**Testimony of Akira Onogi**

*Mr. Akira Onogi was 16 years old when the bomb was dropped. He was at home 1.2 km away from center of explosion. The house was under the shade of the warehouse, which protected him from the first blast. All five members of the Onogi family miraculously survived the immediate fire at their house.*

MR. ONOGI: I was in the second year of junior high school and was mobilized work with my classmates at the Eba Plant, Mitsubishi shipbuilding. On the day when A-bomb was dropped, I happened to be taking the day off and I was staying at home. I was reading lying on the floor with a friend of mine. Under the eaves I saw blue flash of light just like a spark made by a train or some short circuit. Next, a steamlike blast came.

INTERVIEWER: From which direction?

ONOGI: Well, I'm not sure, anyway, when the blast came, my friend and I were blown into another room. I was unconscious for a while, and when I came to, I found myself in the dark. Thinking my house was directly hit by a bomb, I removed red soil and roof tiles covering me by hand and for the first time I saw the sky. I managed to go out to open space and I looked around wondering what my family were doing. I found that all the houses around there had collapsed for as far as I could see.

INTERVIEWER: All the houses?

ONOGI: Yes, well, I couldn't see anyone around me but I heard somebody shouting "Help! Help!" from somewhere. The cries were actually from underground as I was walking on. Since no choose were available, I'd just dug out red soil and roof tiles by hand to help my family; my mother, my three sisters and a child of one of my sisters. Then, I looked next door and I saw the father of neighboring family standing almost naked. His skin was peeling off all over his body and was hanging from finger tips. I talked to him but he was too exhausted to give me a reply. He was looking for his family desperately. The person in this picture was a neighbor of us. I think the family's name was the Matsumotos. When we were escaping from the edge of the bridge, we found this small girl crying and she asked us to help her mother. Just beside the girl, her mother was trapped by a fallen beam on top of the lower half of her body. Together with neighbors, we tried hard to remove the beam, but it was impossible without any tools. Finally a fire broke out endangering us. So we had no choice but to leave her. She was conscious and we deeply bowed to her with clasped hands to apologize to her and then we left. About one hour later, it started raining heavily. There were large drops of black rain. I was wearing a short sleeve shirt and shorts and it was freezing. Everybody was shivering. We warmed ourselves up around the burning fire in the middle of the summer.

INTERVIEWER: You mean the fire did not extinguish by the rain?

ONOGI: That's right. The fire didn't subside it at all. What impressed my very strongly was a 5 or 6 year-old-boy with his right leg cut at the thigh. He was hopping on his left foot to cross over the bridge. I can still record this scene very clearly. The water of the river we looking at now is very clean and clear, but on the day of bombing, all the houses along this river were blown by the blast with their pillars, beams and pieces of furniture blown into the river or hanging off the bridges. The river was also filled with dead people blown by the blast and with survivors who came here to seek water. Anyway I could not see the surface of the water at all. Many injured people with peeled skin were crying out for help. Obviously they were looking at us and we could hardly turn our eyes toward the river.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't it possible to help them?

ONOGI: No, there were too many people. We took care of the people around us by using the clothes of dead people as bandages, especially for those who were terribly wounded. By that time we somehow became insensible all those awful things. After a while, the fire reached the river bank and we decided to leave the river. We crossed over this railway bridge and escaped in the direction along the railway. The houses on both sides of the railroad were burning and railway was the hollow in the fire. I thought I was going to die here. It was such an awful experience. You know for about 10 years after bombing I always felt paralyzed we never saw the sparks made by trains or lightning. Also even at home, I could not sit beside the windows because I had seen so many people badly wounded by pieces of glass. So I always sat with the wall behind me for about 10 years. It was some sort of instinct to self-preservation.

**General William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (1950)**

Once it had been tested, President Truman faced the decision as to whether to use it. He did not like the idea, but was persuaded that it would shorten the war against Japan and save American lives. It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons. It was my reaction that the scientists and others wanted to make this test because of the vast sums that had been spent on the project. Truman knew that, and so did the other people involved. However, the Chief Executive made a decision to use the bomb on two cities in Japan. We had produced only two bombs at that time. We did not know which cities would be the targets, but the President specified that the bombs should be used against military facilities. I realized that my original error in discounting the effectiveness of the atomic bomb was based on long experience with explosives in the Navy. I had specialized in gunnery and at one time headed the Navy Department's Bureau of Ordnance. "Bomb" is the wrong word to use for this new weapon. It is not a bomb. It is a poisonous thing that kills people by its deadly radioactive action, more than by the explosive force it develops.

The lethal possibilities of atomic warfare in the future are frightening. My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children. We were the first to have this weapon in our possession, and the first to use it. There is a practical reality that potential enemies will have it in the future and that atomic bombs will sometime be used against us. That is why, as a professional military man with a half-century of service to his government, I come to the end of my war story with an apprehension about the future. These new concepts of "total war" are basically distasteful to the soldier and sailor of my generation. Employment of the atomic bomb in war will take us back in cruelty toward non-combatants to the days of Genghis Khan. It will be a war of pillage and rape of a society, done impersonally by one state against another, whereas in the Dark Ages it was a result of individual greed and terrorism. These new and terrible instruments of uncivilized warfare represent a modern type of barbarism not worthy of Christian man. One of the professors associated with the Manhattan Project told me that he had hoped the bomb wouldn't work. I wish that he had been right.

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**Interview with General Paul Tibbets, Pilot of the Enola Gay**

Colonel (later General) Paul Tibbets was the pilot of the Enola Gay, the B-29 that dropped the “Little Boy” atomic bomb over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. of Christian man.”

**Ryan:**  I want to go back and talk about that mission, but I want to ask you a question first. What scares a man like Paul Tibbets?

**Tibbets:** I have a hard time answering that, Tom, because I really do not know. I would have to say this. I have been scared a lot of times. When somebody is shooting at you, it is enough to make you frightened.

**Ryan:**  Sure.

**Tibbets:** I do remember that I was coldly objective in that time period because the importance of that mission was so extreme. There was no way that I could fail through personal error or something like that. I just dreaded that thought, and didn’t dwell on it either, because I had reached a point in my military career of flying airplanes and my working with other people and commanding organizations. I was confident. Twenty-nine years old, a man has got a lot of confidence.

**Ryan:**  Sure.

**Tibbets:** I felt there wasn’t anything that I couldn’t do. Now, as we prepared for this mission and as we flew it, I was running a mental checklist on everything that went on because if it didn’t work right, then I made a mistake somewhere. That is one thing I didn’t want to do.

**Ryan:**  If you would, describe that specific moment when the bomb left the airplane and your people were looking down. They saw it being delivered on the target below.

**Tibbets:** When the bomb left the airplane, of course we were 10,000 pounds lighter right to start with. That gave me the opportunity to, in terms of the vernacular, roll the airplane over on its side and pull it around in an unusually steep curve for an airplane of that size and at that altitude. We were at 33,000 feet. But I had practiced this time and time again, and understood how to do it. We did just exactly that very thing.

As I made that turn and leveled that airplane out, my tail gunner sitting in the back says, “Here it comes.” Well, he had seen the explosion before we did. He was the only one that could look directly at it. What he said was, “Here it comes,” meaning, “Here comes the shock wave,” and that’s what we wanted.

How hard is that shock wave going to hit us? It had been predicted to be somewhere between two and three G-forces. It hit. We had an accelerometer in the airplane to measure it. The measurement turned out to be right at 2.5 G-forces. Airplanes are built to take that. Now, in that time of that turn, my thought was, of course, “Get the airplane around,” but that was kind of a mechanical move. I kept thinking, is it going to explode before it should? That was the one thing I was concerned with as far as safety is concerned. When I was well into that turn, I figured okay, the fusing mechanism is working the way it is supposed to work. Actually, when the shock wave hit me, I said, “There is success.”

**Ryan:**  Tell me, when you did look back after you had banked the plane, what did you see?

**Tibbets:** I just continued a normal turn to again face the city. I flew south of the city, Hiroshima, so that the people in my airplane, the people in the two airplanes that accompanied us to drop instruments to record the blast, would be able to take these cameras and make pictures. We knew that it would be three or four days before a photographic reconnaissance airplane could be sent up there to do it. Weather was one thing and then there was a certain worry about contamination.

**Ryan:**  General, you were supposedly quoted as saying after the bomb was dropped, looking back and saying, “My God, what have we done?” Is this true?

**Tibbets:** That is a misquotation. I don’t know how it got turned around. But you know using some rather terse statements “My God,” “Look at that thing,” or something like that.

**Ryan:**  Sure.

**Tibbets:** I don’t ever remember anybody – and I’ve asked the crew in later years – did anybody say, “Look at what we have done?” And they said “Oh no, but we uttered some exclamations that were rather terse.”

**Ryan:**During the Vietnam War, there is an incident that stands out in many people’s minds, the My Lai incident when many civilians were killed. I suppose many people would say that really didn’t differ in any way from what you did. Both of you destroyed innocent lives. How do you react to that?

**Tibbets:** Look, civilians have been killed in every war. Now, it depends upon how they are killed. Let us take two instances right quick. Number one, Germany for instance is an industrial country that had basically isolated industry similar to what we have got in the United States. Yes, when you bomb the factory, bombs went astray and innocent people got killed.

Go to Japan. Japan didn’t have the type of industry that we are talking about. Japan had a little community that in one house they built some part of a machine and in another they built something else and finally they get down to the point. So what I am saying is that a whole city could contribute to that. This is where many, many people were killed during the war with firebombs and with the atomic weapons. They were killed, but I can’t separate that because they all contributed to the war effort and capability no matter what. Even a shopkeeper in Germany who was feeding, say, the factory workers that were working to make munitions. It was still there.

Now, Vietnam and Korea were instances where we are aware of individuals being killed under the term, and I have used the quotation, “a suspected enemy,” a suspected soldier. Some of these suspected people were less than that.On the other hand, we do know from firsthand information that they even made booby traps out of children over there, and this could kill our GIs. I do not know. It is a terrible decision to have to make.

**Ryan:**  Have you ever had any regrets or any psychological problems as a result of this, or suffered any guilt feelings? Do you feel that what you did was right? You got a lot of flak over that, didn’t you?

**Tibbets:** Yes, after the fact there was quite a bit. This was basically a result of Russian propaganda, who took the position that nobody but a crazy man would do that for any country. With that situation, I am supposed to have lost sleep over what I did, have a certain amount of morose, and so forth. I can assure you, I have never lost a night’s sleep on the deal.

The man that flew the airplane over Hiroshima to observe the weather [Claude Eatherly] became, should we say, unbalanced after the end of the war. But he had had a problem of mental incapacities, disabilities, leading up to the wartime. Declared competent. He was a good pilot. He flew a good crew for me. But when he got pushed out of the Air Force unceremoniously, because of drinking habits and gambling, he, I guess, wanted to seek publicity. What he did was to hold up post offices in Texas with a water pistol, hoping to get caught. Now, this played into the hands of the propaganda machine because here was a man that had been to Hiroshima. He was mentally unbalanced. A book was written that played that particular part, but didn’t subscribe to the fact that this man had anything to do with the dropping of the bomb but rather to report weather.

**Ryan:**  But he was really the only one of the crew—

**Tibbets:** He was the only one, but as I said unfortunately, he got too much publicity and the propaganda machine was fed by some of his utterings, appearances, and his personal behavior. Remember, I had come from a peacetime Air Corps, where safety was the rule if you were going to fire a gun or you were going to drop a practice bomb or do something. Well, you had to ascertain by every means available that the range was clear, that nobody could possibly get hurt by the act that you were about to perform.

The first time I dropped bombs on a target over there, I watched those things go down because we could do it in B-17s. I watched them go down. Then I watched those black puffs of smoke and fires in some instances. I said to myself, “People are getting killed down there that don’t have any business getting killed. Those are not soldiers.”

Well, then I had a thought that I had engendered and encountered for the first time in Cincinnati when I was going to medical school. I lived with a doctor. He would tell me about previous doctors, some that had been classmates of his, who were drug salesmen. That is, they were selling legalized drugs for drug houses and so forth and so on, because they could not practice medicine due to the fact that they had too much sympathy for their patients. They assumed the symptoms of the patients and it destroyed their ability to render medical necessities. I thought, you know, I am just like that if I get to thinking about some innocent person getting hit on the ground. I am supposed to be a bomber pilot and destroy a target. I won’t be worth anything if I do that.

Now, I have been lucky because if I had to make up my mind and want to reject something, I can reject it and I do that. So that was one of the things that I was faced with when, as you say, I was on my way to the target. But before that time, Tom, I was clearly convinced in my own mind, and I had people telling me how much property and lives that bomb would take when it exploded because it was nondiscriminatory. It took everything.

**Ryan:**  Yes.

**Tibbets:** I made up my mind then that the morality of dropping that bomb was not my business. I was instructed to perform a military mission to drop the bomb. That was the thing that I was going to do the best of my ability. Morality, there is no such thing in warfare. I don’t care whether you are dropping atom bombs, or 100-pound bombs, or shooting a rifle. You have got to leave the moral issue out of it.