



Masako's Story

Kikuko Otake

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Surviving the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima

On August 6, 1945, when the world's first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the Furuta family was living one mile away from the hypocenter. Five year old Kikuko, her mother, Masako, and her two brothers barely escaped with their lives. However, their soldier father was not so fortunate. Masako never talked about her family's experiences on that day and the grim days following the bombing. Then one day, Masako started to talk about what happened—breaking a silence of nearly fifty years.

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Written by Kikuko (Furuta) Otake, now an assistant professor of Japanese in the United States, Masako's story is a bilingual collection of prose-poetry, based on the true story of her family's tragedy. The appendix presents the original Japanese poetry written to capture the story as her mother said it in Hiroshima dialect. Moreover, the English translation is written with an "Objectivist" lineation similar in its understated power to Charles Reznikoff's "Testimony":

*After crossing the Aoi Bridge,
I walked diagonally across the grounds of the Gokoku Shrine
To take a short cut.
Oh. That ground was filled with hundreds of people with horrible burns
Scattered everywhere.
Many of them were dead.
But those that still lived,
Begged, "Mizu! Mizu o kudasai," in faint whispers.
Soon my way was blocked by their outstretched arms.
One of them even grabbed my ankle, though feebly,
To stop me from running past him.
His burnt skin sloughed off his fingers,
As I pulled from his grip.*

Kikuko Otake's Masako's Story is a powerful addition to the literature of the Atomic Bomb, and yet more evidence that we should all work together to stop the Nuclear madness.

About Kikuko Otake

Kikuko Otake was five years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, August 6, 1945. In her book *Masako's Story*, she offers a survivor's perspective.

Professor Kikuko Otake was born on February 22, 1940 in Osaka, Japan. She earned her B.A. from Tsuda College of Tokyo, Japan in 1962 in English Literature. In August of 1968, she came to the US and in September 1987 earned her M.A. in Education from California State University in Los Angeles.

Professor Otake is an award-winning poet who regularly publishes tanka and haiku.

What Others Say

In addition, prose read as poetry creates objectivity. We rise above the transient and can view something like the eternal. Petty political concerns are dwarfed by the towering certainties of the actual. We are enddistanced and consequently have a wider view, one that — however paradoxically — preserves the emotion since we must move closer in order to understand, to feel, to remember . . . Each year pushes the reality of the destruction of Hiroshima further into the past, further away from all of us. At the same time, anyone who fails to learn from history is doomed to repeat it. With the anniversary of the event upon us, here is a book to remember it by.

—Donald Richie, The Japan Times Online

"I found it quite compelling and read it all the way through. I like the layout very much. I think the poetic treatment adds to the weight of each phrase."

—Steven L. Leeper, Chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation

"Masako's Story reads like poetry. I was struck by the honesty and beauty of the writing."

—Steven Okazaki, Academy Award-winning film director of *The Mushroom Club* and *White Light/Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*

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