

'Hiroshima? It was horrible,' recalls N.C. man who saw its wreckage

Associated Press

Some grew up in the shadow of the mushroom cloud and others walked on the rubble left behind and then returned to the safety of North Carolina, but all learned to recite the nightmares of the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"Hiroshima? It was horrible," Sidney Dixon, 63, of Kings Mountain said. "It's hard to realize what one little trash-can bomb could do to a city of 275,000 people."

"The railroad tracks were rolled up like wire. There were no buildings, whatsoever — not a building standing in a five-mile radius from the center of the city," Dixon said.

"It would remind you of a football stadium with the seats all bent back away from it, blown completely down."

Dixon — and many other North Carolinians — saw the destruction the atomic bomb did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki 40 years ago this week. The bombings led to the Japan's surrender in World War II and ushered in the nuclear era.

The worst was over when Dixon, now a barber in western North Carolina, and his buddies on the USS *Montpelier* escorted some of the first American troops into Hiroshima in October 1945. But he vividly remembers what the city looked like.

'The railroad tracks were rolled up like wire.'

Sidney Dixon

"I started out at Guadalcanal, and I saw bombs dropped and ships sunk," Dixon said. "But there was nothing like Hiroshima. You can look at a picture of it all day long and still never grasp that a city of 275,000 people was wiped out in a matter of seconds."

Sister Serena Yuriko's father was in the Japanese army when the

bombs were dropped.

"I remember him telling us about Aug. 6, the day of the atomic bomb. He was part of the rescue team sent into the city. His job was to gather up the dead and put them in piles. He found a pregnant woman and helped deliver her baby. It was still-born," said Sister Yuriko, now a Roman Catholic nun at Sacred Heart Convent in Belmont.

"He had to show it to her and say, 'Your baby is dead. We have to take it to the pile of dead bodies and burn it,'" said Sister Yuriko, who was born in 1946 after her family was forced to move from Hiroshima.

Thomas Ferebee, who grew up in Mocksville, was a bombardier aboard the B-29 bomber named *E-nola Gay*, which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Ferebee, who had been aboard planes that dropped 500- and 1,000-pound bombs on Germany, said the mission over Hiroshima seemed to him "just another bomb run."

But when the bomb went off, Ferebee, 66, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel living in Maitland, Fla.,

knew it was not a normal run.

"We were about 10 or 11 miles away when the bomb went off. It was all different colors. I can't explain it. There was just about every kind of color," he said.

"It looked like we had done a pretty good job. The main thing that was going through my mind was that it actually worked."

Ferebee said he had no regrets or guilt about dropping the bomb.

"None whatsoever," he said. "Given the conditions at that time, none. I'd do it again. It was something we were ordered to do. It was just another flight, another mission."

A-bomb shattered our innocence, some experts say

By Walter Goodman
N.Y. Times News Service

Scarcely had the atomic bomb been dropped on Hiroshima than Americans began to ponder its effects: Would the event sear the national psyche and significantly change our lives, or would it be absorbed along with all the other terrors of the century? The issue remains as unsettled, and unsettling, today as the issue of whether the bomb should have been dropped 40 years ago.

A prominent exponent of the view that the atomic bomb has transformed our lives is Robert J. Lifton, a professor of psychiatry and psychology at John Jay College of the City University of New York, who has reached conclusions about the United States from his studies of the survivors of Hiroshima. Lifton contends that the bomb has undermined man's sense of immortality, as expressed in one's family, work and faith. He discerns the influence of this "sense of radical futurelessness" in such things as increased divorce, "significant impairment of the parent-child bond" and the recent growth of religious fundamentalism.

This diagnosis is tied to his views on what to do about the bomb. A critic of the Reagan administration's arms policies, he hails the "worldwide struggle to get rid of the weapon" and has drawn criticism for what a fellow psychiatrist, Dr. Seymour C. Post, of Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, calls "his politically motivated activity."

The views of Lifton and others who believe that the bomb has had profound effects on American life appear frequently in *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, an influential magazine established almost 40 years ago by scientists who worked on the bomb. Dr. John Edward Mack, a professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, surveyed children in Boston, Los Angeles and Baltimore between 1978 and 1980 and reported that they are "aware of the threat of nuclear war and live in fear of it."

Such concerns for the nation's children go back to the 1950s, when a brief enthusiasm for classroom air-raid drills sent youngsters crawling under their desks for shelter; some reportedly had nightmares about the bomb. Mack says that "the imminent threat of nuclear annihilation has penetrated deeply into their consciousness," leading to "cynicism, sadness, bitterness and a sense of helplessness."

Like Lifton, Mack has an opinion of the arms race. He has written, "There can be no differences between the United States and the Soviet Union which warrant the level of risk of nuclear annihilation we are now creating for each other and for the rest of humanity." His surveys have been criticized as aimed at obtaining desired answers, and he has conceded that his sample of 10- to 12-year-olds may have been "somewhat biased."

Robert Coles, Harvard's best known child psychologist and a supporter of a nuclear freeze, calls many of the reports on children's fears of a nuclear holocaust "sentimental balderdash."

A pair of conservative critics, Professor Joseph Adelson, a specialist in adolescence at the University of Michigan, and Chester E. Finn Jr., who was recently confirmed as an assistant secretary of education,



Civilians who survived the Hiroshima bomb gather at about 11 a.m., less than three hours after the blast.

wrote, "The only testimony we have comes from those engaged — freely engaged — in the nuclear-freeze movement; there has been no spontaneous evidence of intense anxiety among children or, for that matter, among adults."

Dr. Jerome Kagan, another Harvard psychologist, reports that his studies of 6-year-olds reveal no fear of nuclear war. He thinks parents project their concerns onto their children.

Another way to try to assess the bomb's impact is through what writers, moviemakers and others have had to say about it. Since the late 1950s, when Tom Lehrer was singing *We Will All Go Together When We Go*, there has been no shortage of works dealing in some manner with the bomb, from suspense potboilers to Nevil Shute's cautionary novel *On the Beach*.

The mushroom cloud quickly became a trite symbol. Among the more notable works is Stanley Kubrick's movie *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. It treats our condition comically, as though, like observers at atomic tests, its creators avoided staring directly into the blast lest they be blinded.

The theme of *Dr. Strangelove*, popular among stop-the-bomb forces, is that the weapon has escaped the control of reason and that finally the nuclear button will be pushed by some highly placed lunatic. That idea was behind the com-

mercial used in Lyndon Johnson's 1964 presidential campaign, which suggested that the election of Barry Goldwater would mean nuclear annihilation, and it could be found too in films and plays about the Vietnam War.

Estimable though some of the works inspired by the bomb have been, these 40 years have produced no generally acknowledged masterpieces on the order of those inspired by other calamities. There has been no *Red Badge of Courage*, no *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *Grand*

Illusion, no painting to rival Picasso's *Guernica*, no major body of poems like those of Isaac Rosenberg or Wilfred Owen from the trenches of World War I.

Reviewing what he calls the "episodic and inconclusive" nature of America's cultural and intellectual engagement with Hiroshima, Paul Boyer, a historian and author of the forthcoming study, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, maintains that Hiroshima challenges both the United States'



The Hiroshima bomb stopped this wristwatch at 8:15 a.m. In this photo, the small hand looks like the big one because the heat of the blast seared its shadow into the dial.

of World War II and "the myth of American innocence," the belief that "our motives are higher, our methods purer" than those of other nations.

Some critics write off works like

Schell's as panic-mongering for political ends, but they have stirred millions.

Public opinion surveys do not reveal any sea change in what worries people.

But whatever the level or duration of concern over the bomb, the evocations of nuclear catastrophe, the drumbeat of warnings by scientists and such groups as America's Roman Catholic bishops, the anti-nuclear campaigns and demonstrations have had a measurable impact.

Polls over the years indicate overwhelming support for a mutual verifiable nuclear freeze. In recent years, they also indicate that more people feel more threatened by the United States falling behind in nuclear weapons than by a continuation of the arms buildup.

So there are a lot of Americans who believe that deterrence has worked — yet would like to see a world free of the bomb. This somewhat contradictory accommodation appears to be an effort to deal with the bomb as most of us deal with other problems, not by nightmares but with hope and prayer and politics — and, most of the time, by not thinking about it.

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