

'Strontium 90 in our bones'

'Rest in peace': Hiroshima 30 years later

By DOUG TINDAL
Pikadon. The flash of light. The sound of thunder. The word pikadon was coined a little over 30 years ago, on August 6, 1945.

It was the only word the people of Hiroshima could use to describe the atomic bomb that devastated their city — a bomb that is still claiming victims in Hiroshima today, through radiation poisoning, through genetic defects, through a cancer rate as high as 30 times the norm.

Pikadon Plus 30 was the subject of a multi-media presentation and panel discussion presented last Monday at the OISE auditorium by the Hiroshima Nagasaki Relived committee.

The multi-media presentation was led by York theatre professor Mavor Moore, with assistance from Frances Hyland, a Toronto actress, and singer/composer Beverly Glenn-Copeland, also of Toronto.

The presence of two Hiroshima survivors, now residents of Toronto, added a tangible element to the films of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Setsuko Thurlow, co-chairman of the Hiroshima Nagasaki

Relived committee, was 13 in 1945. She was in charge of a group of girls who had been trained during the previous six weeks to decode government documents. On the morning of August 6, they were about to start their work when the bomb was detonated.

Although she was within a mile and a half of the centre of the explosion, Setsuko was lucky: the building in which she was working collapsed on top of her, shielding her from the worst of the blast. She and a companion were able to claw their way out of the wreckage. The others died in the fire started by the bomb's fireball.

Toshiko Yoshikawa, her husband and their infant daughter, were also lucky enough to survive the blast.

Toshiko's husband died a few years later, the victim of radiation poisoning. Her daughter recovered "perfect" health until 1957, 12 years after the bomb, when she began to experience periods of weakness. She died the same year, from cancer caused by radiation poisoning.

The panel discussion which followed the presentation was en-

titled Where Do We Go From Here?

Dr. Ursula Franklin, a professor in the department of metallurgy and material science at the University of Toronto, began the discussion.

"I suffered and lived through the fall of Berlin," she said. "The conviction grew upon me that I must work for peace in whatever way I could."

In Hiroshima today, there is a Peace Park with a monument to the children who died in the atomic blast. A plaque at the base of the monument is inscribed, "Rest in peace — the error will not be repeated".

Dr. Franklin referred to this inscription and pointed out that the destruction of Hiroshima was not an error — it was a conscious and deliberate action. It is that which must not be repeated, she said.

(United States Defense Secretary James Schlesinger said last spring that the United States has never renounced a nuclear first strike as a possible instrument of defence.)

Fred Knelman, professor of science and human affairs at Concordia University, spoke next.

"The thing we must understand," he said, "is that we are all — every one of us in this room — children of Hiroshima."

"We all have Strontium 90 in our bones, Cesium 137 in our muscles, Thorium in our thyroids. (Strontium 90, Cesium 137 and Thorium are artificially created radioactive isotopes.)

The final panel member, An-

drew Brewin, is an NDP Member of Parliament representing the Toronto riding of Greenwood, and is his party's spokesman on Canadian foreign policy.

"The Minister for External Affairs, the Honorable Allan MacEachen, has told the House that the documents on the sale of these reactors are almost ready for signing," Brewin said. "He has assured us that there are safeguards in the documents to prevent the use of plutonium waste products from the reactor to build nuclear bombs."

"We have not seen the safeguards. We have been told that they

will be tabled after the agreements have been signed."

The Pikadon Plus 30 presentation was not the only remembrance of the birth of the atomic age. Some weeks ago, the scientists who worked to develop the bomb returned to the Los Alamos research centre for a reunion.

They spent their time laughing, dancing and reminiscing over what an emcee referred to as "the good old days".

One of the scientists present was asked whether he felt any guilt for his role in developing the bomb. He commented, "We have to build these weapons — there are just too many insane people in the world."

Coming Events

The second session of the three-week series entitled The Secret Life of Plants will be held today at 12 noon in 107 Stedman. Guest speaker is Grant Clarke. Everyone is invited. Presented by the York Integrity Group.

The York Motorcycle Owners Association is meeting in the ground-floor lounge, 4 Assiniboine Road, 7 p.m., Wednesday. A film about Saarinen will be shown. All are welcome.

This weekend, York is hosting the Ontario Women's Intercollegiate Field Hockey final. All games will be shown on the field hockey pitches below the ice arena. Friday games are from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday games are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The York chapter of the Canadian Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws is holding a meeting next Thursday, Oct. 28 at 4 p.m. in the Faculty lounge on the eighth floor of the Ross building. All interested students, staff and faculty are invited to attend.

Muslim students: Friday prayer meetings held regularly at York — please attend. For further information, phone 633-3821 or 537-1087.

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