a friendship.

Doerrie shot the poignant drama last spring in Minami-Soma, a city in Fukushima Prefecture, about 15 kilometers from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

She conceived of the idea from the late Tsuyako Ito, dubbed the "last geisha of Kamaishi," Iwate Prefecture, another coastal city devastated by the tsunami spawned by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Ito lived in temporary housing after the twin disasters until her death in January this year at age 89.

The film was presented in the Panorama section of the Berlin film festival.

Screening of “Fukushima, mon Amour" in Japan is yet to be decided.

At a news conference, Doerrie said what occurred in the disaster must not be forgotten and expressed hope for the film to be released in Japan.

She also acknowledged the assistance of Minami-Soma residents, who still reside in temporary housing, for educating her about their lives after the disaster and cooperating in the filming.

Links to recent books on Fukushima

http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/12/book-on-impacts-of-3-11-on-fish.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/09/not-so-easy-to-look-at-what-we-should-look-at.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/article-new-book-on-fukushima-disaster-not-just-a-japanese-accident-122529789.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2014/08/fukushima-poet-taro-aizu.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2014/12/on-the-brink.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2016/01/ugaya-hirochimi.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/article-kikujiro-fukushima-to-write-about-fukushima-121184670.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/04/no-nukes-hiroshima-nagasaki-fukushima.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/02/hikari-no-ryu.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/article-david-lochbaum-the-story-of-a-nuclear-disaster-123430596.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/article-oishinbo-s-impact-4-123671795.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/12/ichiefu-a-manga-reportage-about-fukushima.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/article-kazuto-tatsuta-s-manga-1f-123126523.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/04/radiation-and-one-s-hometown.html http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com/2015/03/fukushima-no-koe-wo-kiko.html www.afaz.at (see web « comic » on Fukushima in several languages)

A page from "Hikari no Ryu" depicts toxins flowing from a dragon's belly that engulf a village. (Provided by Miyuki Ono)

Live! Love! Sing!

February 28, 2016

‘Live! Love! Sing!’ film tells of disharmony, hope among Fukushima evacuees

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201602280006

By NATSUKI EDOGAWA/ Staff Writer

The latest Fukushima-based fictional film by director Tsuyoshi Inoue, “Live! Love! Sing!” tells of evacuees from the 2011 nuclear disaster who are still unable to return to their hometowns.

In the movie, playing at mini theaters and elsewhere across Japan, Inoue examines these displaced persons who now have conflicted feelings about their hometowns and hopes of returning.

"Live! Love! Sing!" follows the director's successful portrayal of people struggling to live together after their towns were devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK)'s hit morning series "Ama-chan,” which aired in 2013.

The protagonist in “Live! Love! Sing!” is Asami Mizushima, a high school girl who has moved to Kobe from Tonami, a fictitious town in Fukushima Prefecture whose residents have been displaced due to the disaster.

Scattered across the country, Asami and her classmates return to Tonami to dig up a time capsule they buried in the schoolyard when they were in elementary school.

Yoshihide Otomo, who composed the opening theme for “Ama-chan” and grew up in Fukushima Prefecture, provided music for the film.

“Live! Love! Sing!” was shot in Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, a town that remains completely evacuated since the 2011 disaster. Actual evacuees joined the cast as extras.

When the production team asked for help from the public to appear as extras in festival scenes, about 400 evacuees returned to the town to participate.

Seeing the townspeople hang around the location after shooting the scenes, the cast and staff members were reminded of how the evacuees were reluctant to leave their hometown, according to the director.

In the film, one of Asami’s lines is particularly shocking.

When her boyfriend’s mother, who experienced the Great Hanshin Earthquake, shows sympathy for what occurred in Fukushima Prefecture, Asami rebuffs her, saying, “The disaster in Tonami is not minor like it was in Kobe.”

Because Asami is so preoccupied with her thinking that the nuclear accident was more disastrous than the 1995 earthquake, which claimed the lives of 6,434 people, the emotionally damaged girl cannot fathom the pain of others.

What is portrayed in “Live! Love! Sing!” is a situation different from current society, where human bonds and sympathy have been emphasized after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

“I thought I could have that line (of discord) in a work of fiction,” Inoue said.

The idea came from a TV drama he shot six years ago about the Hanshin earthquake. One of the actors from Kobe said to him, “You don’t know anything, do you?”

“I wondered whether I could have the characters play out the fact that we can’t understand one another,” Inoue said.

In Fukushima Prefecture, there is an evacuated town overrun with weeds, while posters for a “Welcome Back” promotional campaign are put up at financial institutions after the government decided to lift the evacuation order in another town just a few kilometers away.

When Inoue dealt with people affected by the tsunami in “Ama-chan,” whose main locale was in Iwate Prefecture, the director wanted to show hope because there were people determined to stay in devastated areas.

But Inoue said he wasn’t sure how to portray the situation in Fukushima Prefecture because he wondered why there were puzzling differences between areas separated by a short distance in the same prefecture.

Inoue also said he was struck by how evacuees of the nuclear disaster live their daily lives.

“They were forced into an absurd situation, have no one to release their anger on, and yet have to keep on living,” he said. “I wondered how they were coping with it. I wanted to come face to face with such things.

“I still haven’t found an answer. But I thought maybe I could support any choices they make, and try to reconstruct places where they used to live, or live in different places as their new home. Either way is fine. I made this film because I thought it would be great if I could say that any choice might be fine.”

The movie ends with a faint glimmer of hope beyond the discord.

“It would be better if we could say it in words,” the director said. “If it is a rift, it is a rift, and I want to show something that can bridge it in the movie. I don’t mind if it leads to fights. I hope the movie can be a forum where everyone can speak their minds.”

Ichiefu

March 2, 2016

Manga artist and ex-Fukushima No. 1 worker portrays life, progress at troubled plant

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/02/national/manga-artist-ex-fukushima-no-1-worker-portrays-life-progress-troubled-plant/#.VtdNl-aDlLN

by Satoshi Iizuka
Kyodo

A manga artist who has been involved in decommissioning work at the disaster-hit Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant has highlighted the need for effective deployment of skilled workers in parts of the premises that still have high radiation levels.
Kazuto Tatsuta, 51, also said in a recent interview that he feels progress has been made since the Tokyo Electric Power Co. complex suffered triple meltdowns after the March 11, 2011 quake and tsunami disaster in an operation that will take decades.
"It is not hard to collect a large number of ordinary workers, but lower wages resulting from multilayered (subcontractors) is a problem that could, in severely bad cases, have an impact on their motivation," Tatsuta said, noting that about 7,000 people work at the plant every day.
Tatsuta, who uses a pen name for fear of being prevented from working at the plant again, commuted to the complex intermittently between June 2012 and November 2014 to engage in such work as managing rest stations for other workers, plumbing within the reactor 3 building and taking care of robots operating within the units.
His manga stories "Ichiefu" ("1F"), published by Kodansha Ltd., portray the ordinary lives and attitudes of workers at the complex. For example, they were irritated by itchy noses as a result of wearing full face masks and were more afraid of the heat in summer than of radiation.
Ichiefu is an abbreviation for the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant commonly used among local people and those related to the industry.
Tatsuta, who has frequently changed jobs since graduating from university, said work at the Fukushima plant is by no means lucrative. "Initially, I didn't aim to work in 1F. After seeking a job in disaster-hit areas including Miyagi or Iwate, I just found one at the nuclear plant."
But he said, "The construction company I worked for was a sixth subcontractor (of Tepco) and the salary was no different from that for ordinary work. My dream of making a lot of money in a short period was (dashed)."
His pay started at ¥8,000 (about $70) a day working in the rest houses, and rose to ¥20,000 per day for work within the reactor buildings.
His three-volume book series depicts workers from all across Japan having to bear their own living costs in uncomfortable lodgings before work is officially allocated, or not receiving any pay when accidents or other problems cause operations at the plant to be abruptly suspended.
Tatsuta also noted the need for experts, in addition to ordinary workers. "In order to get experts who have experience and skills relating to nuclear plants to work as long as possible, the management of radiation is

crucial," he said. "The longer these workers are exposed to radiation, the shorter they are able to stay in higher dose places."
Measures against radiation, including decontamination of such areas and the setting up of protective barriers around them, are essential, he said.
Ahead of the fifth anniversary of the nuclear crisis, many media outlets were allowed to enter the premises to report on the current situation at the plant.
"A big development is that workers are able to move around (wide ares of the) premises without full face masks," said Tatsuta, having seen photos in a newspaper. Currently, people can work with masks that cover only half their face in about 90 percent of the premises, except for areas around the stricken reactors.
The media tend to report that reconstruction of the disaster-hit area is still only halfway done. But Tatsuta called on readers to focus on the things that are progressing, albeit little by little.
Within the Fukushima complex, the completion of a frozen underground wall to prevent radioactive water from accumulating further and the piling up of around 1,000 tanks to store processed contaminated water are indications of the significant progress made since Tatsuta left 1F, he said, though admitting there was still considerable work to be done.
"Ichiefu" features ordinary middle-aged men who take naps while waiting for their colleagues to finish their jobs, chat cheerfully with their co-workers or play pachinko in their free time.
"Some people viewed us as heroes, saying 'Thank you very much on behalf of Japan and the world.' Others felt very sorry for us, saying 'You were treated like slaves in dangerous working conditions.' But I want to say that neither of these views is correct. I'd like readers to understand that to some extent.
"As one of those workers, I wanted to describe the gap between what the public thought and what I saw inside. 'Ichiefu' is . . . like my diary, but I am pleased if it has resulted in showing the workers' real lives."
Tatsuta, who describes himself as a cartoonist who doesn't sell well, was careful not to indicate his own political views on the government's nuclear policies for fear that this would make his work seem biased.
"I neither agree nor disagree with the restart of nuclear plants, although I am frequently asked that question," he said.
Having made its debut in a weekly magazine in October 2013, some 350,000 copies of "Ichiefu" have now been printed in Japan. It has also hit the shelves in Taiwan, with French, Spanish, German and Italian versions being published soon.
Tatsuta now calls Fukushima his "second hometown" as a result of the connections he made while living and working there, and said, "I hope to work there for the rest of my life, if possible."
But he has had no chance to work at the complex since December 2014, and sometimes suspects that because Tepco or one of its subcontractors has discovered his identity as the author of the manga series, he is unable to return there.
"It can't be helped. I have been prepared for that from the beginning," he said. "But once I became involved (in 1F), I began looking forward and I am closely observing how it will be cleaned up. It can't turn any worse from now."
Tatsuta is currently working on a manga story for an upcoming book on the decommissioning of the Fukushima plant co-authored by Hiroshi Kainuma, a Fukushima-born sociologist.

Moms of Iitate

Current crop: Eiko Kanno (left) and Yoshiko Kanno, evacuees from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant disaster, show off harvested green onions near a temporary housing complex in Date, Fukushima Prefecture. The two women are featured in the film 'Moms of Iitate — Together with Soil,' which is directed by Mizue Furui. | COURTESY OF MIZUE FURUI/KYODO

March 4, 2016

Film depicts life of evacuees from Fukushima

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/03/04/films/film-depicts-life-of-evacuees-from-fukushima/#.VtnOJeaDmot

by Keiji Hirano
Kyodo

Freelance journalist Mizue Furui is a frequent visitor to a small housing complex in northeastern Japan for evacuees from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant disaster.

While domestic issues are not her field, she found herself drawn to Fukushima by parallels she saw between the fate of Fukushima evacuees and Palestinians.

“Both of them have been driven from their homes,” says Furui, who has covered Palestinian issues, particularly concerning women and children, for almost 30 years.

“I wanted to report how the evacuees have lived and what they think, given the unjust hardships,” she says. Next week marks the fifth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which was followed by a massive tsunami that triggered a nuclear crisis centered in the Tohoku region.

Furui's effort evolved into a documentary film titled "Moms of Iitate — Together with the Soil," focusing on two female evacuees in their late 70s from the village of Iitate, adjacent to the Fukushima No. 1 complex.

All residents of Iitate in Fukushima Prefecture were required to evacuate following the nuclear meltdown, which became the world's worst since Chernobyl, with the two women — Eiko Kanno and Yoshiko Kanno — eventually settling in temporary housing in the city of Date, also in Fukushima Prefecture.

Eiko and Yoshiko, who have both lost their husbands, although not to the disaster, were neighbors and close friends in Iitate. Their children and grandchildren have also taken shelter in other cities.

Furui, who started visiting Fukushima shortly after the triple disasters occurred, first met the two women in 2013 while they were involved in a program to teach people outside the prefecture how to make traditional Iitate foods such as miso and rice cakes.

Believing that people might not be able to resume life in Iitate for decades, the two women hoped their town's food culture could nevertheless be preserved. They still also till the soil to maintain their old way of life.

Furui eventually began shooting footage of their food-preservation efforts and their refugee life as farmers.

"When the time came to make miso, we did so, and when the time came to harvest rice, we did so. … It was quite natural for us to secure our own food by ourselves," Eiko says in the film. "I can be free from the fear of radiation and feel, even for just a moment, as if I am staying in my own village by touching the soil."

Furui says Eiko reminds her of Ghada Ageel, a Palestinian woman who collected and recorded narratives and songs performed by elderly Palestinians about their lives and struggles under the Israeli occupation to hand down to later generations.

Furui's first film, "Ghada — Songs of Palestine," depicts the Palestinians' lives through the eyes of the woman.

In her latest film, Furui says she wants to present people whose lives have been changed by the nuclear accident through the eyes of Eiko and Yoshiko.

"I had wanted to end my days looking out at the mountains around the village," Eiko says. "The village and its people lived together with nature's bounty."

Furui first visited the Gaza Strip and West Bank with her camera as a rookie journalist at the age of 40. Since quitting her job as an office worker, she has also covered Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Uganda.

Her photos, videos and articles have been carried by major magazines and TV news shows.

She now hopes to continue following the evacuees from Iitate until they return home, if it is possible during their lifetime.

"Iitate was beautiful, with cherry blossoms blooming and birds singing, when I visited there in May 2011," Furui says. "It is sad that such a village was damaged."

"Moms of Iitate," whose production costs were covered by around 300 mostly individual donors, will be screened at a Tokyo movie theater in May, followed by screenings in other cities in Japan.

Furui says she plans to create an English version of the film so it can be screened at international film festivals and other overseas venues.

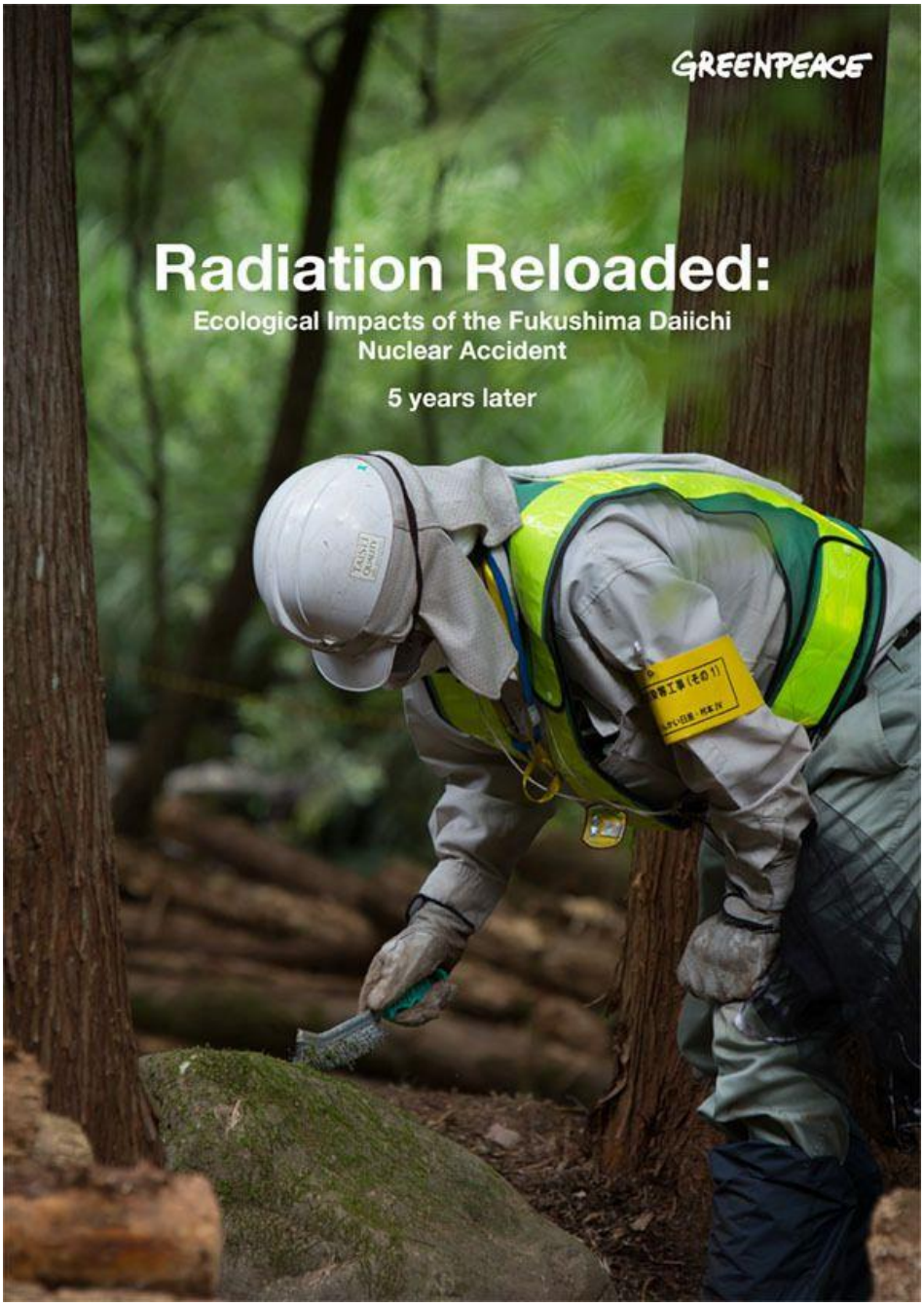
Greenpeace Report

http://www.greenpeace.org/japan/ja/library/publication/20160304_report/

Radiation Reloaded

出版物 - 2016-03-04

Ecological Impacts of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident 5 years Later



The report is based on a large body of independent scientific research in impacted areas in the Fukushima region, as well as investigations by Greenpeace radiation specialists over the past five years. It exposes deeply flawed assumptions by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Abe government in terms of both decontamination and ecosystem risks. It further draws on research on the environmental impact of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe as an indication of the potential future for contaminated areas in Japan.

The environmental impacts of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster will last decades to centuries, due to man-made, long-lived radioactive elements are absorbed into the living tissues of plants and animals and being recycled through food webs, and carried downstream to the Pacific Ocean by typhoons, snowmelt, and flooding.

Greenpeace has conducted 25 radiological investigations in Fukushima since March 2011. In 2015, it focused on the contamination of forested mountains in Iitate district, northwest of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Both Greenpeace and independent research have shown the movement of radioactivity from contaminated mountain watersheds, which can then enter coastal ecosystems. The Abukuma, one of Japan's largest rivers which flows largely through Fukushima prefecture, is projected to discharge 111 TBq of 137Cs and 44 TBq of 134Cs, in the 100 years after the accident.

read here >> (pdf.)

Conclusion
Five years after the start of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, it is clear that the environmental consequences are complex and extensive. Due to the radionuclides released by the accident, and their incorporation into the materials cycle of ecosystems, the impacts of the disaster will last for decades and centuries. However, the understanding of the full scale of the Fukushima disaster for the natural environment is only its early phase, highlighting the need for continued and expanded independent research into the multiple ecological effects. Clearly, some early impacts are already being seen: internal tissue contamination in forest plants and trees resulting in caesium translocation in bark, sapwood, and heartwood; high concentrations in new leaves, and at least in the case of cedar – pollen; apparent increases in growth mutations of fir trees with rising radiation levels; heritable mutations in pale blue grass butterfly populations; DNA-damaged worms in highly contaminated areas; high levels of caesium contamination in commercially important freshwater fish; apparent reduced fertility in barn swallows; and radiological contamination of one of the most important ecosystems – coastal estuaries.
With the history of the Chernobyl and Kyshtym

radiological disasters as a guide, we can expect further serious consequences for flora and fauna of Fukushima-contaminated terrestrial and freshwater aquatic ecosystems.
Further, the vast stocks of radiation in the forests will be a perennial source of radiological downstream contamination, including high radiocaesium inputs into coastal and marine ecosystems, for the foreseeable future.

Greenpeace fully supports the dedicated efforts of independent scientists working to better understand the impacts of this man-made nuclear disaster on the ecosystems of Fukushima. It is their work and investigations, inexcusably under resourced, that will help the people of Japan grasp the scale of the environmental impacts.
And the people of Fukushima, who have lost so much to TEPCO's nuclear disaster, deserve to have accurate and complete information so that they may face the decisions ahead with clarity and knowledge. This report is dedicated to them, as they have and continue to face the enormous challenges wrought by this nuclear disaster with resiliency, hope, and courage.

Three photographers & Tokohu recovery

http://features.japantimes.co.jp/march-11-photography/

Documenting Tohoku's long road to recovery

Rob Gilhooly
Special to The Japan Times
We profile three photographers who have worked tirelessly since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster to ensure the struggles of the region are not forgotten

Fukushima: A Nuclear Story

March 8, 2016

Italian broadcaster creates TV documentary about Fukushima disaster

http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160308/p2a/00m/0na/017000c

ROME -- As the fifth anniversary of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster approaches, a documentary about the catastrophe created by Italian news television broadcaster Sky TG24 was screened here on March 7, with former Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan attending as a guest.
The documentary is titled "Fukushima: A Nuclear Story," and is based on writings by Sky TG24's Far East correspondent Pio d'Emilia, 61. The footage includes that of d'Emilia as he arrives by car to the front gate of the disaster-struck Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant eight days after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami hit.
At the screening, Kan, noting the continuing problems of contaminated water leakages from the plant and people still being forced to live as evacuees, said, "The Fukushima nuclear disaster is continuing even now."
He added, "The current administration is trying to restart reactor after reactor, but over half of the Japanese people are opposed to this," and proposed expanded use of renewable energy sources in place of nuclear energy.
The documentary is scheduled to show at 9 p.m. on March 11 local time, or 5 a.m. on March 12 Japan time, on Sky TG24.

Kioku no Keisho [the Amazon archive]

March 11, 2016

FIVE YEARS AFTER: Amazon marks 3/11 anniversary with digital media archive

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/business/AJ201603110037

By MARI FUJISAKI/ Staff Writer
Internet retail giant Amazon Japan KK published a web archive on March 10 documenting the 3/11 disaster and its aftermath in visual, audio and written digital media.
The website, called "Kioku no Keisho" (the remembrance project), was launched to mark the fifth anniversary of the 2011 East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.
The archive--part of Amazon's online bookstore--currently contains three audio recordings of people talking about their experiences around the disaster, and six Kindle e-books including photography documenting the events.
One audio file includes a recital of part of "16-sai no Kataribe," (16-year-old storytellers), a book about three high school students that experienced the disaster at the age of 11, and the five years of their lives since.
The file also includes an interview with the book's editor, Toshiro Sato, a former junior high school teacher.
Sato lost his second daughter in the tsunami at Okawa Elementary School in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, where 84 pupils and teachers were killed.
Amazon will be expanding the archive collection in future. The contents are available for free download for the time being at http://www.amazon.co.jp/kioku

Fukushima manga series

"Ichiefu Fukushima Daiichi Genshiryoku Hatsudensho Rodoki" (1F; Records of labor at Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant) (Provided by Kodansha Ltd.)

April 1, 2016

Manga convey realities of living in Tohoku disaster areas

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201604010061.html

By EIICHI MIYASHIRO/ Senior Staff Writer

Although words of praise poured in for Kazuto Tatsuta's manga about the Fukushima nuclear disaster, some comments said he was a spy for Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The artist, who went to great lengths to show the true situation around TEPCO's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, scoffed at the notion.

"As for nuclear power generation, I have never taken stances of 'promotion,' 'opposition' or 'neutral.' I just wanted to convey the changes of the place (at the nuclear plant) in real time," he said.

His manga series, "Ichiefu Fukushima Daiichi Genshiryoku Hatsudensho Rodoki" (1F; Records of labor at Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant), was one of several that started after the triple disaster struck five years ago.

Some of them initially offered messages of encouragement to the disaster victims. But they gradually changed to depict the realities of the situation in the northeastern Tohoku region and the disaster victims' extraordinary experiences.

Tatsuta's series, carried in the weekly magazine Morning, was based around the sites of demolition work at the nuclear plant.

He was working at a company of an acquaintance near Tokyo when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck on March 11, 2011. Tatsuta looked for a job in areas affected by the disaster, and ended up working at a rest station of the nuclear plant as an employee of the sixth-layer subcontractor in June 2012.

In 2013, Tatsuta started "Ichiefu" to show the daily lives of workers at the plant.

His work drew much attention and acclaim. But some said the artist was underestimating the dangers of nuclear power generation. The series ended in October 2015.

Yoko Hano depicted the daily post-disaster lives of a different group--senior high school students in Fukushima Prefecture.

She started the serialized manga "Hajimari no Haru" (Spring as a beginning) because she also wanted to convey the truth. The comic is currently carried under the title of "Happy End?" in the Monthly Afternoon magazine.

Hano, who is from Nishigo in Fukushima Prefecture, now lives in Shirakawa, also in the prefecture.

"From the time immediately after the outbreak of the disaster, I saw false information from the media that was slipshod in confirming facts," she said. "A person in my neighborhood was cornered by the situation caused by the disaster and committed suicide. I thought that unless accurate information is offered, our local communities will be destroyed."

The protagonists in her manga learn about agriculture. They vow to reconstruct their hometowns and start taking action despite being shaken by nuclear accident.

"Here (in Fukushima Prefecture), there are many themes I should tackle throughout my life. I think that people who are making a living with jobs related to expression and speech should migrate to Fukushima," Hano said.

In the serialized manga "Gogai! Iwate Chaguchagu Shinbunsha" (Extra edition! Iwate Chaguchagu newspaper company), the protagonist is a female reporter with a local newspaper in Iwate Prefecture.

Its creator, Aruto Asuka, who lives in Ichinoseki in the prefecture, began to carry the manga in the comic magazine Be Love, published twice a month, in 2009. Initially, it focused on the people, seasonal traditions and industries of the prefecture.
Then, the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami struck in 2011.
The manga now features the reality of the prefecture that was hit hard by the disaster.
Ichinoseki, an inland area, escaped serious damage. However, "that produced big conflicted feelings in my mind," Asuka recalled.
In a special edition titled "Sanriku no Umi" (Sea of Sanriku), which was carried in the third volume of the book version of the manga, the protagonist visits the coastal district of Koishihama in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture, for news coverage, and meets a young fisherman and his wife again.
The wife is pregnant but hesitant to give birth because of her feelings for a relative who lost her child and other family members in the disaster.
"I also have feelings of guilt about the fact that I am alive without suffering from any damage," Asuka said. "I will not forget the various feelings of people (in the affected areas)."

Anguish (Fukumoto)

Fukushima Animation Makes Debut

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20160405103203696/
« Anguish »

Fukumoto's animated film in which local people (Namie) can express their pain. They are the actors' voices.

Childrens' books

A page from Shoko Nakazawa's latest work depicts Natsuko about to part with her pet piglet Momo. (Provided by Iwasaki Publishing Co.)

Children's book connects stories of Fukushima and Chernobyl

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201604080006.html

By WATARU NETSU/ Staff Writer
Inspired by a letter sent to her by a young reader, author Shoko Nakazawa revived a past work and penned an entirely new illustrated children's book on nuclear disasters in Fukushima and Chernobyl.
In 1988, Nakazawa's "Ashita wa Hareta Sora no Shita de Bokutachi no Chernobyl" (Tomorrow, under a fair sky, our Chernobyl) was released by Choubunsha Publishing Co.

In the letter, a junior high school student in Yokohama who read the book after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant wanted to know how such an incident occurred when humans had surely learned of nuclear horrors from the Chernobyl accident in Ukraine in 1986.
The student asked what adults had done to prevent the Fukushima disaster. Because her 1988 book had long been out of print, Nakazawa, 63, first went about having it republished in summer 2011.
She also wrote a new work, recently published by Iwasaki Publishing Co., titled "Kobuta Monogatari Chernobyl kara Fukushima e" (A tale of piglets, from Chernobyl to Fukushima). The book sells for 1,300 yen, tax exclusive.
The two parts of the book involve little girls living in Chernobyl and Fukushima. Tanya lives in Chernobyl and has a pet piglet named Marumaru. Their peaceful life is turned upside down by the nuclear accident that forces all residents to evacuate.
Marumaru is left behind on the farm and time passes as the piglet waits for Tanya and her family to return. They never do.
The Fukushima portion involves a girl named Natsuko and her pet piglet Momo. They are also separated by the Fukushima nuclear accident.
A temporary lifting of the evacuation order allows Natsuko and her mother to return home. However, the mother does not recognize Momo, who is now filthy because no one was around to take care of the animal. The mother shooes the piglet away in a harsh voice.
The two parts of the book are connected because Natsuko's mother had come to know Tanya when she visited Japan more than 20 years ago. Tanya even sent a letter to Natsuko's mother in which she wrote, "Please do not forget us."
During their short stay at home, the mother comes across that letter again and breaks down crying.
"I forgot everything."
A key turning point in Nakazawa's life was moving to Hiroshima from Nagoya before she entered junior high school. Most of her friends had parents who were hibakusha. Nakazawa herself was shocked when she saw the exhibit about the horrors of the atomic bombing at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.
She is concerned about recent moves to resume operations at nuclear power plants around Japan.
"We are once again trying to forget," she said. "I hope the book becomes a catalyst to rethink a civilization that exists upon something like 'nuclear power' that simply cannot co-exist with humans and nature."

Hana wa Sakedomo

April 26, 2016

VOX POPULI: Folk group still sings about no nukes 30 years after Chernobyl

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201604260044.html

"Kageboshi" (Shadow), an amateur folk group based in Nagai, Yamagata Prefecture, began singing about nuclear power generation when the Chernobyl nuclear accident that left a vast area of land off-limits raised the following question: If a nuclear accident occurred in Japan, will there be any place for people to flee?

Fumio Aoki, the group's bassist, immediately came up with this poem: "When contamination spreads all over Japan/ Where do we go?"

Nuclear power generation was on Aoki's mind again when he wrote a song to decry the selfishness of the big cities that refuse to handle their own garbage and dump their dirty work on the provinces.

Referring to the presence of nuclear power plants in the Tohoku region, Aoki wrote, "Every risky thing, like nuclear power generation, is shoved down Tohoku's throat ... What a lousy, worthless deal for Tohoku."

When the group got a chance to perform this song at a TV station in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, a studio manager rushed over before the program was to go on the air and begged the group to skip the part about nuclear power generation. He said this was out of consideration for Tohoku area prefectures, which host nuclear power plants.

That was about 10 years before the Fukushima disaster occurred in March 2011.

"To our eternal regret, we complied with the request," said Kotaro Endo, the group's banjo player. "The first thing I thought about when the Fukushima disaster occurred was that even though we'd been singing about such an eventuality, we were powerless to avert it. We may have failed in getting our message across."

Feeling this sort of regret and self-recrimination is probably natural for people who believe their songs may have the power to change something.

Determined to deal squarely with nuclear power generation this time, the group has created a new song titled "Hana wa Sakedomo" (Even Though the Flowers Bloom). Whenever their schedule permits, the group goes around Japan, including Fukushima, to perform this song.

April 26 marks the 30th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. And the Fukushima disaster unfolded five years and 46 days ago.

--The Asahi Shimbun, April 26

* * *

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a popular daily column that takes up a wide range of topics, including culture, arts and social trends and developments. Written by veteran Asahi Shimbun writers, the column provides useful perspectives on and insights into contemporary Japan and its culture.

Japanese artists & anti-nuke poetry

May 5, 2016

Yoshinaga, Sakamoto hold anti-nuke poetry event in Canada

By HIDEKI SOEJIMA/ Staff Writer
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605050034.html

Sayuri Yoshinaga recites poems on the 1945 atomic bombings and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster while Ryuichi Sakamoto plays the piano in Vancouver on May 3. (Hikaru Uchida)

VANCOUVER--With a piano accompaniment by composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, actress Sayuri Yoshinaga recited poems written by survivors of the 1945 atomic bombings and people affected by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster here on May 3.

About 200 people attended the event, titled "The Second Movement in Canada," held at the University of British Columbia.

Yoshinaga, who hopes to "hand down the plight of victims not in a loud voice but in a soft tone," read Sankichi Toge's "Ningen wo Kaese" (Give Back the People) from "Genbaku Shishu" (Poems of the Atomic Bomb) in Japanese and English, as well as Sadako Kurihara's "Umashimenkana" (We Shall Bring Forth New Life) in English.

Toge and Kurihara both suffered in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and they were highly acclaimed for their poems about the catastrophe.

The veteran actress also read, in Japanese, poems about the Fukushima nuclear disaster written by Ryoichi Wago and Shigeko Sato, both of whom are from Fukushima Prefecture and were affected by the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

One other work read at the May 3 event was “Furitsumu” (Falling down) by celebrated poet Kiyoko Nagase, whose admirers include Empress Michiko. The empress herself has translated “Furitsumu” into English.

It was the second time for Yoshinaga and Sakamoto to hold a poetry reading event overseas. The previous one took place at Oxford University in Britain in 2011.

“I relate to her strong belief that humans and nuclear weapons cannot coexist,” Sakamoto said about Yoshinaga in his speech at the gathering. “I hope that people will not have to suffer nuclear weapons or an accident at a nuclear power plant.”

Over the past 30 years, Yoshinaga has held poetry readings about the suffering caused by the atomic bombs.

She starred in “Haha to Kuraseba” (Living with My Mother), a 2015 movie directed by Yoji Yamada featuring a mother who lost her young child in the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Sakamoto wrote the music for the movie, which was released in Canada on May 4 for the first time abroad.

The event in Vancouver was organized by the University of British Columbia, the Simons Foundation and The Asahi Shimbun.

Hiroshima story told through pictures

May 6, 2016

Teacher's tragic A-bomb story told in pictures in Nagasaki

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605060069.html

By SHOHEI OKADA/ Staff Writer

zuko Yumii holds a student in her arms before the girl dies in a scene from a picture-story show at
e Nagaski Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki on April 10. (Shohei Okada)

NAGASAKI--Kazuko Yumii was determined to take the story of her wartime experience to the grave. But decades after World War II ended, Yumii told a city official what happened to her when the atomic bomb exploded over Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945.

What the official heard was a story of tragedy and shame, words so moving that Yumii's experience is now being told through picture-story shows at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum here.

Yumii, a 24-year-old teacher at Yamazato national school, was digging a bomb shelter at the school in August 1945. The school happened to be about 700 meters from ground zero.

She flopped forward on the ground when she felt the shock wave and heard the deafening roar of the nuclear blast. Sometime later, the teacher looked for a pupil who had called out to her before the explosion. The child could not be found.

A girl then staggered toward Yumii.

"My mom and dad are both dead," the girl said, looking into Yumii's eyes and then dying in her arms.

About 1,300 of the school's 1,600 students were killed by the atomic bombing.

Yumii's story, titled "Hitomi no naka no Kodomotachi" (Children in My Eyes), has been told more than 100 times so far at the museum. She died before the picture cards for the story-telling shows were completed in 2009.

At one show on April 10, visitors cried as they listened to the words and viewed the accompanying picture cards. Foreign tourists also watched the show while reading the text translated into English.

Yasuhiro Onoe was the city government employee who heard Yumii's story and decided to produce the shows.

Onoe, 57, became acquainted with her in 2006, when he was visiting an uncle in a hospital where the former teacher was also being treated.

At the urging of his aunt, Onoe asked Yumii to share her wartime experience.

She was initially reluctant to recall those tragic days, but she accepted his request and began to speak slowly.

She later poured out details of what she had went through toward the end of World War II.

Onoe already had a connection with Yumii. He graduated from Yamazato Elementary School, the successor of the school where Yumii had worked.

When he was a student there, scars from the atomic bombing were still evident on the school building.

Onoe visited her three times at the hospital and scribbled down all her words.

"Yumii harbored a sense of guilt," he recalled feeling at that time.

As a teacher, she had encouraged her students to join the nation's war effort with the spirit of "I won't demand anything until I win," a wartime slogan that had circulated throughout the country.

"I was under the impression that she was ashamed (of what she told her students)," Onoe said.

Onoe said Yumii looked relieved when she finished sharing her account.

He then asked Hidehiko Tajima to produce pictures based on Yumii's experience.

Both Onoe and Tajima were members of Mugentai, a group that visits local nursing homes to entertain residents through singing and other activities.

Since December 2011, Mugentai has been offering the free picture-book shows at the museum at 10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. on the second Sunday of each month.

"I am happy to be able to pass down her experience in the form of a show," Onoe said. "I would like young people to watch the performance. Yumii's experience should be remembered."

Art tribute to Fukushima

May 8, 2016

Chernobyl survivor's ink-wash art pays tribute to Fukushima

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/08/national/chernobyl-survivors-ink-wash-art-pays-tribute-to-fukushima/#.Vy9FluRdeot

JIJI

MINSK – A Belarusian man is making ink-wash paintings themed on the nuclear disasters in Chernobyl and Fukushima as a way to support their recovery efforts.

"I hope to encourage the Japanese people by showing them that I'm healthy 30 years after the disaster, being involved in a creative activity and living a forward-looking life," Vladimir Malyshev, 51, said in an interview.

Malyshev, a former member of the military who lives in the Belarus capital of Minsk, was one of those deployed to respond to the Chernobyl disaster in northern Ukraine, then a Soviet republic, soon after it began.

"A quarter century of human suffering should never be overlooked," Malyshev said, speaking in Russian.

His ink-wash paintings focus on the tragedies of those who were forced to abandon their homes to escape the radiation. The paintings also reference A-bombed Hiroshima and *orizuru*, the paper cranes representing peace and reconstruction.

Malyshev expressed respect for the Japanese workers who took part in the response to the triple core meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 plant in March 2011. His experience battling the April 1986 Chernobyl explosion lasted for three months starting in November 1986.

After retiring from the military in 1993, he started making paintings related to the disaster while working in anime production. His first solo exhibition was recently held in Minsk to mark the 30th anniversary of the accident.

Malyshev, an aikido practitioner, hopes his paintings will one day make it to Japan.

"I'd like them to be seen by Japanese people working for disaster recovery and those who were forced to evacuate."

"Radiation is falling. It's a quiet night"

May 17, 2016

Poet Ryoichi Wago tries to bridge hearts after Fukushima

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605170009.html

By HIDEMASA YOSHIZAWA/ Staff Writer

Poet Ryoichi Wago (Hidemasa Yoshizawa)

FUKUSHIMA--Ryoichi Wago, a high school teacher who doubles as a poet, rose to national prominence with a series of tweets he posted days after the March 11, 2011, nuclear disaster in his native Fukushima Prefecture.

On March 16 of that year, he tweeted the following short free verse about the drama unfolding at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant:

“Radiation is falling.

“It is a quiet night.”

Plunged into despair by the nuclear accident, Wago began groping for ways to get a dialogue going involving all sectors of society to bridge differences brought on by the catastrophe.

At the time of the disaster, Wago, now 47, was at his home in Fukushima city, which is situated inland and northwest of the crippled nuclear power plant. It has been estimated that radioactivity levels there were as much as 500 times higher than before the accident.

Like many other local residents, his wife and son left town and took refuge in Yamagata Prefecture, north of Fukushima. But he stayed on, even though the neighborhood felt like a ghost town. A radio station kept blaring, “Keep calm and evacuate.”

“Will I be forced to leave?” Wago feared. “Fukushima will be abandoned by the nation.”

Two months later, he published “Shi no tsubute,” or “Pebbles of poetry,” a compilation of free verse he had tweeted expressing his fears and anguish. Prior to the disaster, he had only four followers. The number quickly rose to 15,000 by the time the book was released.

Clearly, his words and thoughts were reaching a wider audience. But not everyone was in his corner.

One day a message sent through Twitter gave him pause for thought: “You live inland so you are not a disaster victim. You have not lost your hometown nor your family,” the message read, questioning his legitimacy to talk about the disaster as "one of them."

By April, gas pumps were working again and Wago was able to visit other parts of Fukushima Prefecture to listen to what people were saying. He spent a year doing this, mostly at weekends, and talked to 60 or so people.

During these chats, he noticed a wide disparity in the way people viewed the disaster.

“I want the government to promise to return us to our hometown,” one individual would venture. “I cannot go back, I will make a new life somewhere else,” another would say.

A mother's wish that her children would ''be able to play outside” invites a stinging rebuke: “Are you trying to make them sick from radiation exposure?”

It occurred to Wago that such disparities must be felt everywhere in Japan after the 3/11 disaster.

For example, Wago says the argument that Japan must rely on nuclear power to some extent may sound rational, but if one spares a thought for the misery of people directly affected by the nuclear disaster then surely championing nuclear power generation does not offer a viable future.

Despite the lack of common ground and the prospect of never resolving such differences, Wago concluded that starting conversations to talk about issues related to the disaster would be a fundamental first step in the right direction.

That was Wago's starting point for creating Fukushima Mirai (future) Kagura. Kagura is dance and music performed at festivals and rituals as offerings to Shinto deities.

Wago gathered 50 or so locals as production staff and dancers, and held a talk session to get them to state what they wanted to get out of the project.

"I want to tell how much my tsunami-drowned friends would have wanted to live," said one. "I want to express my anguish that my hometown was contaminated by radiation," said another.

Wago recalls "some kind of intangible solidarity" was born among the participants.

In August 2015, the presentation of kagura at Fukushima Inarijinja shrine in Fukushima city received an ovation from the 700 or so spectators gathered for the performance.

His kagura is made up of several parts, including poetry reading accompanied by live calligraphy and a drum performance, and dance performance representing foxes and a dragon.

"A willingness to have conversation rather than confrontation is important. It is not necessarily in words either," said Wago.

In March 2016, Wago published a new poetry book titled "Kinou yorimo yasashiku naritai" (I want to be kinder than yesterday).

One of those poems goes to the heart of what Wago is trying to express.

"From that day, I am having fruitless discussion with him.

"He tells me he cannot understand a single thing I say.

"I also respond flatly that I cannot understand him.

"Still, we have no way but to keep up our dialogue."

Wolves "back" in Fukushima

An exhibition of reproduced wolf paintings from the Yamatsumijinja shrine in Iitate, Fukushima Prefecture, starts at the Fukushima Prefectural Museum of Art on May 28. (Yuri Oiwa)

Meiji Era wolf paintings lost in fire reproduced in Fukushima

By YURI OIWA/ Staff Writer

FUKUSHIMA--Evacuated residents of Iitate, Fukushima Prefecture, have a special gift to look forward to when they make their expected return home next year.

About 240 paintings of wolves from the Meiji Era (1868-1912) that were destroyed in a fire in 2013 have been reproduced, and will be placed in the village's Yamatsumijinja shrine after their exhibition at the Fukushima Prefectural Museum of Art in Fukushima city ends on July 3.

The ceiling of the shrine's "haiden" worship hall had been decorated with the wolf paintings, each of which measured 40 centimeters by 40 cm, before the blaze.

Yamatsumijinja is known in and outside Fukushima Prefecture for its worship of wolves, with tens of thousands of worshippers visiting the shrine annually before the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Eiko Kanno, a resident of Iitate who is evacuated in Date, Fukushima Prefecture, visited the Fukushima Prefectural Museum of Art when the exhibition opened on May 28.

"I am happy that the wolf paintings, which watched over us when we were sad or in tough times, have been reproduced," the 80-year-old said. "I was able to take time to appreciate the paintings before they decorate the shrine's ceiling again."

The reproduction project was headed by Kei Arai, an associate professor of art work preservation at the Japanese painting conservation center of the Tokyo University of the Arts.

After visiting the shrine to interview Iitate residents and practicing how to paint wolves, Arai and his colleagues started recreating the paintings in summer 2015.

In the paintings, some wolves are together with their pack, while others are courting a partner or taking a nap. Arai believes that the animals represent the way residents of Iitate lived during the Meiji Era.

"I really hope that the life full of seasonal blessings, as portrayed in the paintings, will return to the village from next year," he said.

The researchers were able to faithfully replicate the original paintings from the late Meiji Era, partly because Kumi Kato, an environmental ethics professor at Wakayama University, and video journalist Simon Wearne, an assistant professor of tourism at the university, had taken photos of the paintings shortly before the 2013 fire as part of their research activities.

All of Iitake residents were ordered to evacuate after the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered a triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The evacuation order for the village is expected to be lifted as early as March 2017 except for a "difficult-to-return zone" close to the crippled nuclear plant.

Hideo Furakawa & Fukushima

June 11, 2016

Novelist Hideo Furukawa views the Fukushima disaster through nonhuman eyes

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/06/11/books/book-reviews/novelist-hideo-furukawa-views-fukushima-disaster-nonhuman-eyes/#.V1xksuRddLN

by Kris Kosaka
Special To The Japan Times

After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, critically acclaimed writer Hideo Furukawa experienced an unsettling "imagination meltdown."

"Novelists are artists, and usually imagination comes between them and reality," Fukushima-born Furukawa says. "But when reality becomes something far beyond our imagination, we are exposed, rendered naked and reality moves closer to art. We must then confront reality directly."

Furukawa's "meltdown" eventually distilled into "Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure," a book that is a memoir, metafictional novel and philosophical treatise on time, humanity and the nonhuman world. In other words, it defies genre; something Furukawa has attempted throughout his career. In 2002 he "remixed" Haruki Murakami's 1980 short story "A Slow Boat to China," and in the 2015 novel "The Book of 300 Treacherous Women" — winner of both the Noma Prize for New Writers and the Yomiuri Prize for Literature in 2015 — Furukawa reinterprets the 11th-century classic "The Tale of Genji," portraying its author, Murasaki Shikibu, as a vengeful spirit.

Consistently challenging conventions, Furukawa has become a literary superstar in Japan. In 2002, he was simultaneously awarded the Mystery Writers of Japan prize and Japan's SF Grand Prize for "The Arabian Nightbreeds," and in 2006 he was awarded the Yukio Mishima prize for "Love," a complicated novel that Furukawa describes as "one gigantic short story."

In total, Furukawa has written more than 35 works; "Horses" is the second to be translated into English. Starting as a straight memoir, biography slides into metafiction when characters from Furukawa's sprawling 2008 novel, "Seikazoku" ("The Holy Family"), intrude within the narrative. The book then pivots into Japanese military history before returning to memoir, when it is written from the perspective of the nonhuman victims of the 2011 disasters. The perspective of animals consistently intrigues Furukawa.

"Novelists can't write realistically about human society while they're inside it," he says, "so I write through the eyes of dogs, cats or horses — animals that depend on humans for their existence — to depict reality more accurately. Also, to write realistically about the present, I believe we need to look at it through the eyes of the past. If a Japanese person writes about 20th-century warfare, he will write from a Japanese perspective. An American would write from the perspective of an American and a Russian would write from the perspective of a Russian. I wanted to get away from that, since you don't see the whole picture."

Furukawa's other novel that has been translated into English, "Belka, Why Don't You Bark?," recounts modern history from the perspectives of dogs trained and used in wartime combat. However, Furukawa is not only concerned with nonhuman perspectives, but also with perspectives silenced by the winners of history.

“Literature is part of a country’s history,” says Furukawa. “History has been written so that those in positions of power can tell their version of how the country came into being. But there are many others who have a voice besides those in power. I believe it’s essential to include literature when writing the history of Japan, to give those other perspectives a voice.”

He is currently working on a re-imagining of the epic “Heike Monogatari” (“The Tale of the Heike”), another classic of Japanese literature.

With “Horses,” Furukawa admits he wants to keep the memory of the 3/11 tragedy alive.

“Right after the earthquake, all I wanted was for the horrible situation to disappear as soon as possible. Now, over five years have passed and people are beginning to forget, so I want to remind readers about it. I want all readers, whether they come from America, England, Australia or elsewhere, to share the experience. By reliving the experience together, perhaps something good will come out of such a terrible disaster.”

It is easy to slide into Furukawa’s worldview in “Horses” with its realistic, unsentimental descriptions of disaster: “A broken record lay on the ground; obviously, no sound to be heard from it. CDs spread everywhere, mute as well. Around a dozen golf clubs looking like nothing more than blue-green walking sticks. Uprooted plants and shrubs — roots and branches, all pulled out — withered. Or, if not withered, muddy brown in color. How far should I go in describing all these thousands, tens of thousands, of parts? And this is just the beginning.”

In addition to his individual works, Furukawa makes a point of collaborating with other artists. It’s another way, he believes, to change perspective: “If you don’t connect with other people, then it’s impossible to write realistically about contemporary issues. That’s why I feel it’s important to interact with other artists; to share a stage with musicians, dancers, painters. Through this you see what it means to be a writer, and the musicians, dancers and other artists get to know what it means to be a novelist.”

Despite directly addressing social concerns such as human tyranny and corruption, Furukawa obviously believes in the redemptive power of art.

“There’s no point in writing a book without hope. Even if you’re writing a book with violence or a particularly original book, I personally believe there is no need to write a book that does not leave the reader with a feeling of encouragement or hope at the end.”

Though Furukawa has a number of award-winning works behind him, he admits he is “never completely satisfied” with what he has written.

“Still, if my novels have provided a way for people to re-experience other worlds, then I feel my work has been worthwhile,” he says. “Writing is hard, keeping at it day after day, but if it does this, then it makes my work meaningful, and I am proud.”

Ichi-fu in English

https://www.facebook.com/ichiefu/posts/1415129962074416
Read 1st chapter of "Ichi-Efu". (English ver.)
Translation & Lettering: William Flanagan
Editing: Julie Davis
Technical Consultant: Takayuki Karahashi

Hirokawa: Chernobyl and Fukushima

July 4, 2016

Japanese photojournalist documents nuclear crises in Chernobyl, Fukushima
http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/07/04/national/japanese-photojournalist-documents-nuclear-crises-in-chernobyl-fukushima/#.V3oh06Jdeot
by Satoshi Fujiwara
Kyodo
Ryuichi Hirokawa, a Japanese photojournalist, has documented the world's two worst nuclear crises — in Chernobyl three decades ago, and the 2011 meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant.
With this year marking the 30th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, Hirokawa, 72, has released a photo book titled "Chernobyl and Fukushima" compiling his reports on the lives of victims of the catastrophes.
After years of reporting on the two disasters, Hirokawa said he has concluded that nuclear power "is not something human beings can handle or control."

Born in 1943 in a Japanese community in Tianjin, China, Hirokawa was the first non-Soviet journalist to enter the Exclusion Zone following the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in April 1986.
He has since visited the area more than 50 times and established in April 1991 a foundation for children suffering from leukemia, thyroid cancer and other diseases caused by exposure to a high level of radiation, in response to requests from their mothers.
The foundation has provided these children with medicine and medical equipment and also built recuperation facilities in Ukraine and Belarus.
One of the photos from Hirokawa's book shows a 14-year-old Ukrainian girl named Tanya lying on a bed at her home. She was 4 years old and lived in a town close to the Chernobyl plant when the disaster occurred.
A decade later, she suddenly felt agonizing pain all over her body. Her thyroid cancer had spread, including to her brain.
"I could do nothing for the girl. All I could do was watch her die," Hirokawa said. "It was that feeling of helplessness that drove me to support sick children there."
A quarter of a century later, another devastating nuclear disaster occurred at Tokyo Electric Power Co. Holdings' Fukushima No. 1 plant.
When Hirokawa rushed to the scene shortly after the calamity started, the needle of his radiation detector went off the scale in surrounding areas, including in the town of Futaba and the village of Iitate.
"It was shocking because it never happened even in Chernobyl," he said.
Maps comparing radiation levels in Chernobyl and Fukushima, which he attached at the end of his book, show that radiation levels detected in still inhabited areas in Fukushima are almost the same as those in ruined Chernobyl villages.
"I can't tolerate the Japanese government's policy of allowing children to stay in areas contaminated by such high levels of radiation," he said.
He has also worked to halt operations of the Sendai nuclear plant in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, in the wake of a series of strong earthquakes in Kyushu in April.
Hirokawa sent a petition to Kyushu Electric Power Co. calling on the utility to immediately halt the Sendai plant, which is the only nuclear plant operating in Japan.

Photo exhibition of zones under evacuation

July 17, 2016

Fukushima exhibition by 2 France-based cameramen underway in Tokyo

http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160717/p2a/00m/0na/013000c

A photo exhibition of areas under evacuation orders since the 2011 meltdowns at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant is now underway in Tokyo. The photos on display include cars buried in thick grass, and dried vegetables and fish at an abandoned supermarket.

Guillaume Bression of France and Carlos Ayesta of Venezuela took the photos in evacuation zones within 20 kilometers of Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s nuclear power plant after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered the nuclear disaster.

The photo exhibition is a combination of documentary work and art. In a series titled ''Akumu'' (nightmare), the photographers laid out cellophane in forests, seas and parks to make it look like see-through borders. An accompanying caption says, ''Residents are fighting the fear of invisible nuclear radiation because they don't know the border between safety and danger. Reality stands out from fiction.''

Bression, 35, came to Tokyo from Paris three months before the 2011 nuclear disaster to work as a contract cameraman for a French TV network. ''I studied energy conservation and environmental problems before becoming a photographer. I thought I have to reveal about the effects of the nuclear accident as a journalist.''

As time passes, he thinks there has been less talk in Japan of the Fukushima nuclear accident. ''Interest (in the accident) abroad has further diminished. It's our role to keep transmitting (the Fukushima reality) through foreigners' perspective.''

The impact of the Fukushima disaster has spread to France which relies on nuclear power for more than 70 percent of its power generation. French President Francois Hollande has promised to reduce nuclear power in the country.

Ayesta, 31, who is based in Paris, says, ''Nuclear power generation carries big risks in earthquake-prone Japan. It will become a big issue in France.''

The pair met while studying at a school of photography in Paris. They teamed up in 2009.

Their exhibition at Chanel Nexus Hall in Tokyo's Ginza district runs through July 24.

Hiroshi Omae's solo exhibition

August 4, 2016

Painter seeks to convey hellish scenes of Hiroshima atomic bombing

http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160804/p2a/00m/0na/015000

"I had to find a way to paint the hellish scenes of that day..."
Hiroshi Omae's solo exhibition, "The Black World and the Eyes Shining White," opened at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theater in Toshima Ward. After witnessing the bombing of Hiroshima at the age of 8, the atomic bomb became the theme of the painter's early work. With a desire to once again express the horrors of nuclear weapons, he returned last year to painting scenes of Hiroshima.
On the day of the bombing, Omae was at his home only about two kilometers west of ground zero. Having seen the B-29 bomber fly overhead, he was hit by a flash and the bomb blast as he fled indoors.
Until his late 20s, the atomic bomb was the theme of his work. Omae then began to feel that "as a survivor, describing the events of that day became unpleasant." Plagued by unshakeable fatigue and other symptoms he attributed to radiation exposure, "I had a sinking feeling that death was not far away." Faced with this unpleasant reality, he changed the theme of his paintings.
At the age of 32, in an attempt to distract himself from his circumstances, Omae moved to France. While traveling back and forth between France and Japan, he began painting the tranquil countryside of the south of France. However, three years ago, after seeing works themed on the religious ideas of "hell" and "the end of days" at an art museum in Paris, the memories of that day in Hiroshima came flooding back.
"In a world where everything had been charred black, only the eyes of the survivors shone eerily white," he explained. "Even if I die, if I can leave evidence of that hell in my paintings, then I will have successfully conveyed the horror of the atomic bomb." From that day forward he began to develop the concept for his works.
The works that appear in the solo exhibition include scenes of groups of charred survivors, mothers carrying their children with desolate expressions, and other scenes burned into 79-year-old Omae's memory from that day for a total of 31 abstract pieces. The exhibition runs until Aug. 7 and is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is free.

1945 Soviet footage on Hiroshima & Nagasaki released

August 5, 2016

Hiroshima, Nagasaki release Soviet footage of A-bomb damage

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201608050061.html

Rare footage documenting the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki shot by former Soviet researchers only months after the U.S. atomic bombings in 1945 were released to media representatives on Aug. 4.
Sergei Naryshkin, chairman of the Russian State Duma, presented the five-minute black-and-white footage on a DVD when he met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo in June. It is voiced over with Russian narration.
It is the first time for Hiroshima and Nagasaki--which mark the 71st anniversaries of the atomic bombing on Aug. 6 and 9, respectively--to acquire videos of the aftermaths taken by the former Soviet Union.
The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum on Aug. 5 started showing the video in its feature exhibition gallery. The showing will run until Oct. 2.
The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is also considering showing the footage to the public, describing it as a "valuable documentation."
The video starts with footage of the U.S. Trinity nuclear test in July 1945, the first successful detonation of an atomic bomb, followed by documentation of the flattened cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
Officials at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum believe that the Nagasaki portion was shot on Sept. 16, 1945. They said it represents the earliest known video of the destroyed city after the one taken by the U.S. military on Sept. 8 and 9.
The video shows extensive damage to industrial facilities in Nagasaki, such as the plant of Mitsubishi Steel Mfg. Co. and a torpedo factory. Soviet researchers inspecting the ruins of the city were also captured on film.
According to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, judging from the levels of deterioration of damaged buildings and bridges, the Hiroshima portion was taken between Sept. 17, 1945, when a deadly typhoon hit the city, and around November that year.
It includes panning shots over the bombed-out landscape of Hiroshima, taken from the upstairs of the Hiroshima Fukokukan building, about 300 meters from ground zero, as well as from Hiroshima Chokinshikyoku (Hiroshima branch of postal bank), about 1.6 kilometers away.
(This article was compiled from reports by Yosuke Takashima and Kentaro Yamano.)

keeping cattle alive in Fukushima

In a scene from "Hibaku-ushi to Ikiru" (Living with irradiated cattle), stray cattle head down a road in the 20-kilometer no-entry zone around the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in August 2011. (Provided by Tamotsu Matsubara)

August 24, 2016

Film focuses on 'irradiated' cattle kept alive in Fukushima

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201608240067.html

By SATOKO ONUKI/ Staff Writer

OSAKA--For some cattle farmers in Fukushima Prefecture, the thought of destroying their herds is too painful to bear even if they are contaminated with radioactive fallout.

A new documentary to be shown here this week records the plight of these farmers, who continue to look after their beef cattle in defiance of a government request to euthanize the animals.

"I took on this project because I wanted to capture what is driving farmers to keep their cattle. For all the trouble it is worth, the animals are now worthless," said Tamotsu Matsubara, a visual director who shot the documentary.

Four years in the making, "Hibaku-ushi to Ikiru" (Living with irradiated cattle) is set for its first screening on Aug. 26 at a local community center in the city.

Matsubara's interactions with the cattle farmers date to the summer of 2011, a few months after the nuclear crisis unfolded at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11 that year. His assignment was to cover a traditional festival in Minami-Soma, which is located near the stricken nuclear plant.

Matsubara, 57, became acquainted with a farmer caring for more than 300 cattle on his land in the 20-kilometer no-entry zone set by the government. Residents in the zone were ordered to evacuate, but the farmer stayed on to look after his animals.

At that time, the government was seeking to destroy the cattle within the no-entry zone by obtaining their owners' consent, saying animals that were heavily contaminated with radiation from the nuclear accident could not be sold at market.
But some farmers did not want to put their livestock down.
However, keeping them alive costs 200,000 yen ($2,000) a year in feed per head.
Matsubara became curious why the farmers continued to look after cattle that cannot be sold or bred, despite the heavy economic burden.
He soon began making weekly trips from Osaka to Fukushima to film the lives of the farmers, their cattle and the people around them.
After finishing his regular job in promotional events on Fridays, Matsubara would drive 11 hours to Fukushima and spend the weekend documenting the plight of the farmers before returning to Osaka by Monday morning.
He had 5 million yen saved for the documentary, his first feature film. When the money ran out, Matsubara held a crowdfunding campaign to complete it. Shooting wrapped up at the end of December.
About 350 hours of footage was edited into the 104-minute “Hibaku-ushi to Ikiru.”
The film documents the farmers and their supporters who are struggling to keep the cattle alive.
One couple in the film returns to their land in Okuma, a town that co-hosts the Fukushima plant, to care for their herd. They affectionately named each animal and said it would be unbearable to kill them. Their trips are financed using a bulk of the compensation they received for the nuclear accident.
A former assemblyman of Namie, a town near the plant, tends to his animals while asking himself why he used to support nuclear power.
The documentary also sheds light on scientists who are helping the farmers. The researchers believe that keeping track of the contaminated cattle will provide clues in unraveling how low-level radiation exposure impacts large mammals like humans.
Matsubara said the documentary tells the real story of what is going on with victims of the nuclear disaster.
“Not all the farmers featured in the documentary share the same opinion or stance,” Matsubara said. “I would like audiences to see the reality of people who cannot openly raise their voices to be heard.”
Takeshi Shiba, a documentary filmmaker who served as producer of this project, hopes the film will reach a wide audience.
“Matsubara broke his back in making this movie,” he said. “I hope that many people will learn what Fukushima people are thinking.”

Kono Sekai no Katasumini

A scene from "In This Corner of the World" depicts Hiroshima's Nakajima Honmachi district in 1933. ((c) Fumiyo Kono/ Futabasha/ In This Corner of the World Project)

October 8, 2016

Hiroshima anime comes face-to-face with horrors of war

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

An anime historical film that faithfully mirrors the cityscape and lives of the ordinary people of wartime Hiroshima before it was leveled by a nuclear weapon will premiere in Japan in November.

In the opening scene of "Kono Sekai no Katasumini" (In This Corner of the World), Suzu, a young girl, strolls through the busy streets of the city's Nakajima Honmachi district in late 1933.

"(The film) focuses on the details of life," director Sunao Katabuchi said in a recent interview with The Asahi Shimbun. "While the war casts a shadow, ordinary lives appear shining as if a treasure."

The Nakajima Honmachi district today forms part of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, and was close to ground zero when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city on Aug. 6, 1945.

Katabuchi spent six years visiting Hiroshima to gather accounts from people about those days and thousands of photographs for his project. He said the interviews made him realize that the most awful thing about war was the sense of guilt felt by survivors.

The film is based on Fumiyo Kono's manga of the same name. The protagonist, Suzu, marries a man in the naval port of Kure in 1944 at age 18. But the war casts a shadow over her life, and eventually the bombs begin to fall.

"Six years ago I started thinking about a film adaptation," Katabuchi said. "I portrayed the city of Hofu in Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1955 for 'Mai Mai Miracle.' For me, born in 1960, 1955 almost feels like a nostalgic year, but I felt that there was a gaping fault between the war years and the time that immediately followed, with a completely different world sandwiched between them. That was when I came across Kono's original manga.

"I felt sympathy with how she portrays (the people of Hiroshima)."

Occupying one wall of the director's room in his studio in Tokyo's Suginami Ward are reference materials about the period, including publications about the histories of Hiroshima and Kure. Katabuchi said he collected more than 4,000 photographs to re-create the cityscape of the 1930s and 40s.
"Kono draws each scene after thorough research. She even adds a line that says, 'If it is wrong, please tell me,' " Katabuchi said. "She grew up in Kure surrounded by people who knew how things were back then. In order for us who have no relation with Hiroshima to revisit and draw, I thought it would be a tough act to follow unless I did a lot of research.
"I read the original manga and could relate to the first part where people peacefully live their ordinary lives. But the next moment I see bombs raining down on their heads. How absurd is that? I wanted audiences to feel the same way."
The director said Suzu is a symbol of the people who actually lived through wartime Hiroshima, so she is a realistic character.
"When I thought about how I should express her feelings, I came up with the idea to draw the actual scenery (as it was back then)," Katabuchi said.
The cityscape of 1933 is resurrected on the screen as the film opens.
"There was the Otsuya muslin shop standing in front of a building that housed the Taishoya Gofukuten kimono fabrics shop, which still stands today," Katabuchi said of the film's opening sequence. "We studied as many photographs as possible, but we still didn't know what the shop looked like.
"Then we found a woman who lived in a house next to it when she was young. She was able to describe how the store window looked and even how the handrails were installed. She said that they were gold-colored, and that she still remembered how they felt on her back when she leaned against them."
The director also found a person who had a photo album that survived the war with snapshots of how the area looked before it was damaged during the war, including an area where a barbershop once stood.
"We were given a privilege to step into the past--into something very important," Katabuchi said. "That was what we were thinking when we listened to their accounts.
"Today, I can only listen to accounts from those who were children at the time. Even the oldest person was born in 1928.
"Catching shrimp in a river, eating baked 'mikan' (Japanese mandarin oranges), and things like that. These are the childhood memories about the city they are able to recall. But they never talked about how the atomic bomb changed everything.
"The Nakajima Honmachi that disappeared with the atomic bomb has left a strong impression that it was a town where a lot of children played."
After Katabuchi finished making the film, he thought differently about the war.
"War is really horrible," Katabuchi said. "Here is this peaceful person named Suzu living an ordinary life in an ordinary town, and then everything is blasted to nothing.
"It was the war that trampled their everyday lives. The most abominable thing about war is the sense of guilt that war instills in the survivors.
"Before I made the movie, I couldn't help feeling pity for them for having bombs raining down on their heads. But after I finished making it, I can't help feeling pity for them because they have to live with regret and agony for not being able to save their loved ones."
"In This Corner of the World" is scheduled to open Nov. 12.
(This article is based on an interview by Keiichiro Inoue.)

Statements by "complainants"

http://epubfukushima.com/index.html
from Amazon.com :
This booklet is a translation of statements by 50 citizens who were residing in Fukushima at the time of the triple disaster of March 11, 2011. They range in age from 7 to 87, and they wrote these statements as part of the criminal complaint filed with the office of the Fukushima public prosecutor by the Fukushima Complainants for Criminal Prosecution of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster. What, exactly, is a criminal complaint, and who is a "complainant"? In this case, the complaint is a formal legal request initiated by citizens, the "complainants," in response to the failure of both prosecutors and police to investigate the criminal liability of Tepco and government agencies for their roles in the nuclear disaster. The group complaint ("shūdan keiji kokuso/kokuhatsu" in Japanese) is a demand for investigation and indictment of the responsible parties.

Nuclear Nation 2016

November 16, 2016

'Nuclear Nation' offers a long, hard look at Fukushima refugees' plight

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/11/16/films/nuclear-nation-offers-long-hard-look-fukushima-refugees-plight/#.WCwqCcmDmos

by Kaori Shoji
Special To The Japan Times
Feature-length films seemed to get shorter in the early 2000s, with some coming in at a slim 80 minutes or less. Now they're going the other way, with many mainstream blockbusters clocking in at close to 120 minutes or more.
At the Long Film Theatre, part of the Saitama Triennale, which runs until Dec. 11, the operators are showcasing a collection of hefty titles that add another hour or more to that length, much to the delight of long-film enthusiasts.
The good news: Many of the films have English subtitles. Even if you're not particularly a fan of long films, a potential must-see is "Nuclear Nation 2016: the Fukushima Refugees Story," directed by Atsushi Funahashi, which clocks in at 195 minutes and is slated to be shown on Dec. 3 (www.saitamatriennale.jp/event/1826). "Nuclear Nation 2016" re-examines the plight of Fukushima refugees forced to abandon their homes and evacuate from their hometowns after the Fukushima nuclear meltdown disaster triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011.
In the five years since the tsunami and quake of 3/11, many of these refugees have relocated to Tokyo and Saitama, where, for the most part, they moved into government-sponsored rental units. But now the cut-off date for free housing looms, while the contaminated areas in Fukushima remain off-limits.
Many of the refugees are protesting the move, saying that after finding jobs and schools and struggling to fit into new communities, a new move is not only upsetting but unrealistic. Funahashi's film explores the personal turmoil experienced by former Fukushima residents, and what steps (if any) are being taken to lessen their burden.

3/11 at Tokyo exhibit

January 25, 2017

Catastrophic power of 3/11 disaster shown at Tokyo exhibit

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201701250008.html

By EIICHI MIYASHIRO/ Senior Staff Writer

A hair salon clock stopped at 2:46 p.m., the time the Great East Japan Earthquake struck in 2011 (Eiichi Miyashiro)

A broken hair salon clock and bent street signs are among items on display in Tokyo that attest to the enormous power of the earthquake and tsunami that hit northeastern Japan in March 2011.

The special exhibition has been held in areas devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The current display at Meiji University Museum in Chiyoda Ward is the first outside the disaster zone.

"Everyday items had their shapes and significance transformed as they were struck by the disaster, turning them into historical records conveying the extraordinary nature of the event," said Mitsuru Takahashi, head curator at the Fukushima Museum in Fukushima, where the exhibition was held last year.

"We hope for people to listen to what these earthquake relics have to say so that the experience of Fukushima can be shared and passed onto the next generation," he said.

The exhibit is being organized by a committee consisting of museums in Fukushima Prefecture to preserve the heritage of the disaster.

The clock that was set up outside a hair salon shows the time when the magnitude-9.0 earthquake rocked the region. Also on display are distorted parts of a police car that was swept away by the tsunami while calling for people to evacuate.

Committee members have traveled across Fukushima Prefecture since 2014, collecting and preserving various items that tell a story of what happened almost six years ago. Among the collection are candles used in evacuation shelters and bundles of newspapers that were never delivered the morning after the disaster.

The committee started the project out of concerns that memories of the disaster would be lost if these items were discarded.

The exhibition will run through Feb. 5. Special events will be held on weekends, including a 3-D experience of disaster sites and a lecture about the relics.

Yukari, the Fukushima evacuee singer

January 26, 2017

Fukushima singer touches hearts of French after disaster

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201701260004.html

By MASAKAZU HONDA/ Staff Writer

She never imagined she would one day sing overseas, not to mention at a famed venue in France once graced by Edith Piaf. But the catastrophic Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011 changed everything.

In her hometown of Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, Yukari was struggling to raise her two daughters by singing at piano bars and other joints prior to the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant about 40 kilometers away.

On New Year's Eve 2016, though, the singer-songwriter was in Paris performing at La Cremaillere, a famed restaurant in Montmartre that has been in business for more than a century. It was her fourth tour in France.

One song she performed at La Cremaillere was titled "My Life," a ballad she wrote that includes the lyrics: "All of a sudden/ I had to leave behind my hometown/ I was made to realize that nothing can be taken for granted/ on the very moment the sky looked tinged with red."

Shouts of "bravo" erupted among a crowd of about 200 when she completed the song.

Most of her songs centered on her experiences after the triple meltdown in March 2011, which saw her and her daughters displaced from their home.

Yukari, 44, finds it particularly meaningful that she can sing her songs in the world's capital of nuclear power generation. France's 58 reactors generate more than 70 percent of the country's electricity needs, a level not seen anywhere else.

She sang in Japanese, but it did not seem to inhibit the French audience to fully appreciate the evening as organizers explained the lyrics and their backdrop in French. Some listeners even wept, touched by her performance.

"It is the time when I feel the power of music," she said.

Yukari appears to be making a difference in her pleas for a rethink concerning nuclear energy among the French audience, albeit in a small way.

Some approached her after the concert.

"Public opinion in France is changing slowly after the Fukushima disaster," one person said.

"We, too, need to sit down and think about nuclear energy," said another.

Yukari's life was turned upside down on March 11, 2011, when the crisis unfolded at the plant following the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

She fled to Tokyo with her daughters, toiled away living on next to nothing, and is still navigating the rough waters of life in the Japanese capital almost six years later.

She never sat there with her head in her hands, crying over her plight. She instead channeled her troubles into songwriting, finding strength to soldier on and keep a record of her and other evacuees' fight to rebuild their lives through her original songs.

Her connection to France began in 2014 when an instructor at the University of Lyon interviewed her because her songs were themed on the nuclear accident.

The following summer, she was invited to France to perform live there for the first time. She later sang at Lapin Agile, the legendary chanson house where Piaf, whom she idolized, had performed.
At that show, Yukari was with Philippe Marchand, a pianist who also accompanied her at her concert at La Cremaillere on Dec. 31.
Yukari, whose full name is Yukari Sasaki, discovered the joy of singing through her grandmother, who loved singing local folk songs with her on her lap.
When she was in a local high school, she often skipped classes to listen to The Beatles. Her aspiration to become a singer took her to Tokyo after graduating from high school. There, she juggled jobs as an office worker and a budding singer at a music agency and dreamed of making her professional debut.
With no breakthrough, however, Yukari returned to her hometown at 22. She did stints at bars, restaurants and in other events, covering all genres of music from jazz to bossa nova to Japanese ballads.
The catastrophe at the nuclear plant came when she was raising her daughters as a single mother after a divorce.
Power outages and cuts in the water supply followed. Hydrogen explosions at the facility caused many in her neighborhood to flee in terror even though no evacuation order was issued as Iwaki was outside the 20-km “no-entry” zone around the plant.
Finally, on March 16, she left for Tokyo with her girls.
Yukari said one thing still torments her: She stood in line outside to get water from a water tank truck on March 15 with her young daughters.
On that day, the radiation level was at 23 microsieverts per hour, 100 times higher than the limit regarded as safe by the International Commission for Radiological Protection.
At that time, she had no knowledge of the danger of radiation exposure, particularly to children.
After four months in the capital, the family moved from a hotel into an apartment, which was provided by the central government.
But the evacuation took a toll on her children. One of her daughters, who was a third-grader back then, temporarily suffered from aphasia as she was feeling homesick.
Even for Yukari, the situation was bleak. She saw no glimmer of hope for the future.
A catalyst was a small gathering of evacuees held in Yokohama in the summer of 2012, where she sang John Lennon's “Imagine.” Seeing a mother crying at her performance, she rediscovered her gift.
“I thought my songs may help others,” she recalled.
Whenever the inspiration for a song wells up, she now records the words and melodies on her smartphone.
She is one of thousands of Fukushima evacuees who are called “jishu hinansha.” The term refers to people who fled despite the absence of evacuation order. Unlike evacuees from within the 20-km radius, they only receive limited government subsidies.
“I was like a dandelion that grew in a field slightly outside the evacuation zone,” she said. “I blew dandelion heads to fly so that I can protect my children.”
She feels a pang in her heart whenever she hears comments like “You can now return to Fukushima as it is no longer dangerous there,” “Did you come here, leaving behind your parents and hometown?” or “Why don’t you return to Fukushima to help the rebuilding efforts?”
Yukari is now worried because public housing assistance to evacuees like her is scheduled to end in March.
She pauses and reminds herself that she has, at least, the talent to sing.
Yukari is determined to leave songs for her daughters ... formed out of her struggle.

Translation of "Ishibumi"

Ruined city: An aerial photo, used in the book 'Ishibumi,' shows the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall in the wake of the 1945 U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The building is now known as the Atomic Bomb Dome. | KYODO

January 28, 2017

Translated A-bomb book reminds us of the horrors of war

by Mie Sakamoto
http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/01/28/books/book-reviews/translated-bomb-book-reminds-us-horrors-war/#.WI3hXvKDmos

Kyodo
A recently released English translation of a Japanese book about 321 junior high school students killed by the 1945 U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima is a poignant reminder of the inescapable suffering and militaristic indoctrination of youth at the time.
Ishibumi, Edited by Naomi Saito, Translated by Yasuko Claremont and Roman Rosenbaum.
239 pages
POPLAR PUBLISHING CO., Nonfiction.
"Ishibumi" — meaning "cenotaph" — was first published in 1969, following a Hiroshima Television Corp. documentary about the bombing, and the first English translation of the text was published last December. The motivation to produce an English edition almost five decades after the original was released came after former U.S. President Barack Obama visited Hiroshima on May 27 last year, said the book's editor,

Naomi Saito. At the time, outspoken Japanese writer Ayako Sono wrote in a newspaper column that "Ishibumi" was the "only book" that needs to be given to the president.

The book, which was recently sent by a group of former students from Hiroshima Second Middle School to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, describes the circumstances surrounding the death of the children and four of their teachers from the school as told by parents who survived the bombing on Aug. 6, 1945.

The students had been mobilized to work in the war effort near where the bomb was later dropped, and nearly a third of them died instantly in the explosion, which had claimed an estimated 140,000 lives by the end of 1945.

Surviving children fled toward their homes, but many died without meeting their parents. Some students became unrecognizable due to their severe burns. In other cases, only their belongings were recovered.

One of the mothers who found no trace of her son, Bunji Kano, expresses her grief in the book:

"If only I could see him in my dreams, but he never appears there. His friends from primary school are now fathers of two or three children," she says.

Saito, editor of the book, said she was encouraged by Sono's words, and understood the need to educate people — about the tragedy, fear of atomic bombs and nuclear power — at a time when there are few remaining who directly experienced the war.

"We cannot forget the tragedy and should also take the nuclear accident seriously," said Saito, referring to the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster triggered by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.

The book also reveals the militaristic indoctrination in Japanese education that significantly influenced the way students behaved, even when facing death.

Before dying, students often sang military songs and the "Kimigayo" national anthem. They hailed the emperor and some pledged to take revenge on their attackers, it said.

In the book, a diary of one student describes how they bowed "as deeply" as they could to salute the national flag and made "a vow to fight the enemy to the end" at a morning assembly.

Yasuko Claremont, who helped translate the book, said it depicts an era when war was glorified, when children were taught that the emperor was a living god and forced to recite a military code.

"From the standpoint of current democratic education, children who appear in 'Ishibumi' received a wrong education that supported a wrong war," Claremont said, adding that the book should be read widely because the risks posed by nuclear weapons are shared globally.

"The book has the mission of conveying to the next generation that there were children who were sacrificed for the wrong war," said Claremont, an honorary senior lecturer at the University of Sydney. "We must never go to war again."

Atomic-bomb survivor Keiko Ogura, 79, who offers her experiences in English to some 2,000 foreign students annually, said she was "overwhelmed by grief" when she read the book and imagined the heartache of parents who lost children.

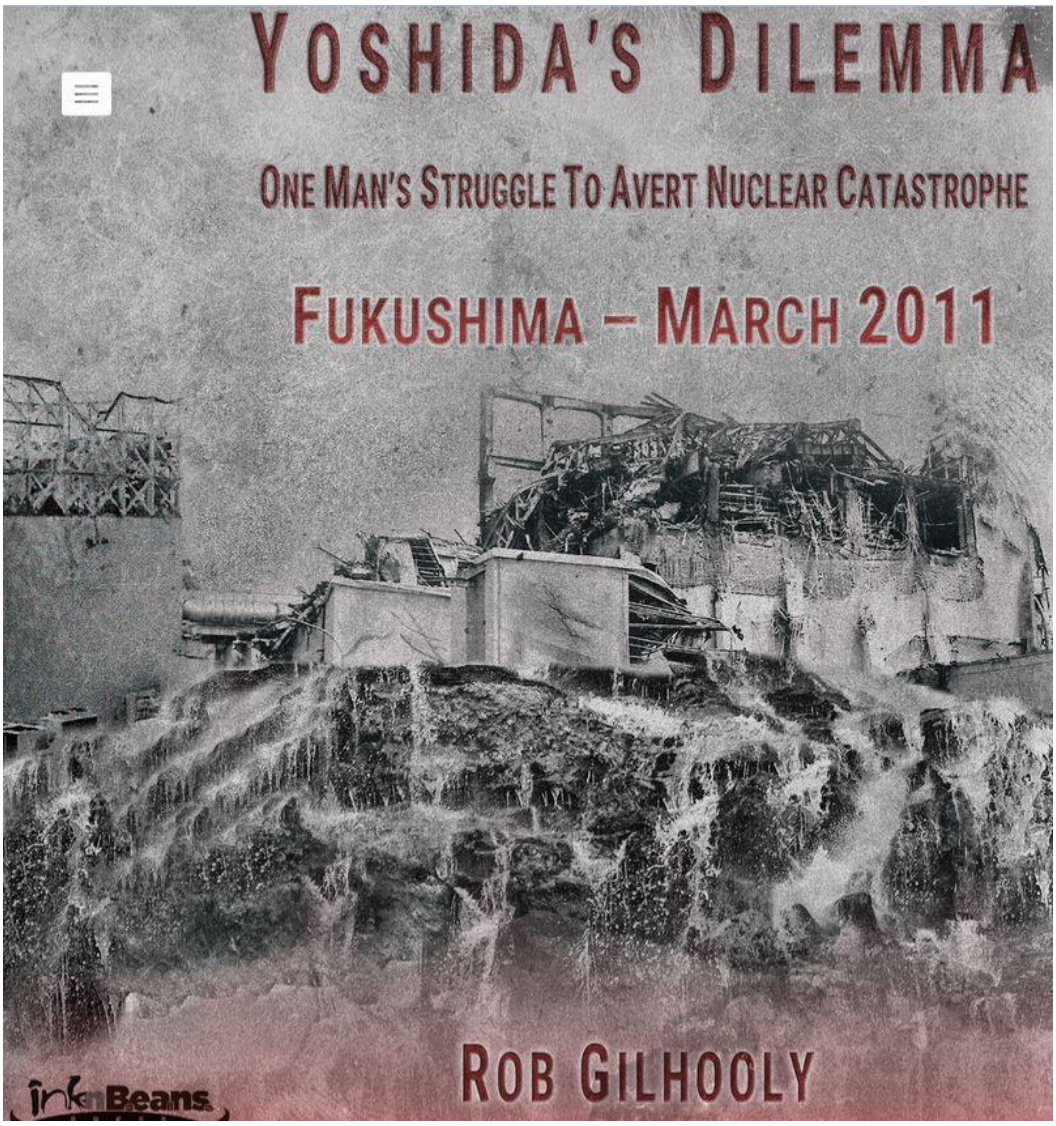
"I was deeply touched by the way this book is written, which refrains from being dramatic and depicts great sorrow in a detached tone, making readers feel the profound grief and anger that exists between the lines," Ogura said.

Ogura said she is still haunted by the memory of suffering from the atomic bombing when she was 8 years old. Many other survivors were traumatized by the attack. Suffering from both death and survival was inevitable, she said.

"I'd like people to understand that nuclear weapons trigger mass killing," Ogura said.

The true horror, she said, is of helpless children having no place to hide when nuclear weapons are used.

Yoshida's dilemma



http://www.yoshidas-dilemma.com/
March 11, 2011. A magnitude 9 earthquake rocks Japan and triggers a mega-tsunami that kills thousands of people. It also knocks out the power at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and triggers one of the worst nuclear accidents in history.

If it wasn't for one man, it could have been much worse.
"Rob Gilhooly has written what is probably the most comprehensive English-language account yet of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown. Gilhooly is among the best-informed foreign reporters on this issue in Japan, having travelled to Fukushima several dozen times since being one of the first journalists to arrive in the prefecture on a freezing night in March 2011. He gives the story of Masao Yoshida, perhaps the key figure in the disaster, all the detail, sympathy and pathos it demands. His remarkable pictures throughout the book are a bonus. Highly recommended. "
— David McNeil, The Economist.

"A powerful synthesis of the technical and the personal, Gilhooly succeeds in conveying the events of March 2011, its aftermath and the dramatic impact on the people of Fukushima and wider Japan. Six years after the start of the accident, Yoshida's Dilemma is a necessary reminder of how through the actions of heroic individuals and luck Japan avoided an even greater catastrophe."
— S. David Freeman, former Tennessee Valley Authority chairman, engineer, energy expert and author of *Energy: The New Era* and *Winning Our Energy Independence*

"As one of the few journalists to have covered the Fukushima story from the very start, Rob Gilhooly is perfectly placed to discuss the disaster's causes and aftermath, and its wider ramifications for the future of nuclear power. From the chaotic scenes as the plant went into triple meltdown, to the plight of evacuated residents and Japan's long and troubled relationship with atomic energy, Gilhooly combines fine story-telling with journalistic integrity to produce a book that is admirably free of hyperbole."
— Justin McCurry, The Guardian.

Yoshida's dilemma (2)

April 29, 2017

Yoshida's Dilemma: One Man's Struggle to Avert Nuclear Catastrophe': But for him, Fukushima could have been much worse

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/04/29/books/book-reviews/yoshidas-dilemma-one-mans-struggle-avert-nuclear-catastrophe-fukushima-much-worse/#.WQdrA9ykKic

by Nicolas Gattig
Disaster response, even at its most heroic, can fall to people who would rather be somewhere else.
Yoshida's Dilemma: One Man's Struggle to Avert Nuclear Catastrophe, by Rob Gihooly.
422 pages
INKNBEANS PRESS, Nonfiction.
So it was for Masao Yoshida, who, while helming the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant during the disaster in 2011, gave the groan, "Why does this happen on my shift?"
But in some ways Yoshida, an industry veteran of 32 years, was the right man to handle the crisis. His leadership during those days on the edge, at times in defiance of orders from the top of the utility that employed him, is at the center of Rob Gilhooly's new book "Yoshida's Dilemma: One Man's Struggle to Avert Nuclear Catastrophe."
Gilhooly writes from the eye of the storm, putting the reader in the plant's control room with almost claustrophobic immediacy. One of his challenges was to render the emergency in real-time. How much can prose, moving forward in measured steps, convey a lethal technology unraveling *in extremis*? How do you convey the breakdown of machinery without getting mired in technical detail?

“It was difficult,” says Gilhooly, who spent almost four years researching and writing the book. “What struck me about the plant workers — it sounded like complete chaos. My decision was not to make it sound orderly. I wanted it to appear chaotic, without the writing becoming chaotic itself. I tore my hair out over the technical details, because I wanted the book to be readable.”

In the end, the book is a cumulative experience — an intense ride that rewards endurance. Gilhooly weaves in the history of nuclear energy in Japan, interviews with experts and re-created conversations among the plant workers.

“Yoshida was a straight talker from Osaka — a larger-than-life personality,” says Gilhooly, who interviewed the superintendent off the record. “He was different from the other superintendents, more prepared to stick his neck out. He was sharper, more bloody-minded. When tipping his hat to authority, he may have done so with a quietly raised middle finger.”

This attitude might have saved lives, when, after a hydrogen blast at the No. 1 plant, Tepco HQ in Tokyo ordered staff to evacuate. Yoshida knew that the executives had little idea of what was actually happening at the plant. Going behind the backs of his superiors, he contacted then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan, insisting that leaving the plant would be reckless. The utility also ordered that seawater not be pumped through the reactor as coolant, since that would render it useless for energy generation in the future. Exposed to life-threatening levels of radiation, Yoshida and his team defied the order, scrambling to cool the overheating reactor with seawater.

The desperate move worked. The team managed to cool the reactor, and later the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, which was authorized by the Diet, concluded in its report that “(Yoshida’s) disregard for corporate instructions was possibly the only reason that the reactor cores didn’t explode.”

In Western media coverage of the Fukushima disaster, much was made of Japanese groupthink. A culturally ingrained obedience and a reluctance to question authority was blamed in part for the disaster. Still, the responses vary, and some staff put safety concerns over company loyalty.

“I didn’t want to editorialize,” says Gilhooly, who writes with a calm, thoughtful voice, avoiding the temptation of melodrama. “But yes, Yoshida — and others — refuted the stereotype that was used to explain parts of the disaster.”

Gilhooly is talking to a Japanese publisher, but thinks a translated version may prove difficult: His sources spoke freely about the events at the plant assuming the interviews wouldn’t be published in Japanese. Still, Gilhooly, who takes a stand in the book against using nuclear energy, hopes to fuel the ongoing debate in his adopted home.

“I just wanted to know the truth,” he says. “There is a discussion that needs to happen about nuclear power — about disaster un-preparedness in Japan. I wanted to contribute to that argument. It’s six years on and already we are airbrushing some things out.”

The book points out the gulf between rural Fukushima and the large cities consuming the energy it produced. Gilhooly talked to Atsufumi Yoshizawa, Yoshida’s deputy at the plant, who recalled the first home leave with his boss, a month after the disaster:

“Tokyo was … as though nothing had happened. They were selling things as usual, women were walking around with high heels and makeup as usual, while we didn’t even have our own clothes (which had been contaminated). I remember thinking, ‘What the hell is this? How can it be so different?’ I realized just how useless it would be to try and explain the situation at the plant to these people, what we had been through and the fear we had faced.”

It is a punch in the gut, then, to read about Yoshida's death from esophageal cancer at age 58, just two years after his exposure to radiation. It's one of the many elements of the Fukushima crisis that stirs anger, demanding a change that honors the lessons and sacrifice.

Gilhooly points out that, unlike Yoshida in the stricken plant, Japan has the chance to make positive choices about the future, choices that should be informed by the suffering in Fukushima.

"We should think more about how we use energy," he concludes. "There are things we can do better, with small changes in lifestyle."

Ryoichi Wago, Fukushima poet

June 23, 2017

Fukushima poet Ryoichi Wago wins French award for tweets issued on 2011 disasters
http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/23/national/fukushima-poet-ryoichi-wago-wins-french-award-for-tweets-issued-on-2011-disasters/#.WU6GY1Fpyot

Kyodo

A poet in the city of Fukushima has won a French award for a collection based on Twitter feeds he started shortly after the March 2011 mega-quake, tsunami and nuclear disasters unfolded.
Ryoichi Wago, 48, and Tokuma Shoten Publishing Co., which published his collection, said Friday they had been notified about winning the foreign-language poetry category of the inaugural Prix de poesie de la revue Nunc, which is sponsored by French cultural magazine Nunc.
Wago is the first winner.
"It has been six years since the disaster, and I hope this award will provide opportunities for my words to reach many more foreign people and help them know about the disaster and Fukushima," Wago said.
Wago began sending Twitter feeds on March 16, 2011, five days after the devastating earthquake and tsunami that triggered three core meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.
His poetry collection, "Shi no Tsubute" ("Pebbles of Poetry") was published in Japan the same year. A French translation by Corinne Atlan, who has also translated Haruki Murakami's books, came out last year.
A selector's comment, quoted by Tokuma Shoten, said Wago's "poetic language was profound even under the tragic circumstances regarding the Fukushima nuclear accident."
The award ceremony will be held at a literature festival in France from July 19 to 20, Tokuma Shoten said.
Nunc began publishing in 2002.

Life in Hiroshima - before the bomb

July 6, 2017

Replicated film shows daily life in Hiroshima before A-bomb
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/photo/AS20170706004319.html
By SONOKO MIYAZAKI/ Staff Writer

The Hacchobori district of Hiroshima is shown in a silent 16 mm film that has been digitally replicated. (Provided by Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum)
HIROSHIMA--Women in kimono strolling across a street and smiling children in school uniforms are featured in a digitally replicated 16 mm film that shows bustling downtown Hiroshima before an atomic bomb destroyed the city.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum here on July 5 uploaded the ultra-high 4K resolution video, which runs three minutes and nine seconds, on its website.

The silent, black and white footage shows people in row boats on the Motoyasugawa river, which later became filled with bodies and lined with people desperate for water after the United States dropped the atomic bomb on the city on Aug. 6, 1945.

The video also shows the Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, which became the A-Bomb Dome, a haunting symbol of the devastation wrought on the city.

"The film brings back memories of the days when I rowed boats and went fishing on the Motoyasugawa river," said Tokuso Hamai, 82.

Hamai's father ran a barber shop at their home in Hiroshima's Nakajimahonmachi district, the busiest part of the city, during the war.

The Nakajimahonmachi area was ground zero for the nuclear blast. The district is now home to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

Hamai had been evacuated from the city before the bomb exploded. But all of his family members--his parents, elder sister and elder brother--were killed.

Looking at the film, Hamai said, "It was such a peaceful time for me."

A 2016 anime hit, "Kono Sekai no Katasumi ni" (In This Corner of the World), depicts the Nakajimahonmachi district before the war.

But Genjiro Kawasaki had actual footage of the area in the 1930s, and he donated the film to the museum in 1963. Kawasaki survived the atomic bombing but died in 1995.

The museum in Hiroshima's Naka Ward teamed up with Imagica West Corp., an Osaka-based visual production company, to digitally replicate the film. The process took about one month to complete.

The images were sharpened using advanced technology to clearly show the citizens' facial expressions and clothing.

The numbers on streetcars are now discernible, as well as titles on movie theater signboards in the Hacchobori shopping and entertainment district in the city center. The films included the U.S. movie "One Night of Love" and "Seishun Ondo" (Youth beat).

Initially, Kawasaki was believed to have shot the film in 1936. But after comparing details in the film with newspapers of that time, the joint team identified the shooting dates of around April 3 and 4, 1935.

Most of the museum's 70,000 photographic materials show the Hiroshima cityscape and victims after the atomic bombing.

Museum officials plan to ask the public for materials that show what life was like in Hiroshima before the bomb exploded. They said such materials are essential historical records that highlight what was lost in the atomic bombing.

Side Job (1)

Coping: Kengo Kora (left) and Kumi Takiuchi star in 'Side Job.' | ©2017 'SIDE JOB.' FILM PARTNERS

July 19, 2017

'Side Job.'presents an authentic portrayal of life in Fukushima after disaster
by Mark Schilling
Special To The Japan Times
The Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and its aftermath have been the focus of many films, both fiction and nonfiction. However, most of them have been by filmmakers who've come from outside Fukushima Prefecture, where the disaster hit hardest.
Ryuichi Hiroki, a native of Koriyama, Fukushima, rewrote his 2011 film "River" to reflect the catastrophic effects of the quake, but he hasn't finished with the subject, as his new film "Side Job." makes clear. Based on his own novel, the film is full of characters and incidents taken from years of research but doesn't turn into a docudrama or a weepy "social issue" production, with its pure-hearted heroes and obvious message. Instead, "Side Job." provides a narrative that stays true to the complex and not-always-edifying reality of life in the disaster zone. And that makes it the best film I've seen on the topic — and I've seen dozens.
A prolific creator of mainstream romantic dramas, Hiroki has long had a side job of his own directing indie films, including his 2015 ensemble drama "Kabukicho Love Hotel." "Side Job." belongs to the indie category but is still a departure from his usual fare.

Rating

-
-

-

Run Time
Language

JAPANESE

The filmmaker's signature lyricism is still present — even drone shots of a highway bus entering Tokyo have a floating grace — but there's a shrugging disregard for pieties, official or otherwise: "Recovery" is not a word used by the heroine and many around her; "lasting trauma" may better describe their situation.

Known for pushing famous actresses out of their comfort zones, Hiroki has cast newcomer Kumi Takiuchi in "Side Job." and surrounded her
with notable talents such as Kengo Kora ("M") and Ken Mitsuishi ("Natsumi's Firefly").

Miyuki Kanazawa (Takiuchi) works as a clerk for the city of Iwaki and lives with her father (Mitsuishi) in temporary housing. She lost her mother in the disaster, and her rice farmer father, whose paddies are in the no-go zone, also lost his livelihood. He now spends his days at a pachinko parlor and his nights drinking. On the weekends, Miyuki journeys to Tokyo, ostensibly for English lessons, but actually to work for a *deriheru* (literally, "delivery health") service. That is, she delivers sex to customers in hotels, as the sharp-eyed Hideaki Miura (Kora) —her driver, guardian and confidant — waits nearby.

Why does Miyuki prostitute herself? She has no mountain of debt or manipulative pimp. One reason may be escape. As Miyuki she faces the prospect of a never-ending sameness, which is not helped by a needy former boyfriend (Atsushi Shinohara) who turns up out of the blue. As Yuki, her deriheru persona, she can find a welcome oblivion, both erotically charged and dangerously degrading. But after two years on the game, she looks jaded — and oblivion of a more permanent sort beckons.

Life for those around her has also become like the seashore near the crippled power plant: quiet, desolate, with the old normality distant or out of sight. One such figure is Miyuki's earnest day job colleague Yuto Nitta (Tokio Emoto). He wants to help the folks who come to his counter, but is still dealing with fallout from the disaster in his own family.

But life, as Miyuki and the others discover, is filled with change — sometimes wrenching, sometimes freeing. In "Side Job.," hope blooms naturally as a kind of benediction from whatever gods are out there. But whether it lasts is another matter.

Side Job (2)

July 19, 2017

Director Ryuichi Hiroki discusses 'Side Job.' and the changing feelings Fukushima evokes
http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/07/19/films/director-ryuichi-hiroki-discusses-side-job-changing-feelings-fukushima-evokes/#.WW8fRFFpyot
by Mark Schilling
Special To The Japan Times

Interviews with Japanese directors tend to be straightforward PR exercises. The subjects may be friendly, but they are also disinclined to deviate from their script, especially if they are on their umpteenth media interview of the day.

Ryuichi Hiroki is different, though, and that's not just because I've known him for years. After getting his start in *pinku eiga* (erotic movies) in the 1980s, Hiroki directed a steady stream of hit commercial films and acclaimed indie dramas in a pattern that could be described as "one for them, one for me." He has none of the pontificating self-importance of typical industry *kyoshō* (masters), though. Instead his answers tend to be pithy, delivered with a twist of dry humor.

When we meet at the Gaienmae office of distributor Gaga to talk about his post-Fukushima drama "Side Job.," he starts the interview with a question of his own: "Have you seen the film?" This isn't always a given with the local media, but I surprise him with my answer: Not only did I see the film, I also read Hiroki's own novel on which the Masato Kato-penned screenplay is based. With that out of the way, we can begin.

"Side Job." isn't the first time Hiroki, a Fukushima native, has addressed the Great East Japan Earthquake in his work. He touched on it in 2011, the year the disaster occurred, in his film "River."

"My feelings then were pretty raw," he recalls. "Since it has been five years I'm … what, calmer? Cooler?"

Even so, "Side Job." is very much a passion project for Hiroki, who tossed aside the usual commercial rules in pursuit of honesty and authenticity. Published in 2015, the original novel was a first for the filmmaker, evidence of the thought and effort that went into the film — though Kato's script is quite different from it.

"It's my own original story, so I thought it would be better to have a third party involved," Hiroki explains. "That's why I didn't write the script. I'm usually adapting the original material of others, and sometimes the authors aren't happy with what I do. I thought if I didn't like something then I could just say so … but I didn't," he pauses … and laughs. "It would have been like fighting with myself!"

The story is still far more Hiroki's than Kato's, however, and that includes the long Japanese title "Kanojo no Jinsei wa Machigaijanai" (literally, "Her Life Is Not a Mistake"). The title is used for a play in the film that is based on the 1970 cult classic "The Honeymoon Killers."

"I love that film," Hiroki says. "It's my favorite."

The "her" in the title, however, seems also to refer to Miyuki Kanazawa (Kumi Takiuchi), a disaster survivor who lives with her father in temporary housing and works at City Hall. On weekends, she travels to Tokyo to work a side job as a *deriheru* (delivery health) call girl.

Unlike the many famous actresses who have graced Hiroki's films and were cast through their agencies, the relatively unknown Takiuchi won the role at an audition.

"One reason I went that route is the nudity," Hiroki says. "There are deriheru scenes and not many actresses will do that kind of thing. Also, I felt it would be better to have someone who came without any preconceptions attached to her."

Takiuchi completely inhabits the role, right down to her perpetual look of exhaustion with life in general.

"That's because I gave her a hard time during the shoot," Hiroki jokes. "She got thinner and thinner, but she did an excellent job in the film. That expression of hers is good, right?"

Hiroki switches roles to play the part of the interviewer again by asking me what I thought of the film. My answer contains a bit of a spoiler, so jump ahead two paragraphs if you don't want to read it.

I found Ken Mitsuishi's portayal of Miyuki's father, a farmer whose fields all lie in the disaster's no-go zone, unexpectedly sympathetic.

"He seems pretty hopeless, playing pachinko all day and drinking all night," I reply. "Then one day he tells his friend in the parlor 'I'm outta here' and leaves abruptly. I felt that he was going to change — and the movie brightens."

"I see," Hiroki says with a sense of satisfaction. "But there's no explanation. Kengo (Kora) was also good, right?," he asks.

"Yes he was," I answer.

“He has the line ‘You’re not the only one I’m protecting,’” Hiroki adds. “That’s something hard to say, but he says it to (Takiuchi). I thought that was good.”

I realize I am having a two-way discussion about the film, which doesn’t happen in too many director interviews.

When he was writing the novel, Hiroki says he made regular trips to the Fukushima disaster area and realized that “It had changed totally.”

“My own feelings also changed,” he recalls, adding that when he first saw the devastation he could only stand there staring at it, stunned. “Now it’s just sad,” he says in English.

“It looks as though people will never be able to go back to some of those places. What’s done is done.”

It was these varied and complex emotions that motivated Hiroki to make a “Fukushima film unlike all the others.”

“There are too many films that are simply sad, or just tell people to *ganbarō*,” he says, referring to the word Japanese use to encourage each other to overcome hardship. “I felt that enough was enough. Films like that tend to be over the top, and I wanted to make one that was a little quieter and slower.”

But Miyuki’s choice of side job, I tell Hiroki, might puzzle foreign viewers, especially. She has none of the usual reasons for prostituting herself.

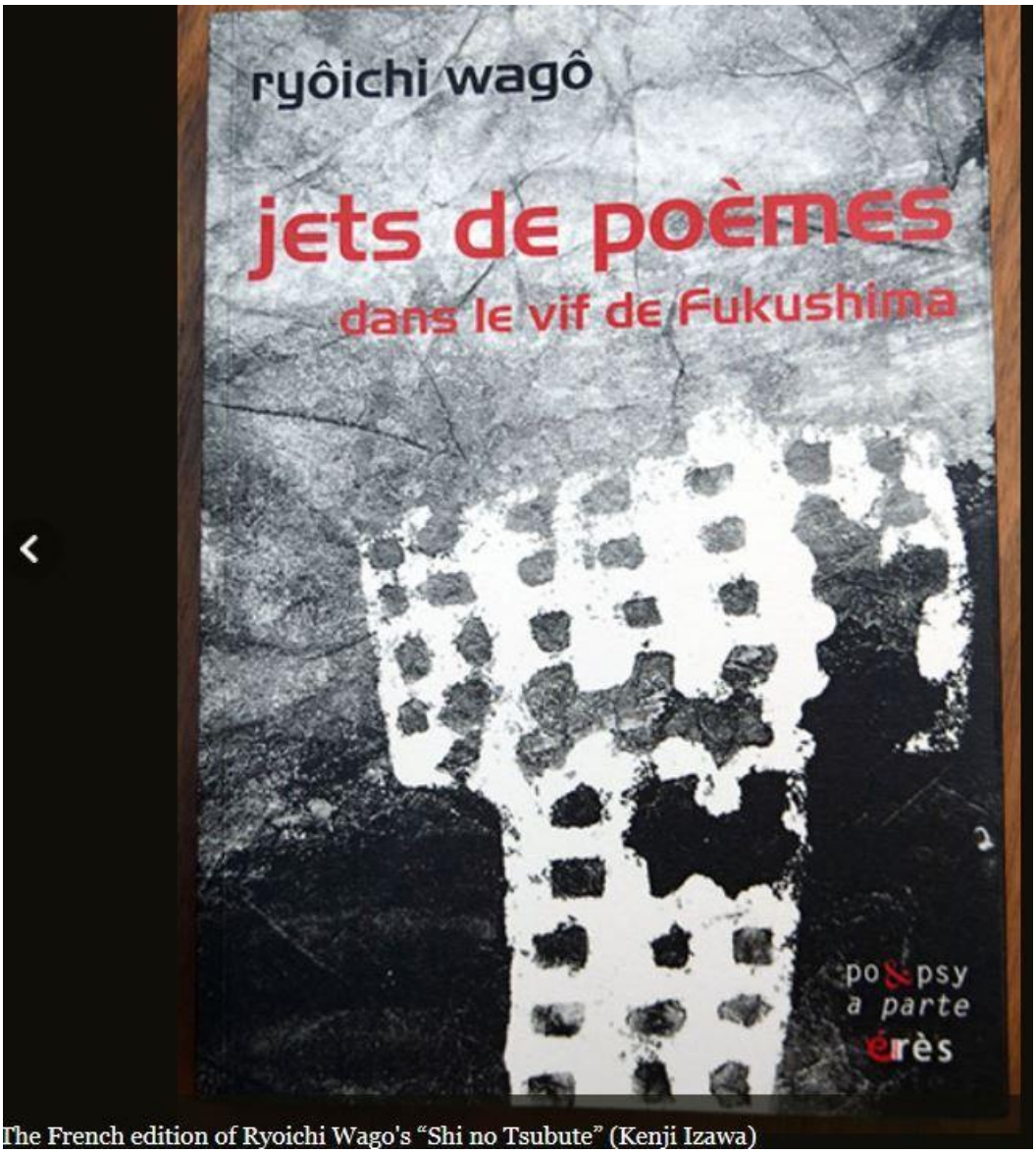
“They’ve spent a huge amount of money cleaning polluted land,” he says. “She turns her own body into money and for her that money has great value, even though she may be making only ¥20,000 or ¥10,000 each time. By turning her body into money she gains a sense of reality that she had been lacking. She affirms her own existence in the moment.”

Another reality, of which she is quite aware, is that she has to move on, but to what?

“I didn’t want to show her having found some deeper meaning,” Hiroki says. “That would just be fictitious. It’s enough for her to simply feel that she is still here.”

“Side Job.” is now playing in cinemas nationwid

"Shi no Tsubute" (Pebbles of Poetry)



The French edition of Ryoichi Wago's "Shi no Tsubute" (Kenji Izawa)

July 21, 2017

Fukushima poet's tweets win French literary award

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201707210048.html

By KENJI IZAWA/ Staff Writer

Poet Ryoichi Wago speaks in Fukushima (Photo by Kenji Izawa)

A series of verses posted on Twitter by a high school teacher over the two months following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster has won a French poetry award.

Ryoichi Wago, 48, flew to the French region of Jura to attend the July 20 awards ceremony.

Wago edited more than 1,000 poems he tweeted after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, and published them in the book "Shi no Tsubute" (Pebbles of Poetry).

The French translation, "Jets de poemes: dans le vif de Fukushima," won the foreign poetry category of the Prix de la Revue Nunc, an annual poetry award founded this year by a French publisher.

The French poets and editors who judged the award praised Wago's work for its "depth and purity of poetic language that arose from such tragic circumstances as the Fukushima nuclear disaster."
Wago, a high school teacher of Japanese language in Fukushima, won the Chuya Nakahara Award, a Japanese poetry award, in 1999.
Five days after the disaster, Wago began posting on his Twitter account, seeking to share his sense of despair with others, as the city of Fukushima experienced strong aftershocks and rising radiation levels.
"I would just end up with tears. I shall give my body and soul to making poems," he tweeted.
"Radiation is falling/ It is a quiet night."
In no time, the number of followers of his Twitter account shot up to more than 14,000 from only a few.
"I had been writing poems for many years, but had little response," Wago recalled how he felt. "Twitter, which allows us to instantly receive responses, has brought revolution to the minds of poets."
Six years have passed since the days when he just kept tweeting verses. He has been concerned how public attention of the disaster has waned, when he received news of the award.
Now he has renewed his resolution to "deliver messages of Fukushima to the world."
"People appreciate the true virtue of spring only after experiencing winter," said Wago. "I believe there is a language that can reach people around the world precisely because it comes from Fukushima."
"Shi no Tsubute" was originally published by Tokuma Shoten Publishing Co.

Seven summers later...in Fukushima

Deserted houses in Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, are covered with rampant grass up to the second floor. A former resident, 38, who lived with his wife and children, says he has many fond memories of the house. The picture was taken from a drone on July 20. (Tetsuro Takehana)

August 1, 2017

7 summers later, weeds engulf Fukushima's abandoned areas

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708010034.html

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Tetsuro Takehana, an Asahi Shimbun photographer who lived in Fukushima Prefecture for 10 years in his childhood, takes photos of the desolate areas designated as "difficult-to-return zones." The film was taken in late July. (Video taken by Tetsuro Takehana and Shigetaka Kodama)

The startling effects of the passage of time come into sharp focus in aerial images taken of Fukushima's "difficult-to-return zones" in the seventh summer since the March 2011 nuclear disaster.

The bird's-eye view pictures were captured in abandoned areas near the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in Okuma and Futaba in Fukushima Prefecture.

The disaster unfolded after the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake spawned a tsunami that devastated coastal areas of the Tohoku region, including Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 plant.

The Okuma outlet of Plant-4, a large shopping mall located 3 kilometers away from the nuclear plant along National Route No. 6, had been bustling with visitors before the disaster.

Today, weeds grow from the cracks of the asphalt-surfaced mall parking lot, slowly creeping through the expanse of space.

One striking image shows the exterior of the TEPCO-owned condominium building, which housed its employees in Futaba, is becoming covered with rampant weeds that have reached the second floor.

Another photo shows cars that cannot be recovered are partially buried, appearing as if they are sinking into a sea of green.

(This article was written by Tetsuro Takehana and Shigetaka Kodama.)

Revenge book returns

Images in Kikujiro Fukushima's “Pika Don: Aru Genbaku Hisaisha no Kiroku” show the struggles of atomic bomb survivor Sugimatsu Nakamura. (Provided by Fukkan.com Ltd.)

August 6, 2017
1961 photo book, a ‘revenge’ by atomic bomb survivor, returns
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708060006.html

By KAZUMASA NISHIOKA/ Staff Writer

A photo book that features powerful images depicting the anguish of an atomic bomb survivor affected by radiation has been reprinted for the first time in 56 years.
“Pika Don: Aru Genbaku Hisaisha no Kiroku” (Atomic bomb: Records of one atomic bomb survivor), published in 1961, is the first photo collection of Kikujiro Fukushima (1921-2015).
The onomatopoeia “pika” refers to the brilliant flash as the atomic bomb exploded, and the “don” represents the deafening noise that followed.
In the early 1950s, Sugimatsu Nakamura, an atomic bomb survivor in Hiroshima, asked Fukushima to take photographs of him, saying, “Help me take my revenge (on the A-bomb.)”
The collection of about a hundred photographs includes heart-wrenching and shocking images. One shows Nakamura fainting in agony due to a stroke caused by atomic-bomb disease. Another looks at scars on his body left by suicide attempts in desperate hopes to escape from his anguish.
Through the power of photography, Fukushima exposed the harsh reality of the relief measures hibakusha received, such as poor medical support and meager social benefits.
“No single problem has been solved (in postwar Japan),” Fukushima said in his later years. “That is because the lines where the responsibility lie have been blurred (by the nation and its people).”

Fukushima, who is from Kudamatsu, Yamaguchi Prefecture, took photographs of Nakamura for about 10 years.
Nakamura, whose wife was deceased, was also suffering from poverty as he struggled to raise six children. He died in the late 1960s.
The photo collection was the starting point of Fukushima's career as a photojournalist, and he went on to document such themes as the anti-establishment movement, the Self-Defense Forces and the defense industry.
Mika Masada, 56, an editor of Fukkan.com Ltd., an online service that republishes books, was behind the reprint in June.
“It is a photo book that meets the needs of the times,” Masada said, adding that she was shown Fukushima's maiden work by a friend.
“Pika Don: Aru Genbaku Hisaisha no Kiroku” is priced at 5,000 yen ($45), excluding tax.

Ogura's letters to Jungk published

August 2, 2017

Hope after the horror revealed in letters from postwar Hiroshima
http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2017/08/02/issues/hope-horror-revealed-letters-postwar-hiroshima/#.WYW5QFFpyic
by Peter Chordas
Special To The Japan Times
HIROSHIMA – "The bomb on the 6th of August, 1945, deprived me of my parents, my friends, my reason … No, it deprived me of my entire life. From that day, I became entirely a living corpse. The only thing I wanted was to destroy everything with that axe … Yes, everything… Even my own life."
These words, uttered by the ax murderer "M" during an interview with Kaoru Ogura, lie among hundreds of pages of raw details of postwar Hiroshima recently unearthed when Keiko, Ogura's widow, discovered the frail carbon copies of letters written by her husband nearly 60 years ago.
"A woman's engagement was broken off," reads another passage, "because it was feared she would give birth to deformed children."
Very little was understood about the effects of atomic radiation at the time, and the survivors of the 1945 U.S. bombing frequently faced immense prejudice, even among their own families. "It is often reported that graves were not permitted to be made for the ashes of bomb victims," Ogura wrote.
Born in Seattle in 1920, Kaoru Ogura grew up in Portland, Oregon, speaking Japanese and English. In 1930 he moved to his parent's hometown, Hiroshima, and later served in the Imperial Japanese Army. After the war he worked as an educator, interpreter and translator, and often assisted foreign journalists who visited Hiroshima.
In 1957, as atomic bomb survivors continued to die mysteriously of unknown causes — and fierce debate raged about whether or not to preserve the artifacts of the bombing (including the Atomic Bomb Dome itself) — Austrian author Robert Jungk, aided by Ogura, set out to discover the true stories of the A-bomb victims. Over the next 2½ years, Ogura would send 213 letters, totaling 836 pages of research notes, to Jungk, the contents of which furnished Jungk's internationally acclaimed book "Children of the Ashes," which has been translated into a number of languages.
"As Hiroshima became more and more just another large city, so the gulf that separated the survivors of the bomb from the world in which they lived grew wider and wider," wrote Jungk in his book. "The houses and streets might be rebuilt, but they remained ruins — human ruins."
Due to Ogura's efforts, Jungk's work captured the true voices of the A-bomb survivors — the hibakusha — and tore through the veil of silence surrounding them. In addition to "M," Ogura interviewed everyone from doctors, politicians and scientists to medical patients, laborers and peace activists. He even talked with the celebrated postwar mayor of Hiroshima, Shinzo Hamai.
Yet surprisingly, Ogura was not present during the interview with Keiko, then a girl of 19.
"I had learned English in school, so Jungk interviewed me himself," relates Keiko (who to this day withholds her maiden name, as her family does not wish to be publicly connected with hibakusha). It wasn't until three years later, when Jungk returned to Hiroshima for a film project, that the two happened to bump into each other, and Jungk introduced her to Ogura.

“At one point Jungk bought me a kimono, so the next day I wore it and performed a Japanese dance for him and Ogura in the traditional garden of my parents’ home,” Keiko recalls. “I didn’t know it at the time, but Kaoru fell in love with me in that moment.”

When asked how she felt about him in return, Keiko replies: “To me he was an orchestra — soft and loud, high and low, large and small. … Other men had good points, but Kaoru had all good points. I refused to accept anyone else.”

They married in 1962, and Ogura, who by then had become director of the Peace Memorial Museum, dedicated his life to peace activism and the antinuclear movement.

Robert Jungk remained a family friend of the Oguras, and stayed in touch with Keiko after her husband’s death in 1979

“I remember it was a few months after my husband passed away,” Keiko recounts, “when Robert called me on the phone and said, ‘Keiko, why are you still crying when the peace movement needs you? You must continue Kaoru’s work!'”

With Jungk’s words resonating in her mind, Keiko began working as an interpreter for Hiroshima’s peace efforts the following year, and in 1984 founded Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace, a nonprofit organization providing language assistance to journalists and peace activists visiting Hiroshima. As part of HIP’s mission, every year on Aug. 6 members organize a live English testimonial of atomic bomb survivors.

Then, in 2010, Keiko discovered the first 300 pages of her husband’s letters. She uncovered the remaining 500 in 2016.

However, her discovery was not accidental.

After attending a Jungk exhibit, Yuji Wakao, professor emeritus of modern history at Nagoya University, concluded that copies of the letters might exist among Ogura’s belongings. He contacted Keiko in 2009 and urged her (apparently over the course of several sumptuous dinner outings) to search for the letters.

Shortly after the recovery of the letters, Wakao assembled a team to translate them into Japanese. Their work will be published in an annotated volume later this year by Nagoya University Press.

According to Wakao, the publication couldn’t be more timely.

“Nuclear issues have traditionally been the realm of journalism, not academia,” says Wakao, “but the study of nuclear issues has never been more vital. East Asia as a whole is shifting away from nuclear power, even as North Korea scrambles to develop nuclear weapons. We hope our efforts will inspire young scholars to take on nuclear issues.”

The legacy of Ogura himself proves in large part Wakao’s concern. While Ogura was active with scholars and universities, his primary work involved assisting journalists and authors in their efforts to document the realities of postnuclear Hiroshima, simply due to the greater demand from those sources.

“What sets Jungk and Ogura’s work aside,” says Wakao, “is that they were interested in looking beyond the symbolism of the bombing — the Dome, the paper cranes, the Peace Park — to acknowledge the real lives of the human beings who suffered and gave rise to those symbols.”

However, their efforts have not been easy.

When asked to describe a particularly difficult challenge to the project, Yuko Kawaguchi, a lecturer at Hosei University and one of the translators for the project, immediately replies, “Only one?”

“Aside from the sheer volume of the text, Ogura’s work contains the names of people, places, businesses and events from 60 years ago that now require meticulous research to understand. But of course,” she adds humbly, “our research is nothing compared to Mr. Ogura’s.”

Additionally, as Ogura’s letters were written on a typewriter (i.e., without spellcheck), passages sometimes contain typographical or grammatical errors that further obscure the original meaning. Not

less significantly, working from 60-year-old carbon copies also means frequently guessing at words that, either from age, wear or a weak imprint from Ogura's typewriter, are now illegible.
Yet despite their historical significance, Wakao's team is only translating about 40 percent of the letters. "Many pages contain Ogura's translations of Japanese newspaper articles," says Kawaguchi, "and for copyright reasons we can't reproduce them in our book. For those parts we're including references so people can look up the originals."
Yet other, more sensitive issues also curtail what content can and can't be published in their book. "Some families named in the letters don't want to be associated with hibakusha," explains Keiko, "and some passages contain details like 'This person murdered that person' or 'So-and-so was with a prostitute' — things certain people probably don't want publicized."
Yet despite these challenges, Jungk was convinced of the importance of Ogura's letters in telling the story of the people of postwar Hiroshima. In the beginning of "Children of the Ashes," he asserts: "Unfortunately I have only been able to make use of a fraction of [Ogura's] written communications; had I printed them all, this book would have been eight times its present length. It is my hope that a research institute may be interested in safeguarding this material."
Perusing even a single paragraph of Ogura's writings makes it all too clear why Jungk felt so strongly. "Any one of these pages could provide a lifetime of research," says Wakao, his eyes scanning over the immense binder of photocopied letters. "It was an incredible time in world history."
Some quotes from Ogura's letters have been slightly edited for clarity, but most have been reproduced as they were originally typed.

• "My Small Steps from Hiroshima," an NHK World documentary about Kaoru Ogura, will screen on NHK World on Saturday, Aug. 6, at 9:10 a.m., 2:10 p.m. and 7:10 p.m., and on Sunday, Aug. 7, at 2:10 p.m. It will be broadcast in the U.S. on Oregon Public Broadcasting Plus on Sept. 5 at 8 p.m. and Sept. 7 at midnight.

• Three atomic bomb survivors will tell their stories in English at the International Conference Center Hiroshima (in the Peace Park) at 10 a.m. on Aug. 6.

• Your comments and Community story ideas: community@japantimes.co.jp

The plea of the victims

As we learn from Ogura's letters, the question of how to commemorate the anniversary of Aug. 6 became a flash point in postwar Hiroshima. There were even some who wanted to transform the day into a celebration of Hiroshima's reconstruction, complete with fireworks and merchandise for sale — in other words, an event completely divorced from the experiences of the bomb victims.
In one of his letters to Jungk, Ogura describes the "three types of people" present in Hiroshima after the bombing.
"Those influential in postwar politics want August 6th to be a celebration for Hiroshima as a City of Peace. On the other hand, those ardent in the peace movement view August 6th as a 'day of struggle,' when we must raise our voices to oppose new wars, and demand an end to atomic weapons. And last of all are the forgotten ones — the victims who actually remember the dreadful day of hell, the sadness of losing parents, children, and siblings, and who wish only to dedicate their prayers silently in front of the cenotaph."
It took 10 years before even the peace movement would recognize the wishes of the A-bomb survivors — and when it did, it changed the shape of that movement forever.

“In 1955,” writes Ogura, “as public opinion of Japan rose in the ashes of the 1954 Bikini Atoll Nuclear Tests, Hiroshima held the first international convention for the banning of A and H bombs. This was the first time for victims to be directly tied with the peace movement, and as a result, the convention marked the first August 6th to organically link the official peace festival with the democratic movement to halt atomic weapons. Between the participation of the A-bomb survivors, and representatives from 14 foreign nations, it was an epoch-making event.

“As one representative said, ‘What moved me most in this convention to ban nuclear weapons was the plea of the victims. On hearing this plea, we reflected that the peace movement we have hitherto built was all very casual and isolated from reality.'”

Wisdom of an ‘idiot’

One of the most important figures in Ogura’s letters is Shogo Nagaoka, the geologist who rushed into the radioactive ruins of Hiroshima the day after the bombing in an attempt to understand what had happened to the city.

Nagaoka had yet to make a name for himself, and to say that his efforts to document the bombing garnered minimal enthusiasm from his fellow scientists would be something of an understatement.

“They saw Nagaoka walking around the ruins picking up debris and said, ‘Look at that idiot,'” explains Yuji Wakao, professor emeritus of modern history at Nagoya University. “But we now know a great deal more about what happened in Hiroshima, and the effects of the atomic bomb, thanks to that ‘idiot.'”

Throughout his research, Nagaoka gathered more than 10,000 geological samples from the ruins of Hiroshima city. His collection of melted granite shards, scorched roof tiles and fused glass would later form the initial artifact display at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.

What’s more, his geological observations allowed him to pinpoint the A-bomb hypocenter, which is why we know the precise location and height of the blast today.

As in modern times, many pillars, bridge railings, gravestones and ferro-concrete buildings in 1945 Hiroshima were made using locally obtained granite — a rock that Nagaoka knew contained a type of quartz that transformed at 573 degrees Celsius. (For reference, temperatures at ground zero reached between 3,000 and 4,000 degrees Celsius.) By observing the quartz “exfoliation” on granite surfaces caused by the heat, Nagaoka was able to determine the exact location of ground zero.

Nagaoka then visited 216 atomic shadows burned into the ruins of Hiroshima, and using a clinometer (a simple device that measures slopes), determined the angle of light that created them. By following the angle from each shadow to ground zero, he was able to calculate a height of 580 meters — the precise point of detonation.

“I was deeply impressed by Nagaoka’s research paper,” wrote Ogura, because it is the result of his walking around with a rucksack on his back, digging in the soil, and calculating with his clinometer in that radioactive, scorched land.”

Timeline

1920 Kaoru Ogura is born in Seattle. He grows up in Portland, Oregon, before moving to Hiroshima.

1945 U.S. drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, killing tens of thousands instantly.

1957 Ogura begins correspondence with Austrian author Robert Jungk.

1962 Ogura, by now director of the Peace Memorial Museum, marries Keiko.

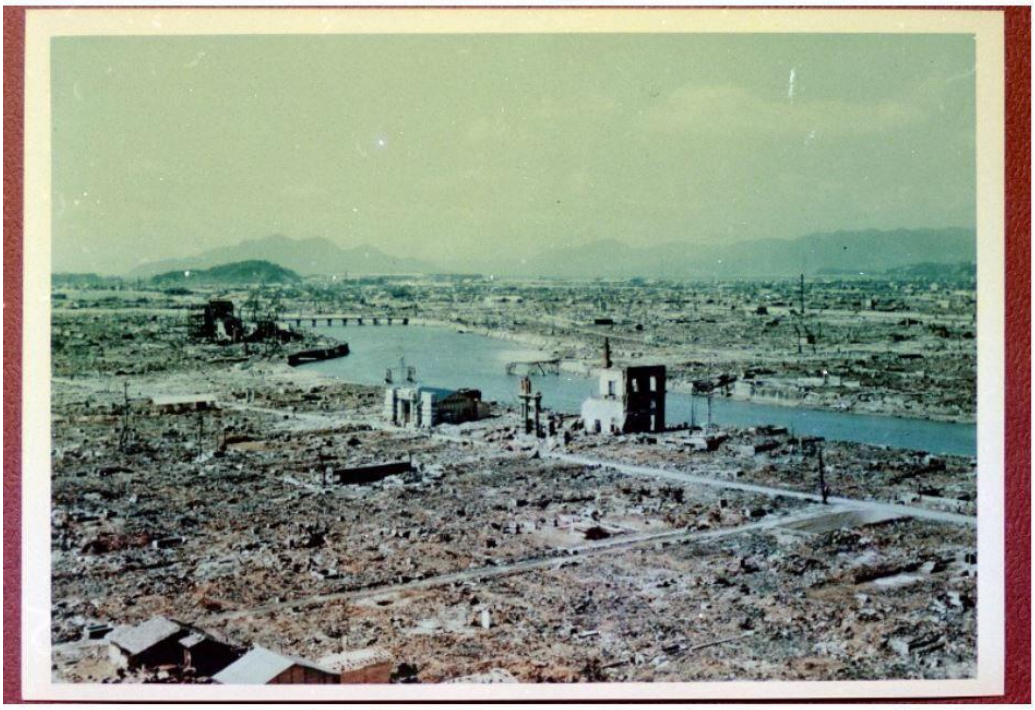
1979 Ogura dies at age 58.

1984 Keiko Ogura founds Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace.

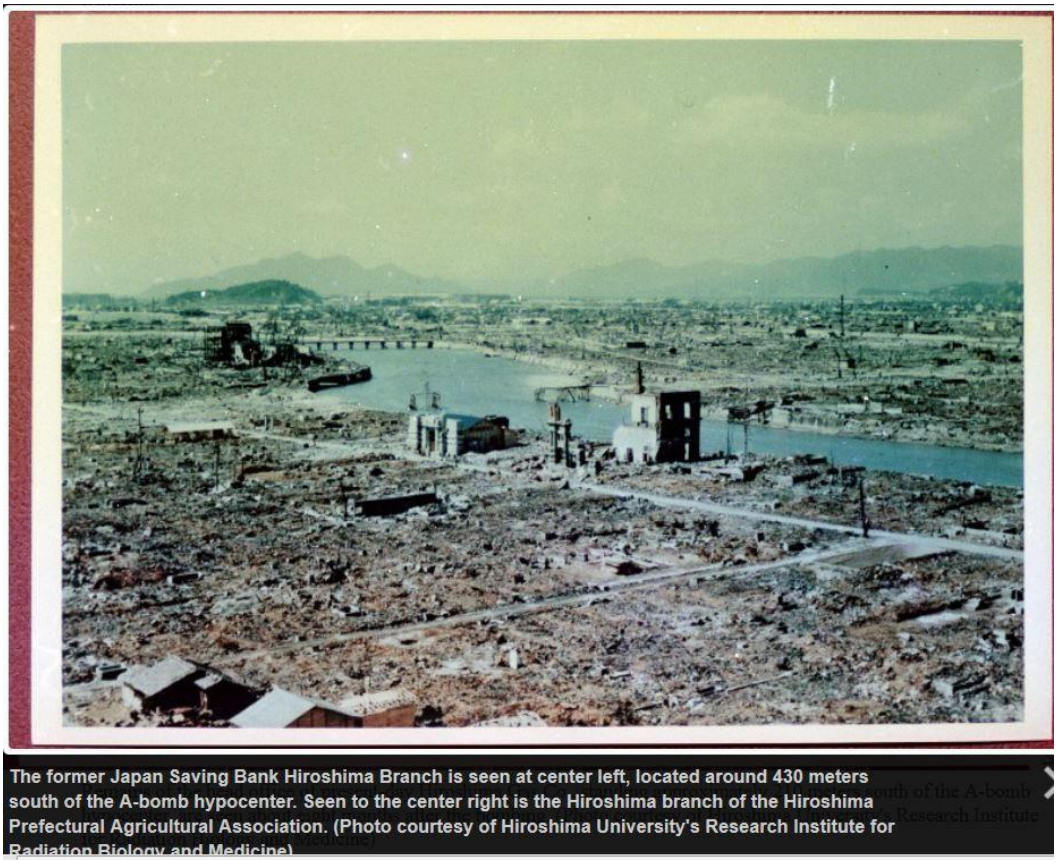
2010 Keiko finds 300 pages of copies of her late husband’s letters to Jungk. She discovers 500 more in 2016.

2017 Nagoya University Press to publish translated selection of Ogura’s letters to Jungk.

Recently discovered photos: Hiroshima in 1946



The former Japan Saving Bank Hiroshima Branch is seen at center left, located around 430 meters south of the A-bomb hypocenter. Seen to the center right is the Hiroshima branch of the Hiroshima Prefectural Agricultural Association. (Photo courtesy of Hiroshima University's Research Institute for Radiation Biology and Medicine)



The former Japan Saving Bank Hiroshima Branch is seen at center left, located around 430 meters south of the A-bomb hypocenter. Seen to the center right is the Hiroshima branch of the Hiroshima Prefectural Agricultural Association. (Photo courtesy of Hiroshima University's Research Institute for Radiation Biology and Medicine)

August 7, 2017

New photos of post-bombing central Hiroshima discovered
https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170807/p2a/00m/0na/016000c#cxrecs_s
HIROSHIMA -- Two color photos of an area within a 500-meter radius from the hypocenter of the Hiroshima atomic bombing taken sometime around the spring of 1946 have been found here.

- 【Related】 Hiroshima marks 72nd A-bomb anniversary with eyes on ban treaty
- 【Related】 The Mainichi opens int'l essay contest on Hiroshima A-bomb play 'The Face of Jizo'

The recently discovered photos capture areas surrounding the head office of what is now Hiroshima Gas Co., located approximately 210 meters south of the A-bomb hypocenter, and the then Japan Saving Bank Hiroshima Branch, about 430 meters south of the hypocenter. They are part of documents that were returned to Japan in and after 1973 by the U.S. Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, and are believed to have been taken by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which studied the power of atomic bombs.
While areas near the bomb's hypocenter remain devastated even about eight months after the bombing on Aug. 6, 1945, the photos depict the city's recovery from the catastrophe such as barracks built on scorched land.
Assistant professor Akiko Kubota at Hiroshima University's Research Institute for Radiation Biology and Medicine discovered the photos that were not numbered or included in a list of A-bomb-related documents. They are believed to have been taken from the Hiroshima Fukoku-kan building, which was the tallest structure in the area at the time.
Kubota says she'll work on clearing issues regarding rights to the photos to have them released to the public.

Taiyo wo Nusunda Otoko

August 11, 2017

VOX POPULI: N. Korea, Trump jostle to steal our sun by painting vulgar picture
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708110023.html
The Japanese movie "Taiyo wo Nusunda Otoko" (The man who stole the sun) tells a spine-chilling story about nuclear blackmail perpetrated by an ordinary citizen. The main protagonist of the film, a high school science teacher played by pop singer Kenji Sawada, steals plutonium from a nuclear power plant and builds his own atomic bomb.
The film was released in 1979 during the Cold War standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union.
The man, who tries to blackmail the government into accepting his demands by threatening to activate the bomb, calls himself "No. 9."
The moniker he has created for himself means he is the ninth possessor of a nuclear weapon after the existing eight nuclear powers at that time.
The man acts in a creepy way and seems to have lost his mind.
One "No. 9" has emerged to spook the real world. A U.S. newspaper recently reported on Washington's assessment that North Korea has produced a miniaturized nuclear warhead that can be mounted on its intercontinental ballistic missiles.
If that is true, North Korea has gone ahead with an utterly reckless and outrageous action that turns a blatant deaf ear to harsh international criticism.
Pyongyang has also been launching an almost daily barrage of verbal threats in viciously abusive language.
In an apparent warning against U.S. military action, North Korea has said, "The mainland U.S. will be catapulted into an unimaginable sea of fire."
It has also ominously threatened that it could create "an occasion for the Yankees to be the first to experience the might of the strategic weapons of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)."
The secluded regime has even gone so far as to declare it is developing a plan to fire missiles near the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam.
What has been equally shocking is that U.S. President Donald Trump responded to North Korea's rhetoric with the same kind of disturbingly bellicose threats, warning that further provocative acts by Pyongyang "will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen."
Trump's apocalyptic warning may have only been an attempt to try and deter Pyongyang from committing a reckless act, but the escalating rhetoric on both sides is, if anything, likely increasing the risk of war.
In the movie, the main protagonist gets wounded and falls ill, failing to achieve his objective.
The film ends with the man walking along the street carrying an atomic bomb with a timer, surrounded by the sound of an explosion.

"Don't close your eyes to the past"

White-robed Imperial Japanese Army war veterans beg for money in Kobe in 1955. | IJSBRAND ROGGE

August 9, 2017

Of guns and cutlery: Memories of the war, from the Netherlands to Japan
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2017/08/09/voices/guns-cutlery-memories-war-netherlands-japan/#.WZK4-cZpyos
by Hans Brinckmann
Special To The Japan Times
FUKUOKA – *To mark the 70th anniversary in 2015 of the end of World War II, Hans Brinckmann, author of "Showa Japan — The Post-war Golden Age and its Troubled Legacy" and other books, wrote an autobiographical essay titled "Of Guns and Cutlery" based on his memories of the Netherlands in wartime and postwar Japan. Its Japanese translation by Hiromi Mizoguchi appeared in Atlas (Atorasu), a Japanese literary magazine, which regularly publishes Mizoguchi's translations of Brinckmann's essays. The English original of the essay appears here for the first time.*
On a high shelf in my kitchen I keep a small metal box containing forks and spoons made from acrylic glass. It's been years since I used them, but today I happened to take down the box, and when I opened it, war memories came floating out. Memories of a man I never met.
I went into my library and pulled out the photo album of the 1931 class of graduates of the Faculty of Economics of Keio University in Mita, Tokyo. Why this album? Because it includes photos of my father-in-law, born in 1905 as Makito Shozo, the third son of an old, established family from the city of Matsusaka in Mie Prefecture.
Shozo was sent off to Tokyo to attend Keio. Soon after his graduation, he was adopted by a childless Nagoya land-owning family to marry their adopted daughter, Toshiko. This involved changing his name to

Tasuke Yoshida, though family and friends continued to call him Shozo. In 1933 Toshiko gave birth to a daughter, Toyoko, who eventually became my wife. But that's another story.

Even after his marriage, the book-loving, Anglophile Shozo dreamt of moving to England someday to study literature at Oxford University. Japan's increasingly aggressive policies made that hope ever more unrealistic.

Shozo was a free thinker who could not identify with Japan's military adventures, and for a long time he had the right connections to avoid being drafted. However, as the war progressed, more and more previously exempted men were being called up, and one day his draft notice arrived. He reported for duty, but was knocked down and kicked by a sergeant for missing roll call and for failure to shave his head.

He realized prompt action was needed. Being the heir of the rather wealthy Yoshida family, he quickly bought two small factories he had been looking at: a manufacturer of bicycles, including a model for military use, and a small subcontractor for Nakajima Aircraft Co. that manufactured acrylic glass used in bulletproof windows for fighter planes. These two factories were classed as "strategic," thus exempting him from military service.

Yet Shozo could not escape his fate. One night in early 1945, he was riding home in the pitch dark on one of his own bicycles. As there was no street lighting, he didn't see the large unmarked hole that had been dug there earlier that day as part of shelter-construction work. He fell into the hole with his bike.

The handlebar lodged into his chest, causing a festering wound. In the absence of antibiotics, it developed into pleurisy and then tuberculosis. He died in August 1946. Opening the box of those spoons and forks, made in his factory from acrylic glass cuttings, brought back those memories.

Perhaps it was Shozo's fatal fall into that hole that also triggered reminiscences of my own childhood experiences in late 1944 and early 1945, the last winter of the war in the Netherlands. My parents divorced when I was 9, and I lived with my mother and my little sister in Wassenaar, a suburb of The Hague.

After my father's departure, my mother had spare rooms available, and as she needed the money, she rented them out to a couple introduced by our neighbors. When the Netherlands was invaded by Nazi Germany in May 1940, they had been on home leave from the Dutch East Indies, where the husband was an inspector of education. The war prevented them from returning to the East, and they were grateful to have found a decent place to live. But his wife was seriously ill, and soon moved to a care home where she died, leaving mother alone with the kind widower. After the war, he never returned to the East, to the delight of all three of us.

But it was still 1944, and food was getting scarce. Sometimes I got on my boy's bicycle to visit my father in the center of The Hague, where he lived above a stationery store he owned. He supplied us with groceries after the shops had little left to sell.

On one of those trips, through a dangerous zone from where V-2 rockets aimed at London were launched, I had jumped abruptly into a crater left by a previous bomb to avoid being hit in a new bombing attack that was being unleashed just then by diving British fighter planes. It clearly was a spontaneous decision, yet as I peeked over the rim of the crater after the attack, I felt that I had hidden there in the belief that the same place would not be bombed twice.

Then another memory took over. A few days after the end of the war in May 1945, my father and I were watching a desolate column of defeated German officers and men who had been part of the occupation forces pass in front of father's store. They were being led away in disgrace, on their way back to an uncertain future in Germany.

Among them was a kind soldier, a private in his 40s, who had taken considerable risks by stealthily supplying my father, his family and his workers with food from the stores of the German military

occupation to help us get through the terrible famine that had hit the western Netherlands during the war's last winter. Once part of a controlling army, now a despised loser, he raised his hand in sad farewell as he lumbered past us.

Back home in Wassenaar, we were also treated kindly by a German soldier who had been in charge of our garage, requisitioned by the occupation for "storage" purposes. Military trucks arrived at night to deliver or take away bags and boxes, but we never knew what they stored there. Until they released the garage back to us early in 1945, that is. When my mother opened the garage doors she found half a dozen large bags of coal, enough to keep our house warm and the kitchen stove burning for the rest of the winter, she said. Perhaps this was a gesture of thanks to our maid, who had taken pity on the nice, lonely soldier guard, serving him a cup of fake wartime coffee whenever mother wasn't looking.

Among the most poignant war-related memories to have claimed my attention recently were those from the streets of Kobe in the early 1950s, when I was barely adult and already working in the branch of a Dutch bank: the heartbreaking images of white-robed disabled war veterans begging on street corners for some money and respect.

They presented a painful sight, those legless, armless wrecks with hooks for hands and iron-and-leather contraptions masquerading as legs. Most were still wearing the soldier's caps in which they had fought — and ignobly lost — the war as they stood there, in clusters of two or three, in the wintry cold, their dolefully white kimonos flapping about their artificial limbs, their lives rendered doubly obsolete by their country's defeat and their own mutilation. Most of them displayed placards describing the horrors they had been through and pleading for support.

They managed to maintain a kind of bitter, accusing dignity in the face of the embarrassed indifference from the equally beaten but still functioning populace, who scurried past minding their own business, trying hard not to see them, sometimes furtively tossing them a coin.

Some of the crippled veterans sang sorrowful songs, or played an instrument — an accordion perhaps — or used a wind-up gramophone from which emerged incongruous, scratchy military marches. I remember seeing two seriously disabled soldiers on a corner of the sloping shop-lined street, the Sando, leading up to the Kiyoshikojin Temple near Takarazuka. They sat on makeshift stools, clumsily playing some kind of string instrument-in-a-box. I felt sorry for them, tried to smile in powerless sympathy, but could find no other way to express my feelings than by slipping a few coins into their collection box.

Clearly these human wrecks did not form part of the orderly pattern of Japanese city-life that I was becoming to admire. There was a disturbing contradiction in this, which I found baffling. I wondered how a civilized and talented people bravely rising from the ashes of their shattered past could so totally ignore the plight of their wounded veterans. I was told that "the government" should take care of these poor devils, and that in any case their plight "could not be helped."

Others were sharper in their judgment: The militarists had deceived the nation and lost the war, and it was their fate to end up like this. I was advised not to pay too much attention to people parading their misfortune. It was a Japanese problem over which foreigners should not worry themselves.

I felt indignant. True, the "militarists" had started and lost the war, but these soldiers were as much the victims of their generals and misguided politicians as the millions in the cities who had suffered the carpet bombings and the two atomic conflagrations. They had to be given the support they deserved and so very badly needed.

Still, it didn't take long before I found myself heeding that sensible advice from sensible Japanese people. Within weeks, I had effectively banned the broken white soldiers from my consciousness. When they loomed into view, I crossed the street. I closed my ears to their plaintive songs. It was not easy at first, but I stood fast. As guilt receded, relief took its place. Since then, I had erased those war images from my mind,

because we must leave the past alone and live in the vibrant, demanding now. Right? What is the use of raking up history? To what end?

Yet now, after all these years, the memories are back, prompted by the innocuous act of my opening that small metal box. Once again, I'm confronted by the horrors that mankind, time and again, has inflicted on itself, the consequence of arrogance, greed, or — most often — in the name of religion or racial hatred.

The message is clear: Don't close your eyes to the past. Awareness of the mistakes and misdeeds by those who went before us — and by those acting the same way *right now* — will keep us alert to the dangers that surround us and thus hopefully help prevent history from repeating itself.

One way, perhaps the only way, for an individual to do our part is to practice in our own life the principles of fairness and tolerance — to allow scope for the broad spectrum of views and convictions that makes up human society, instead of trying to forcefully convert others to our creed or reaching for a gun at the first sign of discord.

I've moved the metal box to a lower shelf, to make it more accessible. From now on I'll open it often and use its spoons and forks to help me remember. For we must know history to help us handle the present and prepare for the future.

A copy of Atlas No. 32 containing the Japanese version of this article can be ordered from its publisher, Nishida Shoten, by calling 03-3261-4509, sending them an email at nishi-da@f6.dion.ne.jp *or visiting their website:* www.nishida-shoten.co.jp*. Hans Brinckmann on Amazon:* www.amazon.com/author/ *hans-brinckmann. Brinckmann's websites:* www.habri.jp *(Japanese and English) and* www.habri.co.uk *(English)*

Recollections

August 15, 2017

VOX POPULI: Remembrances of wars past vital for today's generation

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708150022.html

I felt nostalgic recently when I listened to the voice of actor Ken Takakura, who died three years ago aged 83.

"Looks like Japan has lost the war." "What? We've surrendered?"

He was recollecting a conversation with a friend on the day when Japan lost World War II and using their native Fukuoka dialect.

The exchange is contained in the book "Watashi no Hachigatsu Jugonichi" (My August 15), a collection of personal reminiscences regarding the war and published by Imajinsha.

Takakura re-enacted his own conversation in the audio version of the book.

The title's fifth volume came out earlier this month. About 150 cartoonists, writers, academics, politicians and other professionals have so far contributed their writings or drawings of their memories of Aug. 15, 1945, to the five-volume book. About half of the contributors have participated in the creation of the audio version by reading aloud their own recollections.

Cartoonist Takao Saito, the creator of the popular "Golgo 13" manga series, says in a deep voice, "War is the most foolish of all human activities."

I was a bit surprised to hear physician Shigeaki Hinohara, who died last month at 105, talking fast as he recounted his difficult days during and after the war. St. Luke's International Hospital where he worked was forcibly renamed "Daitoa Chuo Byoin" (Greater east Asia central hospital) during the war and was quickly requisitioned by the Allied forces upon Japan's defeat.

"The generation that lived through the war is really getting on in years, and I am rushing to collect the testimonies, in writing or in voice, of those who are still well enough," said Shigekatsu Inaba, 63, of Imajinsha.

The company's main business is editing and publishing children's books, so the employees are collecting the testimonies in their spare time.

The company has so far donated the print and audio versions as a set to schools and libraries upon request. The print version is sold commercially, but the audio version, which comes with special equipment, is not for sale.

Inaba explained that he does not believe it appropriate to make money from "voices" that have been entrusted gratis to the company.

Consequently, the firm ends up in the red with every volume.

This year again, the nation marks its defeat in World War II. The people who heard the radio broadcast of the emperor's announcement of surrender are diminishing in number every year, and a generation born after the war effectively runs our society now.

This makes me all the more acutely aware that those written and oral reminiscences of mankind's great folly--war--are shared assets of incalculable value.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Aug. 15

Hiroshima punks

August 17, 2017

Nuclear issues aren't a problem for Hiroshima's punk acts — politics are
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/08/17/music/nuclear-issues-arent-problem-hiroshimas-punk-acts-politics/#.WZV8y8Zpyos
by Peter Chordas
Special To The Japan Times
HIROSHIMA – "Adults are stupid," says Shinji Okoda, who is better known in Hiroshima as "Guy," the vocalist for hardcore punk band Origin of M and owner of Disk Shop Misery and Bloodsucker Records. At 52, he certainly appears to have some authority in the matter.
Just one night earlier he was crowd-surfing while simultaneously screaming into a microphone at To Future, an annual concert he helps organize that marks the Aug. 6 atomic bombing of Hiroshima.
At this moment, however, he's sipping coffee and relaxing at a restaurant downtown.
"As you grow up," he adds, with far more articulation than you'd expect from a "stupid adult," "your mind gets filled with garbage. Children understand things instinctively. You show them an image of Aug. 6, 1945, and they know instantly that it should never happen again. It's only when you think deeply that war becomes 'necessary.'"
Yet ironically, the subject of the atomic bombing has always existed within the Hiroshima punk scene the same way an irradiated elephant might occupy the slam pit at a bar show — awkwardly, and with a high likelihood of making you spill your drink.
"Of course bands had songs about the bombing," Guy recalls, "even in the early days." Sure enough, the first two flexi discs by Japanese band Gas, in 1983 and 1984 respectively, were called "No More Hiroshima" and "The Day After" (meaning the day after the bombing). Yet Guy's opinion on whether the inspiration for those kinds of songs stemmed from being Hiroshima bands, or from the fact that "cool British bands" like Crass and Discharge were doing it, comes reluctantly.
"In the early days, probably because foreign bands were doing it," he admits. "But those foreign bands never played in Hiroshima. Now Hiroshima bands are talking about war and nuclear issues in a way that's genuinely linked to their roots in the city." However, when asked what precipitated that change, Guy dodges the question like a studded gazelle bounding past a Bengal tiger.
Hiroshima punks are nothing if not modest.
"It's all because of Guy," says Ryohey Nasu, or "Nass," owner of Dumb Records and drummer of Hiroshima's longest-standing punk act, the So-Cho Pistons. Although he joined the Pistons in 1995, they actually started in '85.
"That's a long time to be in a nonselling band," the 44-year-old says with a laugh. But as a result, he knows the Hiroshima punk scene like the back of his kick drum.
"Being against war is a very normal thing," he says. "I mean, everybody thinks war sucks. So when bands have that message only as a fashion, it's just repeating the obvious. But recently, bands in Hiroshima are adopting a more authentic anti-war and anti-nuclear message that's coming from the heart of Hiroshima itself, and Guy is the driving force behind that change. Personally, I think it's a very good thing."
Yet despite his warm sentiments on the matter, the Pistons themselves have no messages of the kind. Or, for that matter, anything in their lyrics which could be said to identify them as a Hiroshima band.
"Not that I'm an expert," he says with a laugh. "I'm just the drummer."

When pressed on the matter, Nass simply shrugs. “Of course we love Hiroshima, and this town is a huge part of who we are. But it’s not necessary to say it in our music. We play pure punk — three-chord, eighth-note, simple punk rock. With so many punk variations out there these days, someone’s got to carry that torch.

“And besides,” he adds without the slightest hint of irony, “it’s really hard to talk about nuclear stuff in Hiroshima.”

“In Japan, the hurdle is really high for being political, especially for young people,” Guy explains. “One wrong word and people attack you — even people who ultimately agree with you. And exploiting your image as a victim to gain popularity is pure nonsense. Sure, it will sell, but doing it that way is disgusting.

“In Nagasaki, too, you won’t see any hardcore bands with a ‘No more Nagasaki’ message. I say this with the deepest respect, but it’s much easier for bands like Crass to sing about it because for them it’s a ‘distant tragedy.’ But if they sang ‘Nagasaki Nightmare’ in Nagasaki — not just for punks, but for atomic bomb survivors — that would be real political action.”

And for Guy, taking action is the bottom line. “Being political means actually doing something.”

Guy first became interested in nuclear issues after reading “Barefoot Gen” (a manga set in 1945 Hiroshima), and hearing the stories of *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors) as a boy. When he was 19, he started playing in the Hiroshima hardcore band Gudon, but lacked the confidence to get political.

It wasn’t until he turned 39 that he made up his mind to become openly political and started working with a hibakusha organization, which included protesting outside nuclear power plants. But the more politically active he became, the more people in the punk scene distanced themselves from him.

“Pretty soon I found myself alone,” he admits.

Unlike the punk and hardcore scenes in Europe and America (where protests, punk and politics frequently attend shows as congenitally joined triplets), rocking the boat in Japan usually gets you thrown overboard. Japan, after all, is the country that gave us the phrase, “*Deru kui wa utareru*” (“The nail that sticks out gets hammered down”).

But punk is, by its definition, that one stubborn nail that you just can’t hammer down — no matter how hard you try. Guy certainly looks like he can take the social beating.

“I don’t belong to any groups or organizations, but I still attend meetings with hibakusha, and participate as I can,” he says. In other words, he’s just a good old-fashioned, grass-roots, punk rock activist.

You know, like how you see pretty much everywhere other than in Japan.

“For me, hardcore comes first. It’s who I am.” But in classic punk tradition, Guy sees his music as a wake-up call — both for anyone who cares to listen, and for himself.

“By screaming,” he says, “I can refresh my mind.” And as far as he’s concerned, that’s the best reason to do it. “I mean really, who likes this music?! Certainly not pretty ladies,” he adds with a scoff. “Hardcore is reaction. It’s shouting ‘Ow!!!’ when you feel pain. Playing punk of any kind is a way of reconnecting with that simpler, clearer frame of mind.”

Nass agrees.

“The pure, childlike mind that isn’t influenced by many things is the best,” he says with all the sagacity of a punk-rock monk. “The honesty in punk and hardcore comes from that purity.”

When asked if the Pistons will ever have a song about Hiroshima, war or nuclear issues, Nass answers immediately,

“When the time comes, we’d really like to, he says. “But for now, I don’t know if we’re good enough to be able to contribute anything meaningful.” This from one of the tightest and longest playing bands in the nation.

Hiroshima punks are nothing if not modest.

As for Guy, he's determined to keep screaming.
"When adults can finally view the world the way children do," he says, "at that moment war will disappear."

Two punk pockets

Disk Shop Misery (2-7 Fukuromachi, Naka Ward), founded in 1993, offers an international selection of punk and hardcore in vinyl, CD and T-shirt form. Flyers for almost every upcoming show are on display.

Dumb Records (5-15 Mikawacho, Naka Ward) opened in 2005 and offers a new and classic punk alongside delicious food, fresh coffee and draft beer. And if you like your punk (or drinks) a bit stiffer, they've got that too.

Kubota's exhibition: The legacy of Hiroshima

August 22, 2017

Inheriting the legacy of Hiroshima: Embracing what we don't know as a starting point
https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170822/p2a/00m/0na/024000c
Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, in the background, and the A-bomb dome are seen in Hiroshima's Naka Ward, on the morning of Aug. 6, 2017, the 72nd anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. (Mainichi)
Hisashi Inoue's "The Face of Jizo" is set in post-atomic bombing Hiroshima. It all began for 34-year-old event organizer Ryoko Kubota when she became the Hiroshima dialect instructor for the two actors for a stage performance of the work.

- 【Related】Inheriting the legacy of Hiroshima: Conveying experiences to the 'third generation'
- 【Related】The Mainichi opens int'l essay contest on Hisashi Inoue's Hiroshima A-bomb play 'The Face o
- 【The Face of Jizo】
- 【Hibakusha Series】

The two actors were from Fukuoka and Aichi prefectures, respectively. Even then, how they earnestly faced learning about the devastation that befell her native Hiroshima and sought to express what they learned from her through the characters struck close to home for Kubota.
"In comparison, I thought, 'I haven't done anything, have I? Isn't there something I can do?'" Kubota remembers.
That was 2014. Even Kubota, who had learned a lot about the war and the atomic bombs at school in Hiroshima, felt that she needed to learn about the event all over again.
Her young friends also felt the same way. They also felt that they wanted to do something for Hiroshima. However, the "second generation," the children of the atomic bomb survivors, or "hibakusha," were not keen on the idea. They criticized Kubota and her friends, thinking that they only wanted to do something because 2015 was the 70th anniversary of the bombing, equating it to fireworks: just a momentary fancy that would quickly fade away. Kubota and her contemporaries were told to go and do something that would have more meaning to their own lives instead.
"If that was how they were going to react, I decided we should hold an event for 10 years," Kubota said. "I thought we would make the fact that we 'didn't know' the theme. We wanted to make an exhibition so that even if all the hibakusha passed away, the next generation would be able to carry on their legacy."
These are the roots of the event "Hiroshima -- 3rd Generation Exhibition: Succeeding to History" that I introduced in my last piece. What will be passed on to the next generation and how this will be accomplished is left in the blank space of the Japanese title.
"The moment the task becomes unconstrained, something will definitely come to you," Kubota said. "I think it's important to create a comfortable space that pushes people to be self-motivated rather than passive."
Those who attended the event yesterday will help continue to convey the message today. Kubota was surprised by the pure look in the eyes of the children who attended the event and their eagerness to learn. She feels that through her organization of the event, she can feel the circle of communities expanding.
Kubota is a web designer by trade. Her explanations flow smoothly, and I feel her ability to take action and move forward unwaveringly. There is a tendency for exhibitions related to hibakusha to emphasize how tragic the event was, however, Kubota feels that this alone is not effective:

"I think it's a problem when focus is on just death or fear and people just shut down and can't consider anything more than that. It's extremely important to be able to look at what happened from a variety of angles."

Her words made me remember an international conference I attended on nuclear arms reduction several years ago. Local high school girls presented their research, harshly criticizing the United States' policies on nuclear weapons and the Middle East. The representative from the U.S. listened without any change in her expression, but to me, it was a sad scene. There is nothing wrong with criticism, but to me, the cold words of those girls seemed to be the mechanically repeated rhetoric of someone else.

Without being broken down and labeled in one category or another, I hope that Kubota's exhibition can evolve naturally. It's precisely because of the honest and humble nature of the event's theme of admitting to "not knowing" that I think will be the starting point for passing the experiences of Hiroshima on to future generations. (By Hiroshi Fuse, Expert Senior Writer, Editorial Board)

Listen to their unbearable suffering

September 14, 2017

Eliminating the nuclear threat

https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/09/14/national/eliminating-nuclear-threat/#.Wb4wJsZpGos

There is a way to protect ourselves from nuclear weapons.

And that is to listen. Really listen.

Listen to the voices of the people who experienced their aftermath.

We will never muster the political will necessary to rid the world of nuclear weapons unless we understand what these ultimate instruments of violence really are.

We have banned landmines, cluster bombs and chemical weapons. Yet terrifying arsenals of nuclear weapons continue to exist, with nearly 2,000 on hair-trigger alert, the weapon of choice of the world's most powerful nations.

A recently published book, "Hiroshima and Nagasaki: That We Never Forget," brings together the voices and stories of more than 50 men and women who lived through the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. So many personal stories — different perspectives on the same terrible event — create a real, complex and human picture.

And these people, known as hibakusha, are the ones who survived. The fate of those closer to the hypocenters was much worse.

We must not flinch from the reality of human suffering. If we do so, we may slip closer to repeating it, believing that these bombs are "just another weapon."

The very real threat of the use of nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia is completely unacceptable to anyone who understands their reality, especially when we know that today's nuclear weapons are hugely more destructive than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Unbearable suffering

So what is the real human impact described on these pages?

First are the intolerable levels of pain and suffering. The extreme heat obliterated people, melted eyeballs and caused skin to peel off, leaving suppurating burns that took months or years to heal. Masaki Morimoto, who experienced the bombing of Nagasaki when he was 12, recalled: "Maggots crawling around my wounds and bees coming to drink my pus — I was a living corpse. I was completely miserable."

Extreme levels of radiation led to new depths of suffering. Senji Kawai, 15 when the bomb destroyed Hiroshima, stated: "I would run my fingers through my hair, and it would come out in clumps. … My gums turned purple and started to rot. They bled easily, and pus would ooze out. When I brushed my teeth, pieces of jelly-like flesh would get caught in my toothbrush."

Almost all medical facilities had also been destroyed. People resorted to herbal remedies, simple antiseptic or even quack remedies such as ground human bone.

The people whose accounts are collected in this book all experienced the bombings as children or teenagers. Not only did they suffer physically, but they also missed the opportunity for education and often struggled in low-level jobs to make ends meet. They also suffered from persistent discrimination.

Senji Kawai concluded: "I still hate the war for making me like this. … I can't ignore my feelings because that bomb ruined my life. I have suffered continually from it all my life."

These depictions also include the mundane, a woman whose life was saved because she carried on peeling a potato and didn't rush outside to look at the planes, and another who returned home to sew on a button.

Masaichi Egawa, Korean name Lee Jong-gun, was 17 when he experienced the Hiroshima bombing. He described how the human mind reacts in a tragedy of this unfathomable proportion: “The whole world was in darkness. … As my sight gradually returned, I doubted my eyes. Whole buildings had completely disappeared. The scene was unbelievable. My next action was to look for my lunch box. When something beyond comprehension happens, human beings turn their attention to something ordinary.”

He, like many, described terrible regrets, over failing to rescue someone trapped under a collapsed building as fire was spreading. “I just kept going, pretending I didn’t hear her. Every time I recall this, I get angry at myself. … This is an emotional conflict that will never be gone from my mind.”

One woman related how sunsets still trigger memories of the red skies over Hiroshima as the city burned fiercely for three days and nights.

Common to all hibakusha is fear and anxiety throughout their lives regarding the impact of radiation. Reviewing “Hiroshima and Nagasaki: That We Never Forget,” Masao Tomonaga, director emeritus of the Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Hospital, commented: “The anxiety they still feel regarding potential aftereffects emerging in their own bodies or genetic effects in their offspring is quite beyond imagination. … An instantaneous exposure in August 1945 has kept survivors imprisoned by aftereffects for 70 years.”

Due to the stigma of being a hibakusha, many people hid the truth, not even telling their spouse that they had experienced the bombing. For women especially, this led to unbearable anxiety as the birth of a child neared, for fear of radiation-related disabilities.

An end to nuclear bombs

Every account concludes with the absolute determination to ensure that such hell is never experienced again. Shigeru Nonoyama puts it most succinctly: “Human beings do not need atomic bombs.”

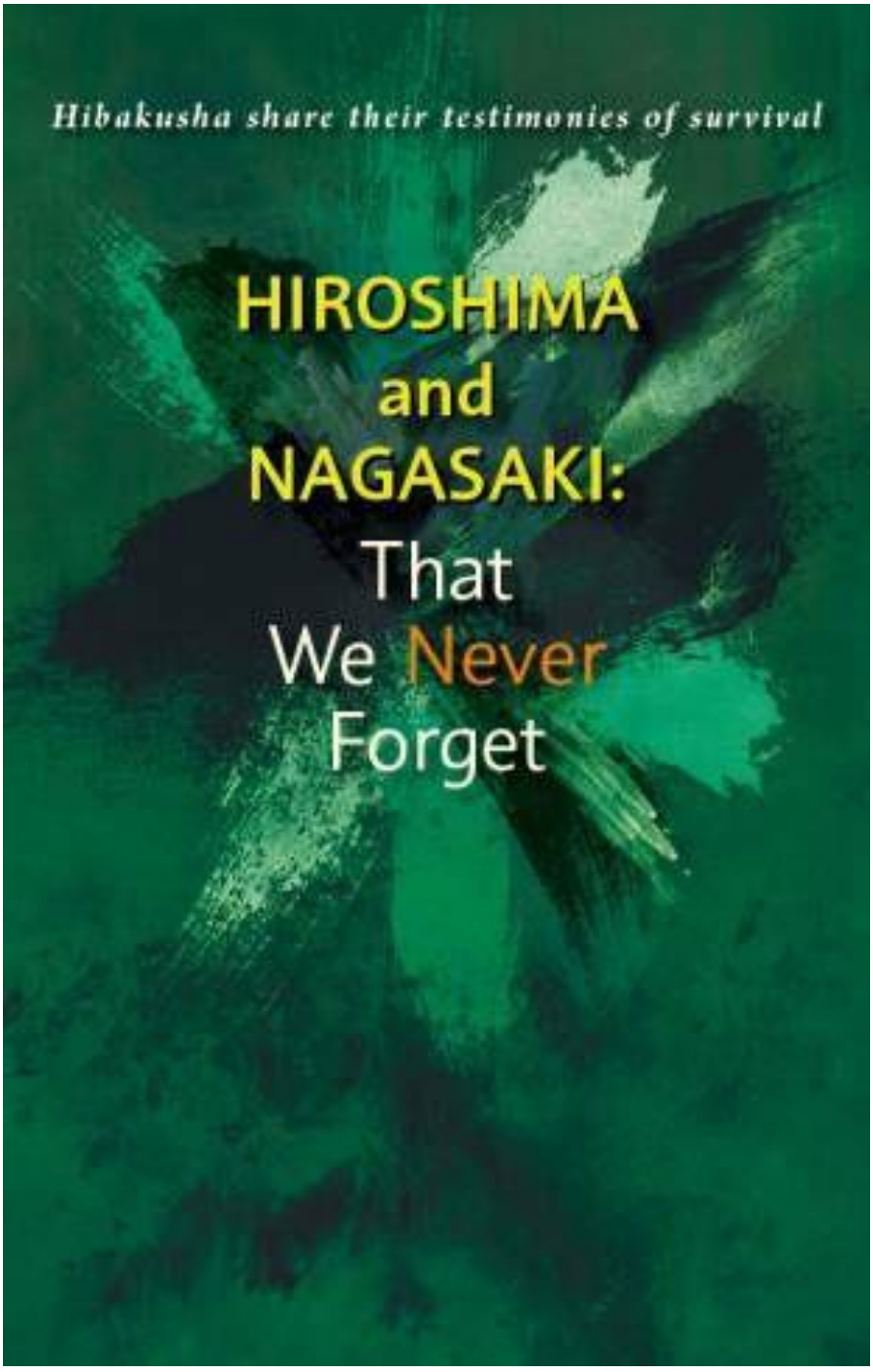
The voices of the survivors have grown increasingly important in the quest to ban nuclear weapons, even as they age and become fewer in number. During the negotiations toward the adoption by the U.N. of the landmark treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons in July this year, Setsuko Thurlow, now 85, and other hibakusha were key voices pushing the debate forward.

Overwhelmed with emotion, she welcomed the formal adoption of the treaty. She asked delegates to pause to honor those who perished in 1945 or died later from radiation-related illnesses. “Each person who died had a name. Each person was loved by someone,” she told the crowded conference room. “I’ve been waiting for this day for seven decades, and I am overjoyed that it has finally arrived. This is the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons.”

The treaty will be open for signing by governments from Sept. 20 during the U.N. General Assembly. Its preamble specifically references the suffering of the hibakusha. Now, more than ever, we must listen to their heartfelt plea for a world free from nuclear weapons.

Kikue Shiota describes the tragic aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. From a series of women’s testimonies

https://youtu.be/VYsZTYfCAfc



*"*Hiroshima and Nagasaki: That We Never Forget*" is published by Daisanbunmeisha. It is available on amazon.co.jp, priced at ¥1,620 for the paperback and ¥464 for the Kindle version. The accounts it contains were gathered by members of the Soka Gakkai peace committees and compiled for this English language volume by the organization's youth division. Soka Gakkai has been promoting the abolition of nuclear weapons for 60 years, since the Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons made by its second president Josei Toda on Sept. 8, 1957.*

Jackson Browne's anti-nuke message (and songs)

Singer Jackson Browne highlights nuclear dangers ahead of Japan concert
https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171017/p2a/00m/0na/015000c#cxrecs_s
October 17, 2017 (Mainichi Japan)
Jackson Browne, an American singer-songwriter with an anti-nuclear message, is gearing up for his first performance in Japan in 2 1/2 years.
Browne, 69, is set to play at Bunkamura Orchard Hall in Tokyo's Shibuya district on the evening of Oct. 17.
A representative singer of the U.S. West Coast, Browne played a leading role in the "No Nukes" concerts held in New York in September 1979 -- the first anti-nuclear rock concerts staged after the Three Mile Island nuclear accident earlier that year.
In a Tokyo concert on March 11, 2015, four years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that triggered the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Browne chose for his last song a number titled "Before the Deluge," which hints at nuclear conflict. He dedicated it to the people fighting damage from the nuclear accident. Browne had played the same song in 1979 at No Nukes, which also featured the Doobie Brothers and Bruce Springsteen among other artists.
He said the song, which came out before the Three Mile Island accident, was not just about nuclear war. "It was compounding ecological disasters, not just nuclear, but also famine and epidemics." As for the prediction of such disasters, he added that there was "no pleasure, no pride, for being right."
In the summer after the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Browne paid special attention to Japan, and held his first anti-nuclear power plant and support concert in 32 years between the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
He said he was relieved the previous time he came to Japan, as the Fukushima disaster was being reported extensively. He said that in his country, he didn't have newspaper stories every day about the ongoing disaster in Japan and had been told before coming that people were afraid to bring it up.
"I was surprised that there were so many articles," he said.
Recently, however, there has been a strong tide running against the "world without nuclear weapons" espoused by former U.S. President Barack Obama with the emergence of his successor, Donald Trump, and the problem of North Korea's development of missiles and nuclear weapons. Separately, the Japanese government is moving ahead with the reactivation of nuclear reactors in western Japan even though the state of melted nuclear fuel at the crippled Fukusima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant remains unknown.
Browne notes that even if the government and the nuclear plant operator reach an agreement on compensation for those affected by the nuclear disaster, taxpayers would eventually have to foot the bill. "Really no one can make a restitution to people for this country's mistake. In the end there is no country that would insure a nuclear power plant." He expresses reservations about the provocative exchange between North Korea and the United States which seems to toy with the idea of using nukes.
Since the 1980s, Browne has been involved in sounding the alarm in social and political circles regarding U.S. foreign policy and the pollution of the oceans through the discarding of waste. The singer-songwriter says "songs can do a lot to raise people's spirits," though he adds, "It's not a complete vehicle for the information you need."
He says it is tough work turning current issues into songs, but adds that Japanese listeners warmly support artists who continue their own style of work.
Browne will give three performances in Tokyo, and one each in Nagoya, Osaka and Hiroshima, and will be selling his album "The Road East -- Live in Japan."

Nuclear cattle

This photo provided to the Mainichi Shimbun shows a scene from the film "Nuclear Cattle."

November 9, 2017

'Nuclear Cattle': Film on Fukushima farmers hits cinema screens
https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171109/p2a/00m/0na/014000c
A documentary film on the struggles of cattle farmers in the wake of the Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster in 2011 has been released across the country.
"Nuclear Cattle," directed by Tamotsu Matsubara, 58, focuses on the farmers' response after the government ordered them to slaughter livestock exposed to radiation due to the disaster.
Matsubara spent about five years making the film, repeatedly returning to affected areas in Fukushima Prefecture from June 2011 onward, capturing the thoughts of the cattle farmers.
"People whose voices aren't normally heard often ring the truest," Matsubara says, referring to the people he met.
As a consequence of the disaster, the farmers have been unable to sell cattle exposed to radiation, and are also losing money on food for the animals. Yet in some cases, they continue to keep the cows.
Among those featured in the film is a man who refuses to cave in to the government's order to slaughter the cattle. On the other hand, there are others who have completed the slaughter, coming out with statements such as, "I will never rear an animal again in my life."
"Nuclear Cattle" is Matsubara's first feature film. In making the movie, he was also supported by veteran producer Takeshi Shiba, 53, who has vast experience in the field of documentary production.
"There was no need to sugarcoat the raw statements made by the farmers. I just wanted to spread the voices of these people, and for them to be accepted across the nation," Shiba explains.
Meanwhile, the director says, "These people believe money alone won't help them find a solution, and that's where we can find how precious their way of life as human beings is."
"Nuclear Cattle" can be seen in Tokyo at POLEPOLE higashinakano until Nov. 10.

Hiroshima Notes by Kenzaburo Oe

November 11, 2017

Hiroshima Notes': Kenzaburo Oe on Hiroshima and the U.S. Occupation
by Damian Flanagan
In 1963, 28-year-old novelist and rising star Kenzaburo Oe was sent to Hiroshima to report on the rancorous split between political groups calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.
Hiroshima Notes, by Kenzaburo Oe.
192 pages
GROVE ATLANTIC, Nonfiction.
It would be the first of multiple visits to Hiroshima and an ongoing contemplation of the deep trauma the people of Hiroshima had endured in the 18 years since the nuclear Holocaust. Reflecting upon their misery and mistreatment gave Oe the strength to search for the light in his own personal moment of darkness when his first child was born with a severe head abnormality.
Both the American Occupation authorities and the local government had been concerned to paint an absurdly optimistic and censored picture of post-disaster Hiroshima. By the autumn of 1945, it was declared that all those expected to die from radiation had already died.
For 10 years there was scarcely any public discussion of the bomb — the local newspaper did not even have movable type for the words "atomic bomb" or "radioactivity." Yet a profusion of victims continued to die from radioactivity and leukemia, and over 1,000 young women hid their scarred faces in shame in Hiroshima back rooms.
The stories Oe records, such as the 4-year-old boy exposed to the bomb in 1945 who died of leukemia 20 years later, and whose fiancee committed suicide two weeks after his death, speak powerfully of a community suffering enduring physical and psychological abuse. This book is Oe's plangent call for the true aftermath of Hiroshima to be eternally remembered.
Read archived reviews of Japanese classics at jtimes.jp/essential.

The Doomsday Machine

To all endorsers of the Montreal Declaration:
Daniel Ellsberg, the man who leaked the Pentagon Papers,
has written a powerful and important new book entitled -
The Doomsday Machine – Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner.
Here is a link to an enlightening one-hour interview with Ellsberg
that was broadcast on The Current (CBC radio) February 1, 2018.
The subject? The utter insanity of possessing nuclear weapons.
Just click on the first audio link that appears on the following web site:
https://tinyurl.com/ydz8jdvh **["listen"]**
Gordon Edwards, PhD, President,
Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.
www.ccnr.org

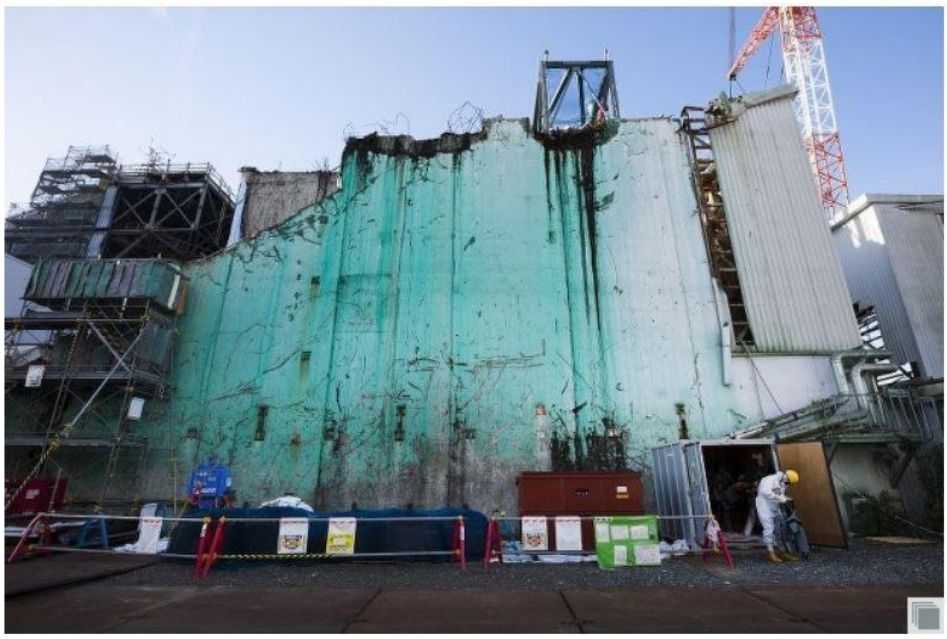
Just a little bit of nuke deterrence?

February 5, 2017

VOX POPULI: Just a little bit of nuclear annihilation is a mad idea
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201802050040.html
Making smaller nuclear weapons to create a greater deterrence is a preposterous idea.
Tatsuichiro Akizuki, a doctor who survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, has just penned his thoughts after watching the initial screening of a documentary depicting the nuclear destruction of that city and Hiroshima in 1945.
The film shows a desolate landscape with heaps of charred roof tiles lying amid the ruined city.
But some viewers have complained that scenes showing humans are scarce.
"You can't describe the atomic-bombed Nagasaki or Hiroshima without human victims," one said.
Later, scenes of survivors receiving medical treatment were added, but Akizuki was not happy with the result. There were images of patients with burns covering their entire bodies and also people with horrific wounds.
In the aftermath of the atomic bombing, however, "the earth and rivers were filled with throngs of such people," Akizuki wrote.
There were certain aspects of the devastation that could not be described in the film.
More then 70 years since the atomic bombs were dropped on the cities, there are still huge arsenals of nuclear weapons in the world and something called a "nuclear strategy" is being developed. The U.S. administration of President Donald Trump recently unveiled nuclear policy guidelines for the next five to 10 years.
The new U.S. nuclear strategy calls for developing smaller nuclear weapons in that their use will be more acceptable. The idea being that if they are "easier to use" it enhances the U.S. nuclear deterrent.
Some news reports have said these smaller nukes would have a quarter of the destructive power of the bomb that devastated Nagasaki.
The military logic of considering such nuclear arms as "easier to use" is simply shocking.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell once rejected this kind of thinking.
“No sane leader would ever want to cross that line to using nuclear weapons,” Powell said in an interview with The Asahi Shimbun about five years ago. “And, if you are not going to cross that line, then these things are basically useless.”
The vision of a world without nuclear weapons was an extension of his line of reasoning.
The current U.S. administration has taken its thinking in the opposite direction and argued that if nuclear weapons are hard to use they should be made easier to use.
The administration claims the new nuclear policy is a strategic response to nuclear threats from Russia and other nations that have indicated their willingness to use nuclear arms.
Does the Trump administration intend to start a nuclear game of chicken in which players more willing to push the nuclear button win?
Is there any room for humans in this view?

Joe Nishizawa publishes photos taken inside Fukushima plant



The building housing reactor No. 3 of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant still shows stark signs of the disaster in September 2016. (Photo by Joe Nishizawa, courtesy of Tokyo Electric Power Co.)

February 15, 2018
Photo collection shot inside Fukushima nuke plant to be released in March
Photographer Joe Nishizawa will offer a rare look inside the Fukushima nuclear plant damaged in the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster with the release this March of a photo book recording of decommissioning work over a 3 1/2-year period.

- 【In Photos】Photo book offers rare view inside Fukushima nuke plant
- 【Related】TEPCO unveils footage of deposits inside Fukushima reactor
- 【Related】Once severely damaged Fukushima reactor building opened to media to showcase progress

- 【Related】'For a nostalgic future': Spaniard snaps Tohoku's past, post-3.11 present in 360 degrees

Published by Misuzu Shobo, "Decommissioning Fukushima: A Photographer's Journey into the Depths of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant" will present roughly 150 photos of workers in protective gear and restorative efforts, arranged to show the passage of time. "I want to convey the scene exactly as it is," the Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture-based photographer explains.
For the last 15 years, Nishizawa has taken photos of steel work factories, expressways and other construction scenes to cover Japan at various work sites. After the nuclear disaster occurred on March 11, 2011, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) released photos but they were blurred and difficult to make out. Nishizawa said he felt the need to document the state of the reactor for future generations. After negotiating with TEPCO, the photographer was granted access to the plant roughly once a month.
Wearing a mask and a protective suit covering his entire body, he first stepped foot on the grounds of the nuclear plant in July 2014. At the time, there was still debris on the premises scattered along the coastline and the destruction from the accident was still starkly evident. Once, a worker at whom he pointed his camera glared back and asked, "Just what are you photographing?"
Still, he continued to document the equipment used to purify water contaminated by radioactive materials, as well as the construction site filled with tanks of processed water. Along with the flow of time, Nishizawa also sensed the gradual progress of decommissioning efforts. Still, radiation levels around the reactor buildings are high, and the difficult labor conditions continue to this day.
"The decommissioning won't end with this generation," says Nishizawa. "We can't afford to let the accident fade into the past, so I will continue taking photographs."

Anime: An "affable note" to boast Fukushima's safety

February 28, 2018

Fukushima makes anime to counter harmful rumors
https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20180228_28/
Japan's Fukushima Prefecture has produced animated films stressing the safety of its agricultural and fishery products to dispel overseas rumors about radioactive contamination from the 2011 nuclear accident.

The prefecture has been trying to expand the international markets for its farm produce and seafood. The main challenge is to refute the negative rumors that have persisted since the nuclear accident.

The 5 "anime" films, each lasting about 4 minutes, are aimed at promoting the safety and quality of local peaches, rice, beef and other items.

In the films, high school girls play the roles of the food items and work hard together to improve their taste.

The prefectural government also plans to make available English, Chinese, Spanish and French versions, which will be shown for the first time at an event in Hong Kong in March.

These versions will also be posted on the Internet.

A prefectural official says the films represent the aspirations of food producers in Fukushima and will convey the safety of their products on an affable note, mainly to younger generations abroad.

Agatsuma's "Tremorings of hope"

Coping with life after disaster: The subjects in 'Tremorings of Hope' are fairly direct in describing their experiences after the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. | © PEACETREE PRODUCTS

March 7, 2018

'Tremorings of Hope': The aftershocks linger in a town devastated by 2011 disaster
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2018/03/07/films/film-reviews/tremorings-hope-aftershocks-linger-town-devastated-2011-disaster/#.WqEUCXwiGos
by Mark Schilling
Contributing Writer
After the Great East Japan Earthquake and resulting nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011, dozens of documentary filmmakers headed north to the devastated Tohoku region, specifically the hard-hit coastal areas of Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate prefectures. One filmmaker, however, had already been filming there for years: Miyagi native Kazuki Agatsuma.
Starting as a student at Tohoku Gakuin University in 2005, Agatsuma had traveled regularly to Hadenya, a tiny fishing port in Miyagi Prefecture, to study the O-sususama, a festival held annually on the second

Sunday of March. For three years he also shot footage that became the basis for his 2014 documentary "The People Living in Hadenya."

The tsunami, however, destroyed all but one of the village's 80 homes and killed 16 residents. New York Times reporter Martin Fackler, visited Hadenya soon after and wrote admiringly about how the villagers "drew uniquely on the tight bonds of their once-tidy village" and "quickly reorganized themselves."

Agatsuma's latest documentary, "Tremorings of Hope," subverts the "harmonious Japanese" narrative of the Western media while reporting in depth on the Hadenya community in crisis. He is not a detached, objective observer, however. When he tries to raise funds online to help Hadenya revive the O-sususama, whose centerpiece is a traditional lion dance, he offends some villagers who view his efforts as outsider charity. Turmoil ensues.

From a macro perspective, the film over-dramatizes the politics of holding a small village festival. But Agatsuma, who spent 12 years on this project, also delivers the telling micro moments that capture a mood, tell a story and illuminate a larger problem.

From a plain-speaking woman who is left to manage the family orchard on her own, to a young former fisherman earnestly explaining why he left the village, Agatsuma's subjects are interesting as individuals. The film also examines larger local issues such as a long-debated plan to rebuild the village on higher land, and attempts to revive the fishery that was once the core of the local economy.

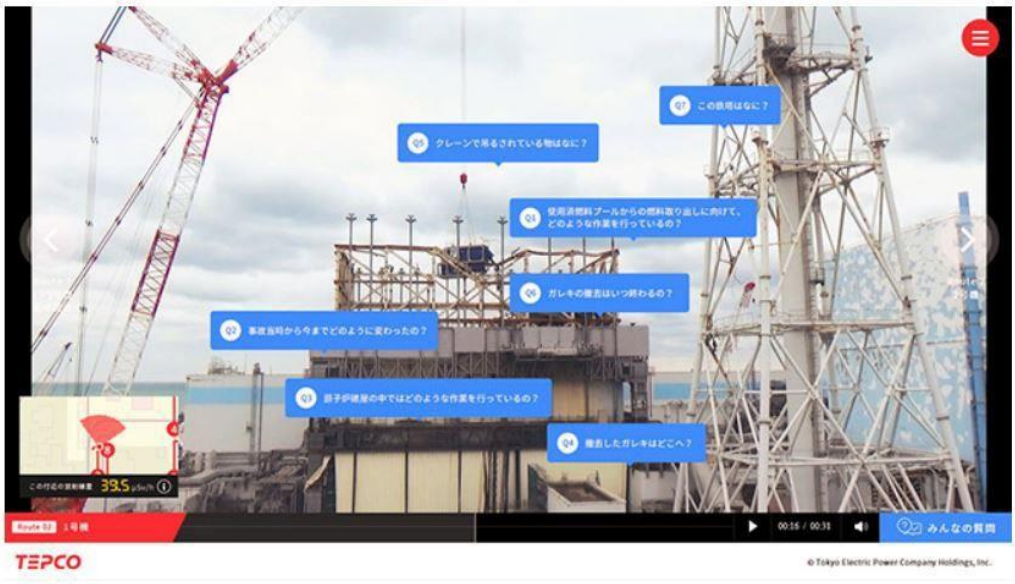
Among the insights to emerge is that folks in Hatenya may be tough and hard-working, but in early 2012, when much of the film unfolds, many are also stressed and unhappy. Neighbors once close are now scattered, with many living uncomfortably in temporary housing.

Meanwhile, fishermen who once worked for themselves are now forced into uneasy cooperation, harvesting *wakame* seaweed together and sharing their earnings. "They've become like salarymen," observes the narration. "We fishermen are lone wolves," says one, with a tight grin.

The festival, we are told, brings people together and helps heal the wounds of the disaster. "It's been one year, we can't always be victims," says a woman. For her and many others the familiar lion dance signals a return to normality. But how to hold it when the tsunami washed everything away? Some villagers propose pooling their funds to buy the needed materials. Others counter that outside financial support is available, lessening the burden on the community.

These and other differences cause strains and threaten eruptions, but they also make "Tremorings of Hope" compelling viewing as the momentous date for the first O-sususama since the disaster nears. In the village, the not-so-peaceful village, will the lion dance tonight?

Helping to understand the situation at Fukushima Daiichi?



Explanations are provided if the questions are clicked when passing through elevated land in front of the No. 1 reactor. (Captured from Tokyo Electric Power Co. website)

May 5, 2018

TEPCO offers virtual tour of Fukushima No. 1 plant on website

http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201805050001.html

By HIROSHI ISHIZUKA/ Staff Writer

FUKUSHIMA--The crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant is open for all to explore in a virtual tour on operator Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s website.

TEPCO released the "Inside Fukushima Daiichi" feature, only available on personal computers, so visitors can feel as if they are touring the decommissioning venue by car.

The service is aimed at helping more people understand the current state of the plant, also known as Fukushima Daiichi, after the nuclear crisis triggered by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

While visitors can tour the plant grounds on the website, the radiation level around the displayed area is shown in the lower left portion of the monitor.

Front and side views of the No. 1 to No. 4 reactors, which suffered serious damage, can be seen up close. In some sections, images taken both recently and immediately after the disaster are shown to offer comparisons. Explanations of the plant are provided in Q&A format for some areas as well.

A 360-degree view of the inside of the No. 5 reactor building, which has almost the same structure as the No. 1 to No. 4 reactors, and other facilities is also offered.

TEPCO is looking to provide an English-language version in the future.

The virtual tour is available at **(http://www.tepco.co.jp/insidefukushimadaiichi/index-j.html**).

Tapes from crew of Enola Gay bomber

The crew of the B-29 bomber "Enola Gay," which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, poses for a picture. Pilot Paul Tibbets is third from right in the back row. (Photo courtesy of Ari M. Beser)

August 4, 2018

Interview tapes of American airmen who dropped A-bomb on Hiroshima found

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180804/p2a/00m/0na/008000c

The crew of the B-29 bomber "Enola Gay," which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, poses for a picture. Pilot Paul Tibbets is third from right in the back row. (Photo courtesy of Ari M. Beser)

HIROSHIMA -- Interview tapes and their transcripts of American airmen who dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945 have been discovered and donated to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the Mainichi Shimbun has learned.

- 【Related】20% of A-bomb disease reauthorization turned down by local governments
- 【Related】Hiroshima Atomic-Bombing Archives (Part 1)
- 【Related】Envoys from 85 nations to attend Hiroshima A-bomb memorial ceremony

According to a transcript of the recordings, Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the B-29 bomber "Enola Gay," told the interviewer that the Hiroshima mission was secret and that the crew was carrying cyanide tablets for killing themselves if needed. The pilot said that he tasted lead in his mouth the moment the bomb detonated, and felt a "big relief."

Museum officials say the existence of those tapes and transcripts had never before been confirmed, adding that they are important as they depict in detail the situation inside the bomber and the psychological state of the crew.

The records include 27 tapes spanning about 30 hours, and 570 pages of transcripts. They were donated to the museum in June last year by the bereaved family of a Japanese person who had owned them. A

memo left with the items suggests that they are copies of records made for the 1977 book "Enola Gay: Mission to Hiroshima" written by British authors Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts.
The tapes contain voices of five people, including Tibbets and Thomas Ferebee, the bombardier who pushed the button to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. A memoir written by Jacob Beser, who was aboard both the Enola Gay and the Bockscar, the B-29 that dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, was also included.
According to the donated records, the interviewer asked in detail how the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. When asked why the crew members carried handguns, Tibbets explained that they were for protection, and revealed that they had cyanide tablets, too, to kill themselves to avoid capture by the Imperial Japanese Army in case the aircraft crashed. This indicates that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was indeed a highly confidential mission.
The Enola Gay took off from a U.S. base on Tinian Island in the Pacific in the early hours of Aug. 6, 1945 and made its way to the target -- the T-shaped Aioi Bridge in the Hiroshima city center. The "Little Boy" uranium bomb detonated at 8:15 a.m. Tibbets is quoted as saying in the records that at the moment of the explosion, "I got the brilliance, I tasted it. Yeh, I could taste it. It tasted like lead. And this was because of the fillings in my teeth. So that's radiation, see. So I got this lead taste in my mouth and that was a big relief -- I knew she had blown."
After dropping the bomb, the Enola Gay made a rapid evasive right turn but the shockwaves hit the fuselage, according to Tibbets. "If you can imagine yourself inside a tin building and somebody comes along on the outside and hits it with a hammer, you get the sound effect," he recalled. The pilot also said he saw the mushroom cloud from the bomb through the aircraft's window.
The museum is considering releasing the audio tapes and having experts analyze the recordings after getting approval from the people concerned. Museum curator Ryo Koyama said, "The records contain vivid testimonies by each and every crew member (of the Enola Gay) and has historic value."
(Japanese original by Shun Teraoka, Hiroshima Bureau and Akira Okubo, Osaka City News Department)

Virtual reality experience of Hiroshima bombing

August 6, 2018
Japanese students use VR to recreate moments A-bomb fell on Hiroshima
http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201808060060.html
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
FUKUYAMA, Hiroshima Prefecture--It's a sunny summer morning in the city of Hiroshima. Cicadas chirp in the trees. A lone plane flies high overhead. Then a flash of light, followed by a loud blast. Buildings are flattened and smoke rises from crackling fires under a darkened sky.
Over two years, a group of Japanese high school students has been painstakingly producing a five-minute virtual reality experience that recreates the sights and sounds of Hiroshima before, during and after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city 73 years ago Monday.
By transporting users back in time to the moment when a city was turned into a wasteland, the students and their teacher hope to ensure that something similar never happens again.
The Aug. 6, 1945, bombing of Hiroshima killed 140,000 people. Three days later, a second U.S. atomic bomb killed 70,000 people in Nagasaki. Japan surrendered six days after that, ending World War II.

"Even without language, once you see the images, you understand," said Mei Okada, one of the students working on the project at a technical high school in Fukuyama, a city about 100 kilometers east of Hiroshima. "That is definitely one of the merits of this VR experience."
Wearing virtual reality headsets, users can take a walk along the Motoyasu River prior to the blast and see the businesses and buildings that once stood there. They can enter the post office and the Shima Hospital courtyard, where the skeletal remains of a building now known as the Atomic Bomb Dome stand on the river's banks, a testament to what happened.
The students, who belong to the computation skill research club at Fukuyama Technical High School, were born more than half a century after the bombing. Yuhi Nakagawa, 18, said he initially didn't have much interest in what happened when the bombs were dropped; if anything, it was a topic he had avoided.
"When I was creating the buildings before the atomic bomb fell and after, I saw many photos of buildings that were gone. I really felt how scary atomic bombs can be," he said. "So while creating this scenery, I felt it was really important to share this with others."
To recreate Hiroshima, the students studied old photographs and postcards and interviewed survivors of the bombing to hear their experiences and get their feedback on the VR footage. They used computer graphics software to add further details such as lighting and the natural wear and tear on building surfaces.
"Those who knew the city very well tell us it's done very well. They say it's very nostalgic," said Katsushi Hasegawa, a computer teacher who supervises the club. "Sometimes they start to reminisce about their memories from that time, and it really makes me glad that we created this."
The students are working through summer vacation in a classroom without air conditioning, as temperatures reach 35 degrees. With the survivors aging, Hasegawa said, it's a race against time.

Archives project of lessons from 3/11 disaster

September 12, 2018

Fukushima prof., residents seek to establish an archive of nuke disaster lessons
https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180912/p2a/00m/0na/028000c
KATSURAO, Fukushima -- A Fukushima University professor and his team are gathering materials for an archive project to pass on the lessons learned from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear disaster in this prefecture in northeastern Japan.

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In a March 2017 plan finalized by the Fukushima Prefectural Government, the archives will be inaugurated in the summer of 2020 at a cost of approximately 5.5 billion yen in the town of Futaba, which has been rendered "difficult to live" due to radioactive fallout from the triple core meltdowns at Tokyo

Electric Power Co. (TEPCO)'s Fukushima No.1 Nuclear Power Plant in March 2011. The facility will have a total floor space of 5,200 square meters with areas for exhibitions, management and research, storage, training sessions and holding meetings. The design was modeled after a similar center in the western Japan city of Kobe that was built to store records of the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake, but with more focus on the nuclear disaster than the quake itself.

Professor Kenji Yaginuma of Fukushima University's Fukushima Future Center for Regional Revitalization and his team are visiting places affected by the nuclear accident and collecting testimonies of residents, documents, pictures and images for the project.

Yaginuma recently interviewed Tetsuyama Matsumoto, 61, who used to be a cattle breeder in the village of Katsurao, to hear his story about how his cows had to be slaughtered after the nuclear accident.

"I can't believe they killed the cows without running any tests first," Matsumoto fumed about the action taken after the central government decided that all cattle inside the no-go zone, within a 20-kilometer radius of the crippled plant, had to be culled. All eight cattle Matsumoto was keeping had to be killed because his farm was inside the zone. "The cattle were supporting me and my family," Mastsumoto said as he looked over pictures of what happened after the disaster.

Yaginuma listened to Matsumoto's tale intently, using a video camera to record the interview. "The value of relevant documents goes up with testimonies," explained the professor.

On the same day, he also visited the village's board of education as well as the former municipal Katsurao Junior High School to confirm the existence of whiteboards with plans for March 2011 written on it as well as what was written on the blackboards at the school. The school held a graduation ceremony on March 11 that year, the day of the quake disaster. According to the professor, sometimes it takes months for some residents to build up enough confidence to give him some important papers they have.

Yaginuma's team is collecting just about anything that shows the daily lives of residents before the quake, or items that show what happened in the disaster and the ensuing nuclear accident, as well as materials indicative of post-disaster situations.

In November 2017, Yaginuma and his team visited the prefectural Ono Hospital in the town of Okuma, which is just 4 kilometers away from the nuclear plant and is still included in the "difficult-to-return" evacuation area designated by the government.

On the day of the earthquake seven and a half years ago, the hospital accepted many people injured by the jolt and the subsequent tsunami. But all patients and medical staff needed to evacuate at 7 a.m. the next morning using buses and ambulances after an evacuation order due to the nuclear accident was issued.

Near the clinic's entrance, papers with patients' names and conditions are posted on a whiteboard. Stands to hang intravenous drip bags are also scattered around, reminiscent of the tense atmosphere of the time.

"We want to make it possible for people to look back on and study the earthquake and nuclear accident from every angle based on these documents," said Yaginuma.

(Japanese original by Takuya Yoshida, Mito Bureau)

The face of Jizo

A still photo from the film "The Face of Jizo" (Image courtesy of The Face of Jizo Partners, 2003)

The Mainichi holding new int'l essay contest on Hiroshima A-bomb play 'The Face of Jizo'
http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180719/p2a/00m/0na/027000c
July 19, 2018 (Mainichi Japan)
The Mainichi is holding a new international essay contest on the theme of the play "The Face of Jizo," penned by the late Hisashi Inoue about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, for our young readers around the world. Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), is encouraging youths worldwide to take action toward a world free of nuclear weapons by using the play and the contest to spark their imagination and motivation. ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for its major role in realizing the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July of the same year.

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- 【Related】The Face of Jizo: Profiles of Hisashi Inoue and Roger Pulvers

The full script of the four-act play will be made available on The Mainichi website from Aug. 6 through Oct. 31, courtesy of copyright holder Yuri Inoue and Roger Pulvers, who translated the work into English. One act per day will be posted beginning on Aug. 3, making the entire play available by Aug. 6.
"The Face of Jizo" is considered a theatrical masterpiece of postwar Japan. After reading the accounts of several hundred atomic bomb survivors or hibakusha, Inoue decided to write the play not as a tragedy, but as a comedy, in order to convey the horror of the atomic bomb to as many people as possible.
The Mainichi Editorial Office shares Inoue's wish, and hopes that as many people as possible will read the script so that the tragedy endured by Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be remembered and never happen again.
The essays on the play must be no more than 1,000 words in English, and from readers between the ages of 13 and 23. The essays can be submitted to jizo@mainichi.co.jp. Entrants must include their name, address, date of birth, school, and school year, and the subject of the email must be "Face of Jizo Essay" followed by the entrant's name when submitting an essay. Submissions are limited to one per person.
The deadline for submitting the essays is Oct. 31, 2018, and entries will be judged by a panel including writer and film director Roger Pulvers, former Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba and The Mainichi Editor-in-Chief Hiroaki Wada. The winning essays will be announced via The Mainichi website on Dec. 1, 2018, and prizes worth 100 U.S. dollars each will be awarded to the top three essay writers. The contest is supported by Kyoto University of Foreign Studies and Sophia University.
(Please note the copyright for the winning essays will be transferred to the organizers of the contest.)

Hiroko Crary's documentary screenings tell the story of Fukushima

December 2, 2018

Translator brings post-disaster Fukushima Pref. to life through documentary screenings
https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20181201/p2a/00m/0na/035000c

NIHONMATSU, Fukushima -- A 46-year-old translator is giving free public documentary screenings both inside and outside of Japan, telling the story of this northeastern Japanese prefecture in the years since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster.

- 【Related】7 years after quake, tsunami, Fukushima town records legacy of disasters
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Hiroko Crary, born in the Fukushima Prefecture city of Nihonmatsu and currently living in the midwestern U.S. state of Michigan, feels strongly that she should do what she can for her home prefecture. Showing documentaries is a way for her to present the current conditions of her hometown to domestic and overseas audiences.

She held a screening event on Nov. 15 in Nihonmatsu. The 100 seats were quickly filled. Crary has previously hosted eight public screening events in various locations including Hawaii and the central Japan prefecture of Mie, but this was the first in Fukushima. She called out to the audience "to consider this occasion an opportunity to think over the time each person has spent since the disaster."

The 2011 tsunami engulfed towns on Japan's Pacific coast and triggered the triple-meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. It was just a year after Crary had settled in her husband's home country. She received an email from a friend working at the Fukushima prefectural government that the disaster was "not a laughing matter," and she paid close attention to news broadcastings.

"Is your family all right?" asked her mother-in-law. Crary was at loss for an answer. The U.S. Embassy in Tokyo had urged American citizens living within 80 kilometers of the nuclear plant to evacuate. Her parents' home in Nihonmatsu was about 76 kilometers from the stricken power station, and they had not evacuated. Her father explained during an internet phone call that "the Japanese government said evacuations are for those within 20 kilometers (of the plant)." Crary did not have any way of confirming if Nihonmatsu was safe.

The 46-year-old wished for her only son to know her hometown, while she yearned to understand Fukushima's current condition. Crary and her son began to live with her parents for four months of every year starting in 2013, when her son began elementary school. Children wore personal dosimeters. Guardians and school officials clashed over field trip routes. Crary learned about safety measures to cope with radiation, invisible to the human eye and causing her stress.

A friend recommended a movie which Crary saw in 2016 when she was in Japan -- and the film became a turning point. "Haru Yo Koi: Bears, Honey Bees and Akio-san," directed by Wataru Abiko, captures the struggles of a bear hunter to preserve tradition and nature in the disaster-affected Aizu region about 130 kilometers from the plant.

Crary saw pain and loss in a nearby resident she had never known. She bought the required equipment and hosted her first private screening event in Michigan that winter, encouraged by a Japanese-American friend in Hawaii.

Crary arranged a screening event in June this year in Honolulu, Hawaii, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Japanese immigrants arriving on the islands. "Mothers of Fukushima: Eiko & Yoshiko," directed by Mizue Furui, depicting feelings of women driven out from their hometown because of the nuclear accident, was added to the bill for the event.

Many members of the local Hawaiian "Fukushima Kenjinkai" prefectural natives association and people of Japanese descent participated. "I'm grateful I got to know the current state of Fukushima," one of the audience said in an answer to a survey. Crary felt she had found her own way of being involved in her hometown.

Meanwhile, she faces a hard time adding the English subtitles. Crary feels she isn't correctly translating the subtle differences in the Fukushima regional dialects. "It would be great if I can be of help as a translator from Fukushima," said Crary, as she seeks to spread understanding of Fukushima's reality to the world.

(Japanese original by Toshiki Miyazaki, Fukushima Bureau)

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