



Testimonies

Section 3 www.AtomicBombMuseum.org/6_2.shtml

My Son Died When He Was Seven Years Old

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*Even with his bones, blood and internal organs all undermined, my son still asked,
“When am I going to get better?”*



Kenzo Nagoya (HIMAT. 201)

Fumiki, my second boy, 7 years and 6 months old, died of the terrible disease, leukemia. His ordeal began one day when suddenly he experienced pains in his joints. His gums became swollen. His face became distorted. My wife wondered if it was leukemia. An ominous premonition came across our minds. The shock of July 29, 1965, is unforgettable for me. It was on this day, when Hiroshima was sizzling with summer heat and the memorial day of August 6th was at hand, that we learned that our 4-year-old boy had leukemia.

My wife is an A-bomb victim. There is widespread anxiety as to whether a victim's child might somehow be affected, and every victim cannot help but feel insecure. Unfortunately, my wife's foreboding came true. At the Hiroshima University Hospital, Fumiki was diagnosed as having terminal leukemia. I could hardly believe that my beloved 4-year-old boy was thus sentenced to death. The doctor said that he could live only a year at most, and that in some cases death had come in less than a week following the confirmation of the disease. Thus did Fumiki's fight against the disease begin. It was an indescribable struggle. My diary at that time reports as

follows: “One year and nine months have passed since he became ill. Our joy and sorrow always go with him. Confronting his death every day, we have passed three autumns, three winters and now spring has come round again. This spring Fumiki graduates from kindergarten and will be promoted to primary school. Even though suffering from the illness, to my surprise, Fumiki is growing steadily.”

On graduation day he brought home a scrapbook of his kindergarten art work entitled “Ayumi,” which means “Walking” [used in the sense of following a course]. I found in it a picture of a big sea-bream with its mouth wide open, seeming to enjoy the delicious seaweed it was eating. A sea-bream in Japan means good luck. I put the picture on the wall, hoping that somehow it would bring him good luck.



Departmental conference on peace education in schools (HIMAT, 228)

His grandmother bought him the biggest school bag available in order to celebrate his going to primary school. Since Fumiki was fat and tall for his age, the school bag looked very good on him, strapped on his back just like every other Japanese boy and girl preparing to enter first grade. I covered it with a piece of yellow cloth, as is our custom, so that he could be easily seen on the street and protected against traffic accidents.

My wife was working as well as taking care of the family. Her diary from this period records: “Now I understand what it means to fold one thousand paper cranes. It makes me feel that somehow my sick boy will surely be alive today, too. Whenever I fold another crane I feel that Fumiki is safe for another day.”

In spite of his parents’ strong wish and prayers, death finally took Fumiki away. He suffered from leukemia for two years and six months, which seemed to me both a short and at the same time a very long period for one small life to be consumed by a terrible disease. Fumiki’s only wish was to get better and to live. At 2:45 AM on February 22, 1968, Fumiki breathed his last breath. It was a snowy night in Hiroshima.

Four years have passed since his death. Our grief has become deeper and deeper. Every time we hear about the death of a second-generation victim (child of an A-bomb victim), we recall our son’s death, and I never fail to visit his death bed. On their dead faces, again I see Fumiki’s face. I shall never forget him. I’m afraid that acute leukemia is always trying to attack not only victims themselves but even their children as well.

Unless we bring about peace in the world, unless we prohibit the production of all atomic and hydrogen bombs, we shall eternally have to face and suffer many deaths like Fumiki’s.