

# A Physician's Diary of the Atomic Bombing and its Aftermath

**Raisuke Shirabe, M.D.**

Professor of Surgery College of Medicine  
Nagasaki Medical University

Translated by Aloysius F. Kuo, M.D.

Edited by Fidelius R. Kuo

昭和二十年八月九日、

此日は長崎市にとって永久に





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Raisuke Shirabe, M.D.  
May 15, 1899—April 15, 1989



## Preface

The Nagasaki Association for Hibakushas' Medical Care (NASHIM) was established in 1992, with financial assistance from Nagasaki Prefecture and Nagasaki City, to provide relief for atomic bomb survivors (*hibakusha*) living overseas and victims of exposure to radiation due to accidents around the world. Since its inception, the NASHIM program has been cited in Nagasaki Prefecture's long-term plan and is now central to Nagasaki City's active policy for non-nuclear peace diplomacy. Supported by a team of specialists from the Nagasaki University School of Medicine and other institutions, NASHIM is a unique non-profit organization devoted to the medical relief of radiation victims, and it is gaining recognition both at home and abroad as an organization sending "peace information based on medical assistance" from Nagasaki to the international community. To ensure that Nagasaki's long experience in atomic medicine and wealth of research data on atomic bomb-related diseases is implemented effectively worldwide, special efforts have been made to provide training for physicians and scientists from abroad, particularly the former Soviet Union, and to bring radiation victims to Nagasaki for treatment, thereby contributing to international cooperation through hibakusha medical care. Still another activity of the organization is the publication of related works.

NASHIM published *Radiation Q & A* in Russian and *Nagasaki Symposium: Radiation and Human Health: Proposal from Nagasaki* in English in 1995 and 1996, respectively. Subsequent publications in Japanese include *The Environmental Radioactivity and the Health Status of Residents and Cattle in Mid-Kazakhstan* (1997), *Chernobyl: Myth and Reality* (1998) and *The Matter of Radioactive Contamination in Taiwan* (1999). NASHIM also produced a documentary video entitled *Kazakhstan Now*. To mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, an innovative photographic exhibition was held for two months at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. At the same time, the organization co-hosted the first Hiroshima-Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Exhibition in the cities of Semipalatinsk and Almaty. In this way NASHIM is promoting international exchange, assisting in the subsidized projects of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supporting various medical activities in Chernobyl and vicinity, and deepening friendship with the former Soviet Union at large.

NASHIM's publication project for the fiscal year 2000 is the present *A Physician's Diary of the Atomic Bombing and its Aftermath* by the late Dr. Raisuke Shirabe, a former Nagasaki Medical University professor who made heroic efforts to provide medical assistance in the chaos after the Nagasaki atomic bombing. This book follows last fiscal year's publication of an English translation of *Atomic Bomb Rescue and Relief Report* by the late Dr. Takashi Nagai, a former associate professor of radiology,

and it will serve as an ideal textbook for global-level studies on the Nagasaki atomic bombing. Nagasaki was devastated by the explosion on an atomic bomb at 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945, three days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The Nagasaki Medical University and its attached hospital, located only 500 to 800 meters from the hypocenter, suffered irreparable damage, and 897 faculty members, employees, students and nurses as well as 72 patients and visitors perished. By the end of 1945, the estimated number of deaths and injuries in the city had risen to 74,000 and 75,000, respectively. Acute radioactive poisoning was severe, and the survivors continue to this day to suffer from various late effects such as a high frequency of malignant tumors. The accurate recognition of past mistakes and the rigorous scientific analysis of current circumstances is essential to ensure that this calamity is never repeated. Throughout the present book we see how a physician, remaining calm in the confusion after the atomic bombing, grasped the extent of the devastation, made appropriate decisions, and carried through on these decisions quickly and resolutely. In this way the book is like a manual on emergency medical care in disaster situations. Dr. Raisuke Shirabe, Dr. Takashi Nagai and the many other medical personnel who treated the injured in the aftermath of the atomic bombing are not only our forebears from the Nagasaki Medical University but also shining beacons in the postwar recovery of this city. I would like to take this opportunity to express once more my prayers for the repose of the souls of the atomic bomb victims.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the faculty of the Nagasaki University School of Medicine for their kind permission and also Dr. Aloysius F. Kuo, Fidelius R. Kuo and others for their hard work in producing this translation. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing in 1995, NASHIM established The *Takashi Nagai Memorial Nagasaki Peace Award* to recognize, once every two years, significant contributions to hibakusha medical care in Japan and abroad. I sincerely hope that the present publication will help more people than ever to understand the reality of the atomic bombings and the importance of peace, and that, thereby, it will contribute to an international community of the 21st century imbued with a spirit of tolerance and cooperation.

Tetsuya Iseki, M.D.

President

Nagasaki Association for Hibakushas' Medical Care

*Nagasaki*  
*March 2002*

## Editorial Note

This publication is an English translation of the diary of the late Dr. Raisuke Shirabe, professor of surgery at Nagasaki Medical University. Handwritten in a hardcover B5-size notebook, the original diary begins on August 9, 1945, the day that an atomic bomb completely destroyed and burned the buildings of Nagasaki Medical University and killed approximately 900 faculty members, administrative staff and students, and it ends on October 26, 1945 with a clipping of a newspaper article reporting the re-establishment of Nagasaki Medical University.

As he states in his introduction, Professor Shirabe kept the diary in order to record his experiences in the wake of the atomic bombing and to make these available for the later compilation of formal documents. The diary was donated by the Shirabe family to Nagasaki University School of Medicine on the occasion of the 50th Memorial Service for Medical University Atomic Bomb Victims held on August 9, 1995. The alumni association of Nagasaki University School of Medicine reproduced and published the diary for the first time in 1995 and presented a copy to each person attending the memorial service.

The English translation of the diary is the work of Dr. Aloysius F. Kuo and his son Fidelius R. Kuo, who also translated the "Atomic Bomb Rescue and Relief Report" by Dr. Takashi Nagai. The translation was based on the above publication, but close examination of the two existing texts of the diary revealed a number of differences. I therefore revised the translators' manuscript on the basis of the original diary. For example, some of the dates were not written as headings in the original diary, although they were added as headings in the reproduced diary to help readers identify the respective dates. In the present publication, these dates are written as headings in parentheses. Other examples of dates used as headings follow those in the original diary.

I would like to thank the Shirabe family for allowing the use of Professor Shirabe's photograph taken at his office (date unknown). I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Brian Burke-Gaffney, professor of cross-cultural studies at the Nagasaki Institute for Applied Science, for lending photographs taken on October 15, 1946 by a *USS Bremerton* crew member and for assisting in the preparation of the final draft.

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*Nagasaki*  
*March 2002*







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