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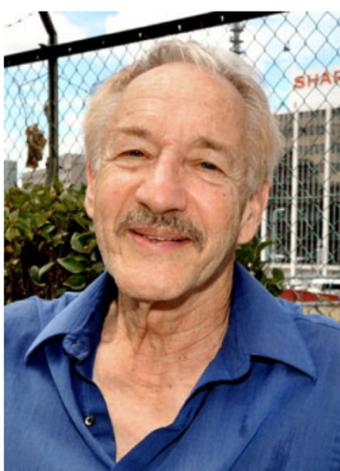
Sunday, Aug. 15, 2010

Hibakusha filmed before time runs out Ex-U.S. actor hopes to pass on A-bomb memories, lessons

By **MIZUHO AOKI**
 Staff writer

An American filmmaker recorded the images and voices of aging atomic-bomb survivors so they could pass down their memories to younger generations and make them think more about nuclear weapons.

Titled "Hibakusha, Our Life to Live," the film describes the lives of Japanese and Korean hibakusha through a mixture of interviews, as well as a fictional drama about a preteen Japanese girl who learns about the 1945 bombings from Eiji Nakanishi, a real hibakusha who was exposed to the bombing in Hiroshima at age 3.



David Rothaus

"Once they (the survivors) are gone, all will be secondhand stories, not firsthand . . . So I think their memories must be kept alive in as many ways as possible," David Rothaus said in a recent interview in Tokyo.

The Boston-based filmmaker was visiting Japan earlier this month to screen his latest movie in Hiroshima and attend the Peace Memorial services in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Nakanishi, who stars in the film, died in 2007. The exact cause of death is unknown, but is related to the radiation he was exposed to, Rothaus said.

According to the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry, the average age of surviving hibakusha in possession of holds the official victim passbook is 76.73. Their number stood at 227,565 as of the end of March, down 8,004 from the previous year.

"The whole idea (to make this film) was to link and connect the older generation and younger generation of the future," Rothaus said.

Completed in April, the film had its first screening at the U.N. headquarters in New York during the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference in May, and was shown at Hiroshima City International House on Aug. 7, where over 80 people attended, according to Rothaus.

Rothaus, an actor-turned-filmmaker who said he is over 60 but declined to give his exact age, had made three documentary films, including "The Diary of Sacco and Vanzetti," a story about an infamous trial and execution of two Italian immigrant anarchists in Massachusetts in the 1920s, before he decided to make a film about hibakusha.

He said he first got interested in the subject after reading journalist John Hersey's famous book, "Hiroshima," in the 1960s.

"It was the first book I had read about Hiroshima and I realized the genetic effects of radiation on children. It made me very moved," Rothaus said.



Out of the ruins: An Allied correspondent stands in Hiroshima's rubble in front of the shell of the A-Bomb Dome, formerly a movie theater, on Sept. 8, 1945, a month after the first atomic bomb ever used in warfare was dropped. Bottom: Eiji Nakanishi, a hibakusha who was exposed to the bombing in Hiroshima at age 3, plays a guitar in a scene from the film "Hibakusha, Our Life to Live." AP, COURTESY OF DAVID ROTHHAUSER



The shock led him to read and study more about the A-bombs. And in 2005, after meeting with eight hibakusha, including Nakanishi, who were visiting New Jersey and Boston to talk about their experiences, Rothaus decided to make a film on hibakusha.

"There are many movies made about Holocaust survivors, but I felt not many about hibakusha. And I felt it was equally as important to tell the story of hibakusha, and maybe more important because our lives are connected to that atomic bomb," Rothaus said. "If there is another nuclear war, then we will all become hibakusha."

The film also describes how the atomic bombings were reported and received in the U.S. in 1945, including a series of photographs with voice-overs showing researchers of Los Alamos National Laboratory throwing a big party to celebrate the success of the A-

bombs.

"I wanted to show what was happening in America at the same time of what happened in Japan at the end of the war to show the influence of propaganda and to show how the Americans were celebrating, and the scientists in particular," Rothaus said.

"The scientists threw a big party . . . That's part of war. It's ugly to me, but that's what they were doing," Rothaus said.

The film will be screened at the University of Southern California in February. At the moment, there is no other screening scheduled. However, Rothaus plans to enter the work to film festivals to try to get a way to deliver it to wider audiences.

"My next dream is to take the film on world tour, to major cities and universities. And not just to show the film, but to engage audiences in discussions about the film and about the whole idea of nuclear weapons . . . to get people to think," Rothaus said.

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A piece of your mind
Dining on a theme

In Japan, a lot of **restaurants** have been putting something extra on menu: **entertainment**. Which of these theme restaurants would you like to try?

- Ninja Akasaka** — dining on shuriken snacks
- Sengoku Buyuden** — dining in ye olde Warring States period
- Ehon no Kuni no Alice** — dining down the rabbit hole
- Yurei Izakaya** — dining among the dearly departed
- The Lock Up** dining behind bars
- Vampire Cafe** — dining with the Count
- No entertainment with my meal, thank you.**

Total Votes : 753
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