



Speaker: **Pacific Nuclear Disaster Assistance Centre**
/ Kochi Prefecture, Japan

The Pacific Nuclear Disaster Assistance Centre grew out of the Kochi Prefecture Bikini H-Bomb Test Survivors Research Team formed in 1985, and was formed in 2012 to track the health of and seek relief for fishermen and sailors affected by nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll. In 2014, the group was successful in having the Japanese government disclose its official documents, and has been working to record the testimonies of the survivors, demonstrating to the government that the testing and its impacts are still ongoing.

The Bikini Incident Has Not Ended

Created by the Pacific Nuclear Disaster Assistance Center
40th anniversary of Nagasaki and Hiroshima (1985)
At a fishing village in Kochi Prefecture

A young man commits suicide. His mother explains why.

Did you see the flashing light?

Yes, we saw the bright flashes of light.

In fact Setsuya-san saw the flashes of light in Nagasaki. After experiencing the bombing of Nagasaki at 12, Setsuya returned to his hometown in Sukumo, Kochi and began to work onboard a tuna fishing vessel to support his family. Setsuya-san was devoted to his mother, and every time the ship called at a port, he would send his mother a letter.

As soon as this expedition ends, I want to return home and put you at ease, mother.

What do you think was the reason for Setsuya-san's suicide?

I don't know. Probably it was because of his illness. I can't think of any other reason.

What kind of illness did he suffer from?

He experienced both the bombing of Nagasaki and the nuclear testing at the Bikini Atoll. These experiences must have been extremely painful for him.

As you can see from the nautical charts, Setsuya-san was nervous about the hydrogen bomb tests taking place while on his fishing expeditions. Setsuya-san, who became a nuclear test survivor, in addition to having already experienced Nagasaki, took his own life at the age of 27.

The high school students continued their investigation. The fishing ship's crew had witnessed the nuclear test.

I think I was standing in this area. A mushroom cloud appeared and expanded across the horizon. Then there was a flash of light. A blinding flash of light.

When people think about the Bikini Incident, they think of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru (Lucky Dragon #5) which was exposed to fallout as a result of the U.S. hydrogen bomb testing in the Bikini Atoll. People are reminded from this incident of the death of Aikichi Kuboyama.



National High School Students' Peace Rally

We are members of the Kochi Prefectural High School Seminar. Our motto is "to consider peace and youth from where we stand."

We have been engaging in peace education that looks at issues related to our community. We hope that all of you will conduct your own exploration into this issue and incorporate it into your learning process.

What was the Bikini Incident?

The coral reefs of the Pacific Ocean Bikini Atoll, in the Marshall Islands March 1, 1954

The U.S. conducted a hydrogen bomb test. It was 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

160km away from the test site, a Japanese pelagic tuna fishing vessel, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, was in operation. The 23 crew members onboard were exposed to radiation. Half a year later, Aikichi Kuboyama, the Chief Radio person, passed away. Six hydrogen bomb tests were held during a 2.5-month period. During this time in the surrounding seas, many fishermen were traversing the oceans in search of tuna. Some people suspected radiation exposure, but the Japanese government did not recognize this fact. The year following the nuclear test (US-Japan Official Document) The problem was considered resolved after a 2 million dollar condolence payment from the US.

Crew member Yokemoto Komatsu:

Around the time we began getting married and having kids, we became worried. Not just me, but my friends as well. I had served as crew on a ship in Misaki. My friends passed away from cancer. Two of my friends passed away from cancer. The crew from the ship in Misaki, passed away one after the other. My elder brother developed skin cancer. His thumb was amputated at the first joint. His cancer spread to his lung.

Was your brother on the same ship?

Yes. We were forced to throw away the fish all night long. We heard that the fish were contaminated with radiation. They conducted tests on people too but did not give us any information.

There was an abnormally low rate in the total number of red blood cells.

Former crew member Taniwaki-san has a hematopoietic disorder. He became anemic in his 40s, and underwent simultaneous surgeries on his liver and stomach.

When I hear people say that these illnesses are not related to the Bikini Incident, I feel abject frustration."

Testimony from Families: He had esophageal cancer

It was discovered too late. It had already spread to his trachea."

My father had esophageal cancer. He coughed up blood and passed away. My father spoke only once of the fact that he had been on a ship in operation near the Daigo Fukuryu Maru. He had a brain tumor.

They weren't able to operate?



No, there was nothing they could do. Before his death my father said, "Why did I have to get a brain tumor?" My father suffered great psychological damage. He had surgery for stomach cancer right after his 60th birthday. He had always been worried about cancer. I never imagined my mother would commit suicide. My father's lashing out on us kids in irritation may have been a factor, a reason our family relationship was destroyed. The hardest part was that he could not speak out. Even as children we wanted our father to tell us about his suffering.

It came out in the year the hydrogen bomb test took place. The Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare published an independent report on their finding about radiation. The Ministry did examine the crew members to check their exposure level and recorded their findings. Kuwano-san, crew member on the Daini Seiko Maru shared his thoughts.

He was exposed to more radiation than I was, a few hundred millisieverts. That is why I hope the Ministry makes this public.

Bikini Incident Workmen's Accident Suits
Kochi District Court July 20, 2018"

Unjust ruling

State compensation for the crew members and bereaved families was not recognized.

Crew member and plaintiff Masumoto Kazuma

The current situation is that we have been abandoned by the Japanese government. In the ruling, it says "compensation for the Bikini Incident victims should be considered.

What do you think about that?

The national and prefectural governments should conduct research on crew's health and fulfill their promise.

The Bikini Incident is significant globally in the context of compensation for nuclear testing victims as indicated in TPNW. Let's stand with the Hibakusha and move towards a nuclear-free world!

Were you scared of dying from an illness such as leukemia?

Nagasaki and Bikini survivor, Yokoyama Kokichi

Yes, sure. Many of the other crew did.

We must avoid a nuclear war at all costs.

As a result of the hydrogen bomb testing at the Bikini Atoll in 1954, more than 10,000 crew of tuna fishing boats were exposed to fallout. The suffering of the crew and their families continue to this day.

Disclaimer

This transcript is at the responsibility of Peace Boat and may not be completely the same as the original testimony.

The original testimony was presented online at the World Nuclear Survivors Forum 2021 on December 2-3, where over 30 nuclear survivors from five continents around the world shared their voices with more than 1000 people. The Forum was hosted by Peace Boat in partnership with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). The stories and panel discussions are all available for viewing on demand via Youtube or on our website here:

<https://nuclearsurvivors.org>