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Nagasaki Survivor Recalls
Atomic Devastation, Horror

By David Wilkinson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The last time Kasumi Hirayama tried to recount her eyewitness experience to the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, she broke into uncontrollable sobs.

That was 25 years ago.

She had been invited to speak on Japanese culture to a small church group in Oklahoma where she was attending college. One question naturally led to another--and eventually to Nagasaki. "The experience was a disaster," she recalled. "I became too emotional to talk about it--and the audience became guilty and defensive."

Since then she had declined invitations to speak publicly about the horror she witnessed at age 13.

But Aug. 6, before a hushed audience of more than 300 at a Southern Baptist-sponsored National Peacemaking Convocation, the diminutive, 50-year-old university professor attempted to describe the moments and days following the atomic blast in her hometown.

Hirayama spoke on the 37th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. A second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki three days later.

She survived because her family was living that summer in a Buddhist temple on a hill on the outskirts of the city. Though her memories are "somewhat blurred," there are some details she said she can never forget.

In a soft-spoken voice broken occasionally by faltering English and irrepressible emotion she recalled:

--The excited voices of children crying, "parachute, parachute" as the bomb descended;

--The blinding, "yellowish, then whitish" flash that filled the sky, the deafening noise of the explosion, the roaring wind and searing waves of fire;

--Naked men, women and children wandering through the destruction hours later, their clothing blown away by the blast, many with skin "hanging from their bodies like strings."

--The starvation, skin diseases and other tortures which plagued the initial survivors, including the "maggots, fleas and lice which tormented us no matter how much we tried to keep clean."

School opened the next year with a memorial service for teachers and students killed by the blast and its aftereffects and the "people who survived, including me, felt guilty being alive," Hirayama said.

New teachers, including several Americans, joined the school. New Japanese students returned from Korea and China. But the survivors "never discussed the atomic bomb experience at school or at home."

In fact Hirayama never talked about the experience with her parents until last year. "We always looked forward, never to the past," she explained. Now she has decided to speak out because survivors of Nagasaki and Hiroshima are becoming scarce--"and our children must know."

Hirayama concluded "the most critical thing surrounding this issue (of nuclear war) is people's underestimation or lack of knowledge of the real destructiveness and horrible nature of nuclear war."

Wright, Agency Heads
Address Peace Meeting

By Dan Martin and Marv Knox

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A United States congressman offered President Reagan a "little idea" on peacemaking as more than 300 persons from 20 states attended a National Peace Convocation.

U.S. Rep. Jim Wright (D-Texas), majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, was one of a number of speakers at a "Strategies for Peacemaking" conference sponsored by Deer Park Baptist Church of Louisville (Aug. 5-7).

Wright, of Fort Worth, suggested both the United States and Soviet Union reduce arms spending by 10 percent a year for five years, using the money to establish a fund "to benefit the needy of the world."

The congressman said such reduction would provide \$200 billion a year, after five years, which could be used to equip hospitals in every town of more than 10,000 population in the world, build 250,000 schools, millions of miles of roads, or "build 10 million modern homes to replace the world's infested slums."

"Using it that way makes a whole lot more sense than spending it on weapons which kill and destroy," he said.

Wright, speaking on the 37th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, noted the United States "celebrated" that anniversary a day early by exploding an underground nuclear device at Yucca Flats, Nev., which was seven times more powerful than that first bomb.

The purpose of the convocation was to "raise the consciousness of people concerning the issue of peace," said C. Carman Sharp, pastor of Deer Park Baptist Church in Louisville and primary coordinator of the meeting.

"We're hearing some very wise people say, 'This is the (most significant) issue of our time; if we don't solve it, nothing matters,'" Sharp explained. "There are untold millions of people who don't know what's going on. When they find out about it they're going to rise up and stop this foolishness."

The meeting included five workshops dealing with various aspects of peacemaking, designed to help participants "translate ideas into action," Sharp said.

Helen and William Caldicott, physicians and anti-nuclear activists from Boston, Mass., told participants continued escalation of nuclear arms eventually will result in the "final epidemic" to strike mankind.

Mrs. Caldicott, national president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, decried the idea of blaming the arms race on the Soviet Union. "This country could save the planet," she said. "The U.S. has led the arms race for 37 years with Russia copying and following, copying and following."

"This is not just a life and death issue," her husband, a practicing physician, warned. "It is a matter of extinction," he said.

Also included in the list of speakers were executives of four Southern Baptist Convention agencies: Jimmy R. Allen, president of the SBC Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, Texas; Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, Nashville, Tenn.; James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., and Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the SBC, Birmingham, Ala.

Allen, a former president of the 13.8 million member SBC, encouraged leaders of the growing peace movement in the denomination to persevere, despite "strife" which will inevitably accompany such efforts.

Allen spoke of the "emotional fire" which surrounds the peace issue in the United States, pointing out that "anxieties create an atmosphere in which pressure toward peace sparks a conflagration of angers and accusations which make peacemaking a perilous pursuit."

Valentine, who for 22 years has headed the moral and social concerns agency of the denomination, said that "no convincing case can be made for the neutrality of the church in the face of the ultimate obscenity of nuclear war."

He labeled injustice in society as "the mother of war" and said injustice "wants to fight its way to brotherhood, hate its way to love and war its way to peace."

"In contrast," he added, "when there is commitment to peace with justice, the body politic chooses morality over mammon, leans toward compassion instead of exploitation, elects freedom rather than tyranny, opts for order in preference to anarchy and pursues peace in preference to war."

Dunn told participants the "real hope for peacemaking through the political process" begins with the realization of the near-hopelessness of the situation.

He suggested that a ray of hope for peace is that the very gravity of the world situation will make more people aware of the desperate need for peace and force the democratic process to reflect the will of the people for peace.

Otherwise, he said, the options are bleak. "If we cannot muster the energy necessary to get our act together for the sake of survival, then democracy is an empty dream."

Weatherford said peacemaking and missions go hand-in-hand and told participants that Christians today are beginning to understand and accept their responsibility for proclaiming the gospel to the whole world. "Those who go are called missionaries; they go as peacemakers into the world."

Frank Stagg, senior professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, pointed out that the teachings of Jesus Christ make it clear that "peacemaking is not an option to Christian discipleship," but a "vocation under the Lordship of Christ." Further, he added, "Peacemaking is not only God's primary work in salvation but it is bound up with the reconciling cross."

The New Testament scholar said: "Hate breeds hate. Vengeance breeds vengeance. War breeds war. Evil stops only where someone is big enough, strong enough and good enough to absorb it. That is precisely what God did at Golgotha."

He commented that Moral Majority with its support for massive new military spending, is one of the most "secular" groups in American life today and referred to it as an "immoral malignancy, not a moral majority."

Stagg added that while the U.S. has spent \$3 trillion on arms since World War II, "we are scared to death."

Glenn Hinson, professor of church history at Southern Seminary, said the "sickness of war is ultimately caused by anxiety and fear, adding that the answer is prayer in response to God's love." Only the opening of our hearts and minds to his love will still our anxiety and cast out our fear," Hinson said. "Through this love our enemies become human beings engaged in the same life in which we are engaged."

In a concluding worship service, Gordon Cosby, pastor of the Church of the Saviour in Washington, emphasized the need for national repentance but warned that the participants must engage in the costly "inner work" of repentance as well.

He identified peacemaking as a central task, saying "unless the church is faithful to this task" none of the other faithful adventures "will matter."

New President Named
At Oklahoma Baptist

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--Bob R. Agee, special assistant to the president for institutional planning and vice president for religious affairs at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., has been named president of Oklahoma Baptist University.

The 45-year-old native of Brownsville, Tenn. was elected unanimously by the school's board of trustees to succeed E. Eugene Hall, who resigned June 30 to become professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Agee will assume his new duties Sept. 1 at the private four-year college of approximately 1,500 students, owned and operated by the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

Agee, a 1960 graduate of Union University, earned a master of divinity degree in 1964 and a doctor of ministry in 1974 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He recently completed requirements for a Ph.D in higher education administration at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

He has been professor of religion at Union University since 1975 and was named to his current position in 1980. Previously, he was pastor of Ardmore Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., 1970-75, and Shively Heights Baptist Church in Louisville, 1964-70.

He was adjunct professor in educational administration at Vanderbilt in 1981.

Agee has been a member of the executive board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and a member of the Union University board of trustees.

Formerly, he was on the human relations committee of the Memphis Board of Education and the mayor's council on crime control in Memphis. Agee and his wife, Nell, have two daughters--Denise, 23, and Robyn, 19. Mrs. Agee is an honor graduate of Union and presently teaches high school art in Humbolt, Tenn.

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Baptists Backing Urged
For Higher Drinking Age

By Duann Kier

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists are being asked to join the National Transportation Safety Board in urging the legal minimum drinking age be raised to 21 nationwide.

The NTSB, in an effort to cut the death toll from drunk driving, is urging governors and legislators of 35 states and the District of Columbia (where the drinking age is less than 21) to change their laws. Statistics show a direct correlation between minimum drinking age and alcohol-related accidents in the 18-21 age group.

"Southern Baptists can help in this vital effort by making personal contact with governors and legislators in those states which have not yet raised their legal minimum drinking age to 21. Churches and associations could help by adopting resolutions calling upon their state governments to act," said Ronald D. Sisk, director for program development for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Sisk said the board's recommendation reflects a realistic assessment of the facts. "More young people die from drinking and driving than any other age group. Each state which has lowered its drinking age to 18 has experienced significant increases in alcohol-related driving fatalities in the 18-21 age group," he said. "People are dying on our streets and highways every day in part because they live in states which allow underage young people to drink legally."

The NTSB is empowered by Congress to investigate aviation, rail, marine, pipeline and highway accidents and make recommendations to improve transportation safety.

According to the board's recommendation, four of their investigations were major highway accidents involving young drivers in the 18-21 age group where alcohol was a factor. In just these four accidents the board reported 30 fatalities and 15 injuries.

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"The best laws," Sisk pointed out, "are those which prohibit any consumption or purchase of alcohol by persons under 21 and which impose strict penalties on those who sell to underage individuals.

"It is also foolish subterfuge to allow those between 18 and 21 to drink 'just beer.' Beer alcohol content is just as deadly and impairs judgment as much as the highest-proof whiskey," he said.

Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said, "We are supporting this important initiative not only because of the impact it can have on the drunk-driving problem, but also because of what it can do to reduce alcoholism, crime, prison expense and the abuse of humanity's most dangerous drug."

"Raising the drinking age to 21 is one way we can save thousands of lives in the United States every year," Sisk added. "As concerned Christian citizens, Southern Baptists need to be at the forefront of this effort."

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Armed Police Raid Awakens
Church Construction Crew

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BOLINGBROOK, Ill. (BP)--When 15 laymen from the Saks Baptist Church in Anniston, Ala., volunteered to give a week's service to the Alpha Baptist Church in Bolingbrook, Ill., they hardly expected to have a run-in with the local police.

They came to this northern Illinois city at their own expense to renovate an old 7-Eleven store for church use and bedded down in the store for their first night's sleep.

About 2 a.m. local police, on a routine check of business establishments, saw the out-of-state vans parked nearby and burst in on the sleeping visitors with spotlights and drawn guns. Discovering the mistake, one of the policemen remarked, "I just can't believe it!"

The Alpha Baptist Church, a black congregation affiliated with the Illinois Baptist State Association, has been meeting in a public school building. When they had a chance to buy the former store building, pastor William M. Rorer contacted Everett Anthony, missions director for Chicago Metro Association.

In turn Anthony talked with Bill Wilson, a contact person for special mission ministries at the Home Mission Board, who relayed the need to the Saks Baptist Church in Anniston, Ala.

Alpha Baptist Church furnished the materials but the Alabama laymen brought their own tools and donated their labor. Their crew chief was Albert Burns.

Not only did the volunteers completely renovate the interior with new carpeting, insulation, drywall and partitions--they also put a steeple on top to give the former retail-outlet building a "churchy" look!

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CORRECTION: In BP 8/6/82, "HMB To Offer Church Bonds," paragraph 11, Hamblin has a Ph.D and a Master of Divinity from Southwestern seminary, not a Ph.D and a Th.D as sent.

Thanks,

Baptist Press