

# A TALE OF TWO CITIES

## Hiroshima, Japan, and Albany, N.Y.

The date Aug. 6, 1945 . . . a 14-year-old Japanese is cavorting on a river bank . . . a half-mile west of the Hudson River, a 13-year-old American is hurrying his paper route so he can play ball.

The account by Father Tadashi Hasegawa is provided by National Catholic News Service, quoting from the St. Anthony Messenger. The counterpoint is written by Carmen J. Viglucci, editor of the Courier-Journal.

Tadashi Hasegawa was 14 when his life was changed forever on Aug. 6, 1945.

Carmen J. Viglucci had celebrated his 13th birthday a week before and a half-world away. He didn't know it at that precise time but his two brothers were in the Philippines that day, part of a massive naval buildup antecedent to the invasion of Japan itself.

"It was a bright, shining day in Albany, N.Y.," Viglucci remembers, "the kind of day that uplifts the spirit, almost scattering the oversoul of gloom produced by the war. When we went to pick up our newspapers under the stoop on Ten Broek Street, we were shocked by the headline (in those days, radio did not have instant worldwide coverage and television was an infant). 'Atomic Bomb Dropped,' the Knickerbocker News announced. None of us knew what an atom bomb was; neither did many other Americans. Or Japanese.

"Bernard Milos, Kenny Wright and I stood there, looking down at the story on top of the stack of newspapers. Banjo-eyed, we greedily read the account of the power, the destruction, the impact. We all were used to newsreel and movie footage of thousands of bombs spewing forth from the bellies of B17s and B29s. When we drew such bombings on paper we would put the pockmarks across the earth, just as they appeared from the planes. But one bomb destroying an entire city! Praise the Lord!"

*The night before, Aug. 6, 1945, at the world's largest air-base at Tinian in the Mariana Islands, Air Force Chaplain William Downey was praying for the crew of the Enola Gay, the B29 carrying the first atom bomb into warfare:*

*"We pray thee that the end of the war may come soon that once more we may know peace on earth. May the men who fly this night be kept safe in your care . . . We shall go forward in Thee knowing that we are in your care now and forever in the name of Jesus Christ."*

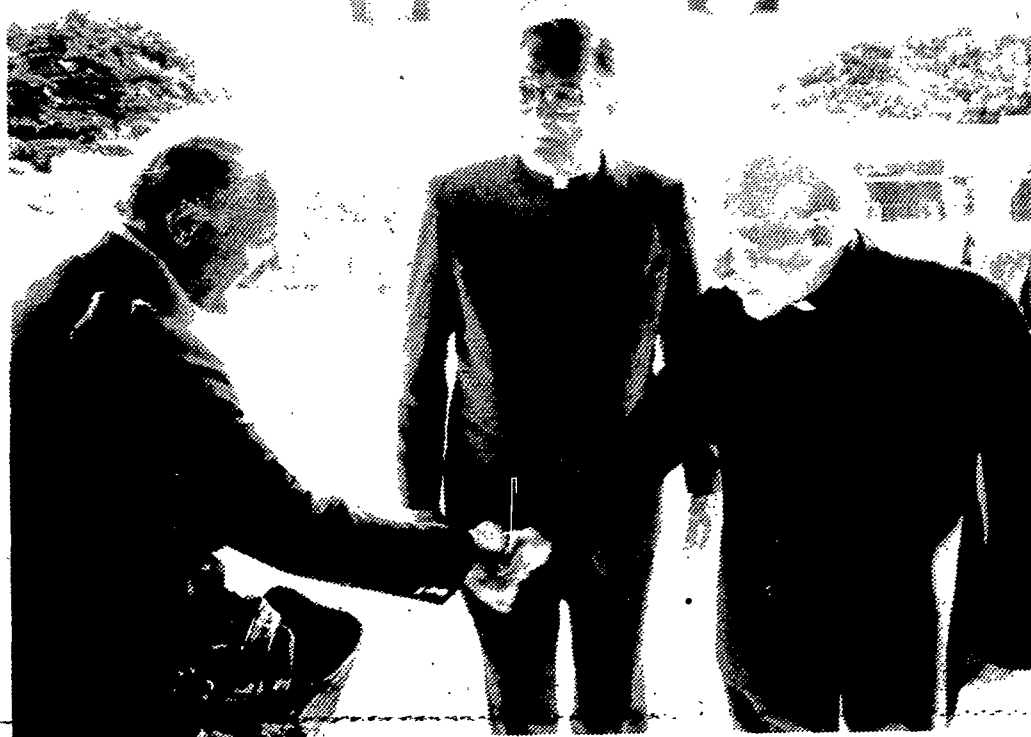
*Edward R. Murrow reported: "The bomb run lasted four minutes. The bomb went away at 9:15. 'My God!' was the only entry in the co-pilot's diary. Seventy-eight thousand, one hundred and fifty people died at Hiroshima."*

*The next day, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, announced: "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base . . . we have used it (the bomb) to shorten the agony of war in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans."*

Young Hasegawa was with about 15 other students on a river bank in Hiroshima about a mile from the hypocenter of the exploding nuclear bomb.

"I heard the B29 coming and those of us who gathered there spotted it in the sky. I fell face down on the ground. The bomb exploded and I was surrounded by yellow light. It was as though ping-pong balls of light were falling all around us. Tremendous heat burned fiercely into my back as well as into the back of my head, arms and legs. My clothing caught on fire."

Father Pedro Arrupe played a key role in the story of Father Hasegawa. Here, the worldwide leader of the Jesuits greets Carmen J. Viglucci, Courier-Journal editor, in Rome at the time of Bishop Matthew H. Clark's ordination.



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"The great news about the bomb eased the burden of carrying the 98 papers. I skimmed along, gladdened by the news which could mean that my brothers would survive the war after all. And I had baseball to look forward to at the end of the route.

"I don't recall running into any customers. But I knew that everybody — black, white and Indian — would be jubilant that night. There would be no blackout. The lights would be on at the 8th Ward Democratic Club. At the Dreamland. At Ryan's Grill. At Ben Greshaber's Tavern.

"My route ended nearly at the Ban Woert Street diamond. Running at full tilt, I gave myself some more time to sit on the pitcher's mound and read the paper again. Soon others were hovering about, all willing to postpone even baseball to read about the atomic bomb. We talked in short spurts. Whoops. Cheers. And epithets:

"I hope Hirohito was there."

"Take that, you yellow creeps."

"Slap the dirty Jap."

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"Because my clothes were burning, I jumped into the river. When I hit the water, my whole body felt stabbed with pain. I got out of the river, my skin came off and hung down from my fingernails. I had to walk like a chimpanzee because of my hanging skin.

"All the houses were flattened and fires were beginning to spread as burning debris sucked up into the blast fell from the sky. As I walked, I saw thousands of dead bodies along the riverside and floating in the river. I reached a park where, in the evening, I began vomiting and diarrhea started."

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"I stuck the Knick News back in my bag and got my glove out. Baseball was gorgeous that day. The ball made a special thwack off the bat. The earth seemed alive and ground balls hopped nearly into infielders' gloves. Backslaps were heartier. Cussing zestier. Standing on second base after an 'atomic double' was like being on top of the world.

"Time lost its perspective and soon my 9-year-old sister was there, shouting for me to go home. 'Boy, are you going to get it!'

"On other nights, maybe, but not this night. I dashed through the twilight and down the street, passing Honey on the way. Small knots of people already were beginning to fill summer stoops. 'Did you hear?' 'Isn't it great!' 'Thank God!'

"Someone shouted to me. 'Mike and Andrew will be coming home now.'

"I glanced at Mrs. Rafferty's service flag in her window with the five blue stars on it. Also Mrs. Zaloga's with its two gold stars — Eddie and Joe would not be coming home.

"That night, the Democratic club was ablaze with lights. Ryan's was jumping with joy — they just about wore out 'When the Lights Go on Again.' The Dreamland rocked with singing, too, including, I was told, some Gospel songs. They say Ben's stayed open all night."



Father Tadashi Hasegawa is pastor of Hiroshima's Misasa Catholic Church which stands a short distance from where he was scorched by the 1945 atomic bomb. (NC Photo by Father Jack Wintz).

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The boy Hasegawa was taken to someone's house where his father finally found him. He brought a young Jesuit priest with him — his name Pedro Arrupe.

"Father Arrupe washed my wounds, which were encrusted and contaminated with ash and mud. I could not move. I was lying on wax paper placed over a mat. My condition was critical and Father Arrupe tried to treat me for three or four days. That's all he could do. Infection set in, followed by intestinal disease and for weeks my life hung on a thread. By the time Father Arrupe came back on Sept. 30, I was just skin and bones. He just looked at me and burst into tears."

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"By Sept. 30, I was back at Philip Livingston Junior High where many of us were transferred after St. Joseph's Academy burned down the year before.

"I really can't remember if my brothers had come home yet but they did — Mike to his wife of three years whom he had not seen since the wedding. Andrew soon would take his high school equivalency test (both had quit school to 'join up') and go on to college.

"My father was nearing the fulfillment of a dream to own his own business. And my mother was busily content running a complete family again."

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"After Father Arrupe left, a new Jesuit priest came. He baptized me and told my parents that I should sleep for one week and they should not touch me. My mother worried because my condition was horrible. Thousands of maggots were in the wounds all over my body. Pus was oozing everywhere and I had a terrible bed rash. But I fell into a peaceful sleep for a whole week. The priest checked on me and came back after a week. My mom began peeling the bandages off my arms and found that they came off easily, with no adhesion. She found dead maggots on the wounds and the wounds were much better. They had healed on my back and all over."

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Who could have guessed back on Aug. 6, 1945, that almost four decades later, the world would be still debating the nuclear bomb.

After his recovery, Hasegawa and his family became Catholics. He became a priest in 1965. Recently he said, "It is necessary for us human beings to be honest before God and confess that we committed this evil" (the atomic bombing). "I think the atom bomb is an evil brought about by human beings."

Pedro Arrupe went on to become the director of the Jesuits worldwide and to see his Church in the forefront of the battle to control the bomb.

No nuclear bombs have been used on humans since 1945. But only a tenuous agreement among distrustful nations has forestalled such. And as more and more nations gain nuclear knowledge and as the world grows more and more fragmented, the threat of the bomb grows and grows.

Now, however, a new dimension has been added for Americans. It could be a group of teens near the Hudson or the Genesee or the Chemung who will look up and see the yellow flash.