

vegetable shops. The colors disappeared from towns. Lovely lyrical paintings by artists like Nakahara Jun'ichi were forbidden. Fragile and delicate things became objects to be crushed.

The teachers who had been popular with the students left school. I heard later that it was because they could not agree with the educational policy of the new vice principal, who was one of the first to wear enthusiastically the national uniform for civilians. On the day that these teachers departed, the train station was so crowded with students, parents, and graduates sending them off that the police arrived to maintain order. The only other time this had happened was when the city's middle-school students had departed to work in military supply factories.

My physical endurance was at its limit. There was nothing to eat. When I was on the verge of malnutrition I heard voices talking about a "hundred-years war." No fighting spirit welled up in me. I was worn out. All I felt was despair.

A policeman went repeatedly to the house of the wife of a serviceman at the front under the pretext of patrolling the area. He forced himself on her, saying, "Do as I say." Geisha and waitresses were drafted to provide services to workers in munitions factories. The workers reveled in the fragrance of cosmetics for the first time in their lives.

The records in the town offices were burned up in air raids, causing lawlessness in the area. Land rights in the burned-out areas became unclear. The cunning roped off places on the street leading to the station, sold food piled up on boards, settled on empty lots of land, and, clawing their way up, expanded their shops.

"... I'll stop getting my hair panned; I'll no longer wear tall shoes; I'll wear wooden clogs. . . ." (This was a verse from "The Girl in Manchuria," which was sung then.) The other day my seventy-year-old sister-in-law and I were reminiscing and sang the song together, and we burst out laughing. If they had said "high heels" someone would have warned them not to use the enemy's language, so they had to say "tall shoes."

When I recall those days, it seems that the outrageous was considered normal. I wondered why this could have been so. I arrived at the term "time of crisis." So that was it. The routine, the everyday things were all denied, and the opposite went unchallenged. Now I understand. It was a time when we were forced to go against the natural feelings that we had about family love, beauty, truth, and goodness.

I urge you young people to read many books. The horror of war is written about in unexpected places,

Watanabe Fukumi, sixty (f),  
retired, Nagaoka

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## Chapter 7

# The Bombing of Japan

Many of the letters in this book have described a variety of atrocities perpetrated by Japanese soldiery on the other peoples of East Asia, as well as on the prisoners of war who fell into their hands, from the beginning of the so-called China Incident to the end of World War II. A second major theme has been life for Japanese people under the restrictions of government dominated by the military, one that single-mindedly mobilized the country to fight a continuing and disastrous war. But there are other horrors that the letters reveal. In the following section, the writers tell of their own suffering and that of others in the mass bombings of Japanese cities carried out by the U.S. Air Force and with navy airpower. These, of course, culminated in the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. The last six of the letters, selected from many others, seem to sum up the suffering of the victims of the A-bomb, as well as their incomprehension at what was being done to them.

Yet the A-bombs were merely the final chapter in a campaign of fire-bombing against civilian targets almost without precedent in modern history. The bombing of Dresden, Germany, is often cited as a classic example of the wanton destruction of a city and its people in the guise of military assault. But Japan had many Dresdens. Tokyo was systematically razed by the B-29 bombings, which began in late 1944 and continued until the end of the War. Other cities were equally harshly dealt with. When I visited Nagoya for the first time in October of 1945, what had once been a flourishing city was literally a desert of rubble and smashed houses. The same was true of much of Osaka and other Japanese cities.

Little effort was made by American bombers to concentrate on military targets. Rather, mass firebombings of Japanese cities was part of the systematic campaign to destroy the will to fight of an entire nation. Perhaps one can understand why this was done in the closing years of a war that had been fought on both sides with savagery and on the Japanese side with

almost unbelievable cruelty. We must nonetheless wonder at the ghastly totality of these attacks. The bombers left nothing behind in their zeal to obliterate every trace of the country they were attacking. Some civilians were even machine-gunned by low-flying navy aircraft. The worst damage, of course, came from the carpet firebombing of the B-29s, silver forms flying securely beyond the range of Japanese antiaircraft, oddly beautiful in the moonlight before they rained down destruction on the land below. The devastation was indiscriminate. Families were literally roasted alive in their homes in attacks from which there was no escape.

This book is a record of the War as experienced by the Japanese. It would be improper for an editor to impose his own commentary on these accounts other than to set the context for a new generation. Yet, as one of the early occupiers of Japan and one who thus visited Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and other bombed-out cities, I retain an abiding horror of the terrible havoc and slaughter wrought by my fellow Americans, secure in their mastery of the air.

The letters reveal, even at the distance of four decades, that there was relatively little personal resentment among the Japanese. The firebombing and even the dropping of the A-bombs were regarded almost as natural calamities. There was perhaps an almost unspoken consciousness of the fact that Japan's own army had perpetrated unspeakable horrors on others to provoke this vengeance. Yet the suffering and the horror brought on Japan in 1944 and 1945 cannot be erased with the passage of time.

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## The First Doolittle Air Raid

In 1942 I was a staff member of the overseas posting contact office of the general affairs subsection located on the rooftop of the Yokosuka navy arsenal. I was conducting business by navy telephone with the staff of the Sasebo naval arsenal shortly after noon on 18 April 1942.

Suddenly, the air raid alert sounded. Soon loud booms shook the entire building. This attack on Tokyo was the first time the Japanese mainland had been bombed by the American army's Major General Doolittle. In my surprise I looked out the window and saw a ferocious cloud of black smoke rising rapidly from the Number-1 dock directly in front of my building. I went out on the roof and peered down to see that the warship *Daiho*, then in dry dock, had been hit. Large numbers of wounded were being carried on stretchers to the infirmary next to the docks.

As I gazed stupefied at the scene, I heard a voice behind me say, "The enemy is quite something." I turned around to see a short flag officer smiling ruefully. It was the arsenal chief Naval Vice Admiral **Tsuzuki** Ishichi. Recovering my bearings, I saluted. He said, "All right," and disappeared into the passageway specially designated for the arsenal chief.

The sky was full of the unfamiliar low-flying squat black American military aircraft. Antiaircraft fire exploded in the sky high above them. Japanese fighter planes were flying up to meet the attack. For me as a nineteen year old it was the occurrence of a moment. But when I recall it now, I realize that I had happened upon an important historic event.

Koiwa Kazuei, sixty-four (m),  
corporate officer, **Mizusawa**

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## Corpses in a Pool, Park Turned Into a Graveyard

The night of 9 March 1945, we listened intently to the radio report of yet another air raid on Tokyo. My husband and I went outside at the explosive noise of aircraft, which seemed to press down on our house. We were riveted to the spot. The area surrounding us was bright in a sea of fire. As

the airplanes spread their large wings in the sky, antiaircraft fire shot upward from Sumida Park. "Let's hurry and get ready to escape." I roused myself at my husband's words, but we had nothing to take with us. Pouring some water into a large bottle and putting the remainder of our rationed soybean curds into a bag, my husband took our child's hand and I took my mother-in-law's. We left our house.

A soldier ran by, shouting, "Sumida Park is no good; go to some other place." We went to the area behind the gas company near Shirahige Bridge. Incendiary bombs fell like rain. The town was a blazing hell, lit by the swirling and roiling flames. At dawn Asakusa was filled with so much smoke it was hard to keep one's eyes open. Everyone was dazed and could only gaze dumbly at one another.

We saw my older brother, who lived in Asakusa, but fearing that my older sister's family of seven might have died--they were in Senzoku, where the damage was severe--we searched among the corpses. We saw blackened bodies, half-burned bodies, people who expired even as they called out "Water! Water!" and firemen dead on fire trucks. The swimming pool at the school was a mountain of corpses. The Sumida River was full of the bodies of people who must have been trying to escape the fires. Sumida Park had become a graveyard with lumps of earth piled up in rows. People dug large pits and poured kerosene on corpses to incinerate them.

"It's no use thinking about what's going to happen, so you go to Atami." I caught my breath at my husband's suggestion. We had evacuated our second-grade daughter there. Determined that if I was going to die, I wanted to die with my children, I waited in line for two days at the station to buy a train ticket and went to Atami. But what awaited us there was the hardship of food shortages worse than we'd known in Tokyo.

Ogawa Sumi, seventy (f),  
retired, Saitama Prefecture

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## 10 March, Capital in Flames

We were among those surrounded by flames on 10 March 1945. My mother, older sister, and I tried to make our escape. Wherever I went, a wave of fire rushed toward me. Finally I made it to Oshiage station. There were thousands of people there. It was so hot and suffocating that I pressed

my cheek to the ground. The air was cool and clean down there. I saw the legs of all sorts of people in front of me. Occasionally on my way a man I didn't know would splash ditch water from a bucket on us and urge us on, saying it was just a little further. Behind me a man sat covered with a large quilt. My back pressed against his, I waited for day to break, fearful and worried about the heat.

With the coming of the pale dawn, people started heading for home. Several military trucks came by around that time. Thinking they had come to help us, I stood up, and the man behind me toppled over. I shook him, but he was dead. They said he died from smoke and the heat of the flames.

On the way home, I thought I saw some black work gloves. When I took a closer look, they were hands that had been torn off. Many red fire trucks were burned out on the major road next to the streetcar tracks, with firemen dead on their vehicles. The dead were blackened and had shrunk to the size of children. It was impossible to tell if they were men or women.

I finally made it back to the charred remains of our house. My mother and sister were there. We hugged each other, weeping. We dug up the crockery, furniture, and food that we had buried in our yard. The rice that had been washed and in our pot was now charred, but we ate it. The tin cans of food that had been stored in the basement of the school building, which had been spared, had burst open due to the tremendous heat of the surrounding fires. I had two younger brothers in first and second grade, but they had been evacuated and were not in Tokyo, so they were safe.

Shinoda Tomoko, fifty-seven (f),  
housewife, Yaita

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## Memories of Youth Turned to Ashes

It was 25 May 1945. We had no relatives to whom we could evacuate. My father, older sister, and I, lying on our cold futons, were exhausted from lack of sleep due to nightly air raids. At the sound of the air raid alert we went outside into the garden and saw things falling from the sky. Here and there in the garden were small fires caused by incendiary bombs. We walked over the tatami mats in our shoes many times to get water.

The fires only grew in force. My father shouted, "We can't stay here any longer! Let's get out!" We ran along streets that were a sea of flames and escaped into Shinjuku Gyoen gardens. Live trees burned up with a crackling

noise. and the smoke was suffocating. Suddenly, the **wind** changed direction. At the same time, all my strength left me, and until dawn I could only sit on the ground. When I stood up in the smoldering wasteland, what hit my eyes was a single standing building, the train station at Harajuku. In one night the flames of war had eradicated not only my home but also the memories of my youth.

The entire traffic system had been cut to shreds by repeated bombings. In the midwinter twilight I had walked with an empty stomach for two hours and somehow reached home from school. With no fire to warm myself, wearing the clothes I had on. I crawled under my quilt. Those were the days in which the wretchedness that is war turned to ashes what should have been a brightly colored time of youth. I still cannot recall how I returned home from the factory where I worked on the **day** that the War ended.

Hiratani Yasuko, fifty-eight (f),  
housewife, Musashino

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### “Doesn’t Seem Too Bad”

It was spring of 1945. I was a sixth-grade member of the rising generation living in Hiroshima. An order was issued to evacuate children from the city, so I was on the evacuation train heading east with my father, bound for northeastern Japan, where we had relatives. At that time, Hiroshima had food shortages, but it had not been directly bombed. As a youngster, I was not yet fully aware of the misery of war. I was actually excited about escaping from my daily routine and going on a long trip.

As the train progressed eastward and we neared Akashi, we saw more and more houses that were leaning or had collapsed. My jaunty spirits gradually turned to apprehension. And when we saw the narrow city of Kobe stretching out interminably as a complete wasteland, I caught my breath at the extent of the disaster. Yet what were the first words that I uttered? Contrary to the violent shock I felt, I unthinkingly blurted out, “It doesn’t seem too bad.”

The kindly middle-aged man sitting next to me inquired quietly, “You don’t think this is horrible?” I was stuck for an answer, but pointing to some houses left standing in the **Rokkō** Mountains, I insisted, “See, there are still some houses left.” The gentleman responded, “You do have a point there,” and our interchange concluded. Flustered by the gentleman’s question, I

clearly felt uncomfortable in his presence. The thought flashed across my mind, “I wonder if he is a spy.”

This was what might be called my first experience of the War. War is what made a young boy say “It doesn’t seem too bad” when he saw a city turned into a scorched wasteland, and it is what made me suspect as a spy a man who had the courage to look at the wasteland and to state in public, “This is horrible.” Without this kind of abnormal psychology, war cannot be prosecuted. Once into a war, many people reach this kind of psychological state. The war leaders of the time justified this crazed psychology by calling it “courageous.” As a young boy I fully believed this.

Shirai Naruo, fifty-two (m),  
civil servant, Nagoya

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### Hand Like a Maple Leaf

This is the first time for me to write about a sad wartime memory.

When I was in the fourth year of girls’ school, I left Tokyo and went to Fukui Prefecture to produce aircraft parts in a war plant as a member of the volunteer corps. This had once been an impressive silk-weaving factory, but with the worsening of war conditions it had been converted to a war plant. It took grim resolution for us young maidens to toil through our lives full of hunger and smeared with grease. Having just arrived, I wasn’t familiar with the area, and I felt forlorn hearing the sound of explosions, shrieks, and wails.

A four- or five-year-old girl must have gotten separated from her parents, and she clutched my hand, saying “Take me with you.” Feeling a bit relieved, I told her, “Let’s get away from here together.” Holding hands tightly, we ran for our lives. Flames rose everywhere. The little girl’s face was black from sweat and dirt, and her eyes shone bright with relief.

Just then I saw a firebomb dropping toward us, spewing flames and making a shrill noise. In that instant, I dropped the little girl’s hand and ducked into a nearby vacant house. Then, “Oh no, the girl!” I cried. I turned around to see behind me several people engulfed in a ball of flame, their screams rising up with the flames. A fragment of the little girl’s padded hood drifted high into the sky.

The little girl died because I had let go of her hand for just an instant. I

didn't even know the name of the cute little girl. I have never been able to forget the feeling of her soft, little hand, like a maple leaf, in mine. My heart still aches even after the passage of forty years.

Ōkubo Michiko, fifty-eight(f),  
housewife, Iwaki

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### “A Keepsake of My Daughter” Amid the Wasteland

The massive air raid on Tsuruga on 12 July, close to the War's end, made an unforgettably powerful impression on me. The enemy's large formation of aircraft dropped incendiary bombs as if they were dumping water on the city. The shore breeze fanned the flames rising from various places in the blacked-out, silent city, turning it instantly into a living hell.

I was then stationed as a communications officer in the Central Area Detachment (136th Unit). I set out before dawn the following morning on a scouting mission to assess the damage to the demolished communications lines and prepare for recovery. Amid the stench of death emanating from the still burning bodies of many victims, I urged my reluctant horse forward and rushed about the city. I was shocked to see a firebomb sitting like a porcupine on the white gravel on the grounds of Kibi Shrine.

As day broke, I saw a burned-out wasteland almost devoid of people. In the distance a lone elderly woman in kimono and wooden clogs repeatedly leaned over to pick up pieces of something with chopsticks. She put the pieces on a plate. I approached her and asked what she was doing. With a stately and unflinching demeanor, she replied, “I've lost everything, and now my daughter has turned into this. I want to have a keepsake of my daughter so that I can pray for her soul.” So saying she continued to pick up and place on the dish pieces of brain from her daughter's burnt skull.

I had seen many scenes of the wretchedness of war, but this scene of a mother's love for her child impressed on me the cruelty of war, which causes such pain for innocent citizens. This scene was so brutal that I have kept it to myself, but I decided to send this in after reading the column.

Ōtsubo Hiroaki, sixty-four (m),  
retired, Kamio

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### Fireflies in the Red Sky

On the night of 1 August 1945, and into the predawn of 2 August, there was an air attack on Nagaoka. My younger brother and I clung to each other as we shivered in a rice paddy where the rice was starting to ripen. It was during the time women and children were forced to evacuate from Niigata, and we had gone to my father's parents' home in a town four stops toward Niigata from Nagaoka. By that time Niigata had prepared some defenses against fires caused by air raids. As a result, roads were widened regardless of homeowners' individual rights. We particularly feared the low-flying carrier-based aircraft. There were many days when we took everything out of the closet and hid inside, with our bedding piled up by the opening. Many was the night we rubbed our sleepy eyes and entered the bomb shelter my father had built.

After we were evacuated, we had no such fears. Occasionally we would go into vegetable fields and swipe eggplants or tomatoes. The air raid on peaceful Nagaoka was particularly frightening. Red dots lined up with precision. Floating down on the wind were large objects the size of several door-sized screens tied together.

The whole area became as bright as day. Pillars of fire rose, and I could clearly see **objects** scattering. It seemed that I could also hear people's screams carried on the wind. I lost sight of my uncle, with whom we had run out. My brother and I were left alone. The rice plants waved in the wind, and in a sky stained red were the blue-white glints of fireflies. I felt so lonely, miserable, and forlorn.

Mitomi Hideko, fifty-two (f),  
housewife, Niigata

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### An Angelic Smile

I enlisted as a communications specialist. After my training, I was stationed at the Hiroshima communications office and later at the Ujina maritime headquarters. My final posting was to the headquarters of the Second Military Force located behind Hiroshima station. I was there at the time of the atomic bombing.

Our three-story building collapsed and burned to ashes in an intense fire. A tin-roofed shed on a slope on the Higashi drill grounds was spread with straw mats, and an emergency hospital was set up there. Those who were taken to this makeshift hospital were the fortunate ones. One of my war buddies was hospitalized with a severe wound, and I took him food and water between my shifts. The expanse of the drill ground was so full of corpses that it was hard to find room to walk. When I stumbled on some bodies, they groaned in frail voices.

A bare-breasted middle-aged woman lay in a ditch. I thought she must be dead. Her infant daughter grasped the woman's nipple and smiled at me. She was as cute as a doll, a single flower blooming in the wasteland. Touched by the little girl's smile, I waved at her.

After I hurried to deliver water and food to my friend, I felt concerned about the little girl. I went back to see what had become of her. But already there was no sign of her or her mother, who had probably died. I told myself that the little girl must have been taken to a safe place, and went on home. I still clearly recall her angelic, smiling face.

Yamaguchi Fumio, sixty (m),  
barber, Gumma Prefecture

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### Skin That Slipped Off

Around 6 o'clock in the evening I was having supper with my squad after returning from fatigue duty digging dugouts on Kanawa Island in Ujina Harbor. There were fewer men than usual. From morning through afternoon my fellow soldiers had been called out to help the people in Hiroshima. As I was chewing each grain of sorghum, which at first glance looked like festive rice with red beans, the squad leader suddenly rushed into the room. "All men, stop eating," he said. "Assemble at the pier with stretchers immediately."

What on earth had happened? We had no idea, but in the military, questions are prohibited. We dropped our chopsticks and, glancing regretfully at our unfinished meal, rushed out. At the midpoint of the pier stood four military doctors, two on either side, with stethoscopes at their ears. "Hurry it up!" came an agitated shout at our backs. We moved forward.

At the end of the pier were many large boats covered with heavy planks.

And what were the things lying jammed together on brand new straw mats? They were women, children, and the elderly, who looked more like mud dolls than anything else. It was midsummer. Hardly any of them were wearing any clothes. From head to toe they were coated with a white, doughlike ointment that shone light gray.

They moaned, asking for help and for water in weak voices. When a buddy lifted one person's head and I the legs, the burned skin slipped off in my hands.

The doctors spent less than a minute examining each Hiroshima resident as one after another they were unloaded from the boats. I was ordered to carry those that were pronounced dead to a raft and cover them with straw mats. When the raft filled up with corpses, it was towed to Ninoshima, where the bodies were cremated.

Harada Tsutomu, sixty-two (m),  
former company employee,  
Yokohama

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### Like Pink Wax Dolls

Seven or eight military cadets from Mito on our way to assignment in Korea, we were forced to get off the train at Kaita station due to interrupted rail service. We started walking toward Hiroshima. As far as we could see, houses were smashed down, tiles still on the roofs. There was no evidence of bomb blasts, nor were there any fires. Peering into the air raid shelters made of sandbags piled along the road, we saw bodies, clothed and showing no wounds, piled up in a row. This was twenty-four hours after the atomic bomb was dropped.

I realize now that I was walking through areas strongly contaminated by radiation. The center of the city was still burning bright red, like live charcoal. Roof tiles were popping. We passed by numerous war dead who had been carbonized. At one point we came across dozens of soldiers who had fallen down without any wounds. They were all naked, but we could tell they were soldiers from their army boots. Their bodies were yellowed but with no trace of injury. They lay like dolls in a circle, their arms reaching up toward the sky. We could say nothing. We stood transfixed at this wretched sight. A kilometer further we found five or six half-burned, roofless street-

cars. Inside were piles of corpses smoldering under white smoke.

Amid the horrific scenes we saw a strange sight that made us doubt our eyes. In the space of about a hundred square meters, the pink-colored bodies of some forty men, women, and children without a stitch on were scattered. A young mother lay face down, her baby tucked under her breast. They looked more like pink wax dolls than human beings. For a moment, I saw beyond the horror and they looked beautiful. Hiroshima was a city full of death with no one walking about. We must have been the last witnesses of these early scenes. We were there the second day under the hot summer sun. The bodies must have discolored and deteriorated soon afterward.

The sour stench pervading the city; the figure of a lone girl, a student mobilized to work in a factory, crying as she walked toward the city; the poisonously bright yellow of the squash flowers blooming on the riverbank. These are things that I have kept secret in my heart for close to half a century.

Nozaki Kiyoshi, sixty-four (m),  
former teacher. *Kitakyūshū*

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### Hair Frizzy Like a Permanent

My younger brother, who was mobilized as a student, had been at the clothing depot in Hiroshima. He hadn't yet come home by the morning of 7 August. My father and I went to the city to look for him. The city had been laid waste by fire, No landmarks were left, so it was impossible to get our bearings.

What I saw then were chocolate-colored, shiny corpses that looked like mannequins of indeterminate gender. Firemen were silently prodding the bodies and rolling them with their tire axes to pile them up in one place.

An ox had fallen down, its body bloated to the bursting point. A mother, tightly holding her baby, had died in a water tank. The mother and child had no visible wounds, and their clothes were not burned. They must have fled from somewhere and, unable to stand the heat, jumped into the water.

My brother, fortunately, had been behind a building and had not been exposed to direct radiation. He soon came home. It was later that we suf-

fered from bleeding gums, hair loss, diarrhea, lack of energy. My brother's straight hair frizzed up as if he had gotten a permanent.

Komatsu Mineko, sixty (f),  
retired, Yokohama

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### Bomb Flash: Discomfort Pierced My Brain

Sasaki Kazuji, my father, was a Japanese grammar instructor at the army paymasters' school. He had gone to Hiroshima to proctor examinations for student applicants. He was there during the atomic bombing on 6 August 1945, and it was 12 August when he returned to his childhood home in the town of *Sōryō*, Hiroshima Prefecture, where our family was staying. On 18 August, twelve days after the bomb was dropped, he died.

The following is an excerpt from the draft of his report to the head of the paymasters' school. He dictated it to my mother just before he died.

Just after 7:30 A.M. on 6 August, an air raid warning was issued, but this did not turn into an air raid alert and was canceled at about 8:10 A.M. Therefore, we began to put on our uniforms to assume our duties. Major Takasaki was standing on the veranda of the eight-mat tatami room on the second floor. Professor Sasaki (myself) was inside the room putting on his underwear and shirt. Officer Trainee Sawaki was taking off his nightshirt in the next room. At that moment, there was a strike, a white flash accompanied by an explosive blast.

Major Takasaki on the veranda screamed, "Ah! ah!" At the same time the building collapsed instantaneously, and I was pinned beneath it. At the instant of the attack, I felt an indescribable discomfort pierce my brain. In total darkness underneath the collapsed house, I called out Major Takasaki's name, but there was no response. So I pulled all my strength together and decided to dig myself out. After removing with some effort the pillars, beams, walls, and other obstacles, I was able to crawl out onto the roof some ten minutes later.

I called for Major Takasaki again, but there was no response. Next, I called out for Officer Trainee Sawaki and heard a faint response from under the rubble. He reported that it was impossible for him to get out. Therefore I worked to remove the rubble, pillars, and beams in the area he seemed to be. Finally I was able to confirm his location and pulled him out through a narrow gap among the obstacles.

By that time the collapsed house had caught fire. The flames grew fierce

all around our location. Compelled to forego a search for documents and to abandon the attempt to ensure Major Takasaki's safety, I assisted wounded Officer Trainee Sawaki and decided to retreat from the site to avoid the fire. It was a heartrending decision for me.

The collapse of the house felt like a blow directly from above, not like up-and-down and side-to-side shaking as in an earthquake.

My physical symptoms were localized pain, intense headache, high fever, frequent vomiting, complete lack of appetite.

Although I exerted every effort, I allowed all the documents to be ultimately destroyed by fire. I deplore exceedingly the vast difficulties in the admission of new students induced by this outcome. I am deeply aware of the gravity of my responsibility and find no way that I can excuse myself.

I recall my mother writing down these sentences as she wept.

Wada Michiyo, fifty-two (f),  
housewife, Abiko

## Chapter 8

### “We Are All Prisoners”

When the reedy voice of Emperor Hirohito came over the radio on 15 August 1945, Japan underwent a sea change. Thousands of people wept. Shock mingled with disbelief, not merely at the thought of the imperial nation being beaten, but the fact that the God-Emperor himself announced the bad news. (Since the Emperor, incidentally, spoke in the stilted phraseology traditionally restricted for the imperial *persona*, the average Japanese had **trouble** understanding what he was saying; many had to ask their neighbors for a colloquial translation.) But there was no mistaking the words “We must endure the unendurable and bear the unbearable.” This was the end.

Transfixed, the nation nervously awaited the new conquerors. As things turned out, the American Occupation brought relief rather than the murder and rapine which Japanese soldiery had visited on so much of Asia. Some unpleasant incidents occurred. There were cases where American troops stole from, raped, and cheated Japanese civilians. But for the most part, their behavior was good, if a bit uninhibited. The emotional release of the Japanese turned into something akin to gratitude, as the Occupation took over the work of feeding what was then a starving country.

The losses of the War had been extraordinary. About **1,500,000** Japanese soldiers were killed in action, according to final reports, and roughly 500,000 Imperial Navy sailors. More shocking was the death toll of civilians: probably 600,000 lost their lives in the War. This was due not only to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the wholesale firebombings of Tokyo, Nagoya, and other cities, but to the hardships and atrocities perpetrated on Japanese civilians in Korea, China, and Okinawa. Thousands of families were left broken and destitute in the collapse of Japan's colonial empire.

Soldiers taken prisoner did not have an easy time of it. The Chinese Communists, in many cases, were quite lenient with their captives, **prefer-**