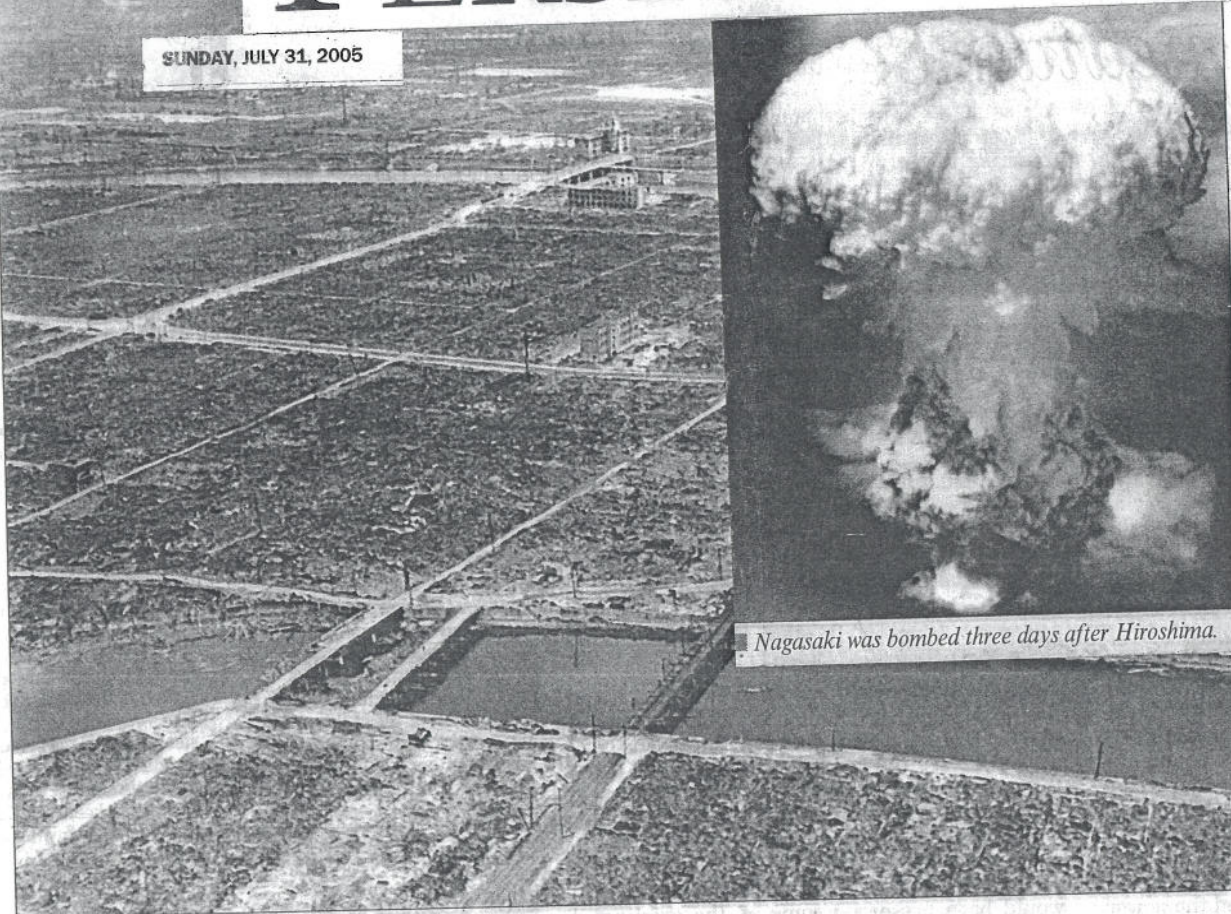


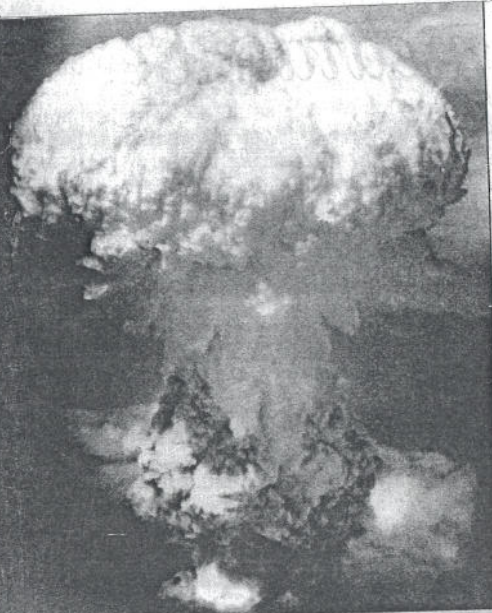
The Day

PERSPECTIVE

SUNDAY, JULY 31, 2005



Nagasaki was bombed three days after Hiroshima.



When History Comes Full Circle

By SHARLENE SPINGLER

SOMETIMES CIRCUMSTANCES can thrust you into a vortex of the past, about which you know little; the present, about which you are aware, and the potentially frightening future. I recently visited a friend on the West Coast who asked me to join him in an event of which he offered few details, except to say that it would involve the Japanese. Since he spent a third of his life in Japan, this came as no surprise. We assembled in San Francisco, climbed into a van and were transported to Pier 39, where Japan's Tall Ship, the *Nippon Maru*, was moored. The ship had taken 25 days to sail to America.

It was July 16, the 60th anniversary of the detonation of the first atomic device in 1945 in Jornada del Muerto at the Trinity Site in Alamogordo, N. M. The *Nippon Maru* had transported the original atomic flame, taken by a monk from the burning embers in Hiroshima

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■ A few steel and concrete buildings and bridges are still intact in Hiroshima after the Japanese city was hit by an American atomic bomb on Aug. 6, 1945.

UNDER A CLOUD

LOOKING BACK ACROSS 60 YEARS, ASSESSMENT OF THE MORALITY OF THE ATOMIC BOMBING OF JAPAN BECOMES CLEARER

AP Photos

Ceremony started monks on journey to return atomic flame

From C1

and kept alive in a monastery for the past 60 years.

The monks believe that good and bad happen in circles. Sponsored by the Global Nuclear Disarmament Fund, this was the beginning of their American journey to return the flame to the Trinity Test Site via a 1,600 mile walk from San Francisco to Alamogordo, where they will extinguish the flame. They believe that by bringing the flame back to its source, they will close the circle of destruction in a peaceful manner while opening up a new circle of peace.

My mother worked during the 1940s for the Manhattan Project. I, born in the 1950s, lived through the Cuban Missile Crisis with the air raid drills in grade school. The nuns at school had 2,000 children praying for peace by reciting the rosary, our voices echoing through the concrete corridors. They would tell us not to stand by the windows to avoid being cut by the glass when the bomb hit. Many of us born in that era harbor

an unspoken fear that we will witness the end of life, as we know it, via some catastrophic, political event which has little to do with us.

Those feelings came back Sept. 11, 2001. I watched the attacks occur from the windows of my office on the 65th floor of the Empire State Building. I live across the street from the United Nations. It's given me the feeling that I have a box seat to the apocalypse. Yet even with the daily bomb scares in New York City, after recent events in London, I climb into my crow's nest on a daily basis with a naive faith that no such thing will occur.

Faith inspired this ceremony, which took place on the pier beside the *Nippon Maru*. It was San Francisco, after all, from which the cruiser Indianapolis sailed from on the same day, July 16, 1945, carrying the parts for "Little Boy" the first atomic bomb, to the island of Tinian for assembly. Weeks later, on Aug. 6, 1945, the B-29 named the *Enola Gay*, dropped it on Hiroshima killing 237,062 people directly and subse-

quently from radiation.

There are currently 270,000 "hibakusha," A-bomb victims, still living in Japan. One of them, Takahashi Tanemori, who survived Hiroshima, spoke on the pier. A diminutive man with a Seeing Eye dog, he had been a child of 8 years old, playing Hide and Seek in the basement of his school when the bomb was dropped. Everyone in his school perished except him. His entire life changed in less than two minutes. The son of a prominent samurai, he said he came to America as a young man to seek revenge. Instead he married, began a family, and his life changed. Here he was, at 68, making an impassioned plea for the cessation of nuclear proliferation.

The original atomic flame was passed from the Hiroshima survivor, to Dr. Bruce Blair of the multinational Center for Defense Information in Washington, D.C. A former Minuteman-II launch officer, he is considered one of the foremost authorities on the potential of acciden-

tal nuclear war.

There are currently 30,000 known nuclear weapons in the world. The U.S. and Russia have 4,000 at ready. Their destructive power is 100,000 times larger than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. They can be deployed within two minutes and delivered within 20 minutes to their intercontinental targets.

Dr. Blair spoke of these missiles, armed and trained on targets. "These weapons remain on high alert and are integrated into an automatic response system whereby if one launches, or a false alarm occurs, all may launch in response," he said. "In an age of cyber-terrorism, as terrorists continue efforts to

hack into Strategic Air Command launch systems, this makes the reality of an unintended nuclear exchange a stone-cold possibility."

The atomic flame was passed to a Japanese senator, Shoukichi Kina, down the line to actor Steven Seagal. Seagal is my friend and had brought me to this ceremony.

Seagal lived in Japan for years, married and raised children there, and is fluent in three Japanese dialects. He gave the Global Nuclear Disarmament Fund its first \$100,000 to disarm a Russian nuclear weapon. He will have a guitar made from the metal. He has been a musician for 40 years, an actor for 20.

Seagal took the flame, then gave it

back to the monks to begin their walk to the Trinity site.

"It's the responsibility of every global citizen to rid the world of this imminent threat," Seagal said. "I have been blessed to know many of the individuals who survived the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is their example of spirit and strength that drives my determination to make this world a safer place."

The original Chinese calligraphic symbol for medicine literally means music. I hope for the sake of all sentient beings that Seagal's gesture and resulting post-nuclear guitar will deliver some healing suggestions to those in power.