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The Manhattan Project, the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,
and the Development of Nuclear Weapons

Robert JACOBS

HIROSHIMA IN AMERICA

A HALF CENTURY OF DENIAL

ROBERT JAY LIFTON
GREG MITCHELL

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Jane Isay, our editor at Grosset/Putnam, has been more than remarkable in helping us to cast and recast central themes of the book, in helping us to deepen our own collaboration and then joining it, and in combining warm friendship with wise editorial discipline. Kate Murphy has been a key figure in keeping the entire process moving in a more or less orderly fashion.

Rachel Klayman of Avon Books has been an enthusiastic advocate and reliable guide in preparing this paperback edition and its new afterword.

INTRODUCTION

THE RAW NERVE

You cannot understand the twentieth century without Hiroshima. Each of us has lived there, studied the effects of the atomic bomb, and written extensively about it. In that way, we have attempted to explain what happened to the city on August 6, 1945, and what is still happening to many of the survivors there. That experience led us to explore what happened to America as a consequence of Hiroshima—both the bomb's existence in the world, and our having used it.

This subject is charged with emotion. When the atomic bomb was dropped over Hiroshima, Americans felt both deep satisfaction and deep anxiety, and these responses have coexisted ever since. Half a century later, Americans continue to experience pride, pain, and confusion over the use of the atomic bomb against Japan. Part of each of us wishes to believe that the decision to use the bomb was reasonable and justified, but another part remains uncomfortable with what we did.

It has never been easy to reconcile dropping the bomb with a sense of ourselves as a decent people. Because this conflict remains unresolved it continues to provoke strong feelings. There is no historical event Americans are more sensitive about. Hiroshima remains a raw nerve.

We decided to look underneath that raw nerve, at its sources—historical and psychological—and consequences. This time we wanted to explore what has happened in our own country. Our focus in this book is not what occurred in Japan on August 6, 1945, but rather its impact on America in the fifty years since. We examine the manipulations and distortions that surround the use of the bomb: the mythology Americans have constructed around Hiroshima, and its cost to ourselves and to the world.

This is the story of how one country, our country, dealt with the Hiroshima bomb, before and after its use, and how this led to profound conflict and uneasiness, causing us to embrace the weapons that terrify us. Hiroshima can be a window of truth not only to our past and current nuclear dilemmas, but also to the broader confusions of our time.

The Hiroshima raw nerve was responsible for the recent dispute that erupted over an exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. Officials called the exhibit—scheduled to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombings—the most divisive ever attempted at any of the Smithsonian Institution's national museums.

Curators planned to put on display the *Enola Gay*, the plane that carried the first atomic bomb over Japan, and designed an exhibit around it that would fully explore the decision to use the bomb, and its effects. They would present both the justifications for, and doubts about, the atomic attack, based on the latest scholarship; and they would not flinch from showing what happened at ground zero. Soon, veterans' groups were claiming that the planned exhibit was pro-Japanese and dishonored U.S. servicemen. Newspaper editorials charged the Smithsonian with "political correctness," and columnist George Will accused the curators of being anti-American. Both houses of Congress passed resolutions condemning the exhibit.

Yielding to pressure, the museum made massive deletions and revisions in the script for the show, culminating in a two-day negotiating session with representatives of the American Legion. What emerged was an exhibit that endorsed in every detail the official version of Hiroshima that has endured since 1945: The atomic bombings were necessary to prevent an invasion of Japan and save up to a million American lives. Now historians and disarmament activists were angry. A delegation of scholars, including the authors of this book, met with the museum director to protest the

censorship, labeling it "historical cleansing" and "patriotic correctness." Peace activists scheduled protests to greet the opening of the exhibit.

Finally, on January 30, 1995, the Smithsonian announced that it was, in effect, canceling the exhibit. Now there would be displayed only the plane, a plaque, and a tape of the flight crew recounting the mission. Hiroshima would be excluded altogether.

Another controversy erupted over plans by the U.S. Postal Service to issue a stamp bearing an image of the mushroom cloud, to commemorate the use of the bomb against Japan. The A-bomb stamp was canceled, but America's nerve endings appear more sensitive to Hiroshima than ever. Half a century ago something revolutionary happened, and it changed everything. But instead of attempting to come to terms with the atomic bombing, on all its levels of meaning, Americans continue to treat Hiroshima, above all else, as a threat to our national self-image.

Why does Hiroshima still matter, now that the Cold War has ended and the Soviet Union no longer exists as a nuclear threat? Here we would stress that nuclear danger has by no means disappeared, that tens of thousands of nuclear warheads remain in the world, often under less control than in the past. The danger of nuclear proliferation is greater than ever; the bomb may soon be in the hands of reckless leaders or terrorist groups. Since Nagasaki, nuclear weapons have not been exploded in a war, but they have nearly been used on a number of occasions. We can hardly put permanent faith in the mixture of restraint and good fortune that has prevailed. Nuclear weapons are still the ultimate threat, in ways that can be traced back to Hiroshima.

Hiroshima set a precedent for the use of the weapon—an example that continues to be widely endorsed. As long as we continue to defend and justify the Hiroshima model we risk making that kind of decision again. But there is another reason why Hiroshima matters. We believe that Americans need to confront Hiroshima and fill in the blanks in history, because no matter what we think of dropping the bomb, it has affected us deeply. Our present historical moment cries out for candor. Around the world, previously suppressed experience has been uncovered, notably in Russia and Eastern Europe. America has had its own revelations of suppressed history in connection with the Vietnam war, the Iran-Contra affair, and most recently, radiation experiments conducted by the government and

the military (which originated in the secrecy surrounding the Hiroshima bomb). Americans are increasingly aware of the value of such confrontations for our political, ethical, and psychological well-being.

To be sure, no country ever fully confronts its own history, least of all when morally vulnerable. Japan, for example, has been deeply divided over coming to terms with its brutal behavior prior to, and during, World War II. Some Japanese justify this avoidance by pointing to what America did in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—just as some Americans point to Japanese silence about its atrocities as a reason to minimize or justify the atomic bombings. Other voices in both countries recognize that nobody benefits from, and everyone is endangered by, such suppression.

The end of the Cold War enables us to look more clearly at the world. We need no longer be blinded by the polarization that so consumed and distorted all perceptions. We believe there is a yearning, conscious or unconscious, on the part of Americans, and most other people in the world, to have the burden of nuclear weapons—their past use, near-use and potential use—lifted from them. There is a wish to step out of the nuclear narrative for good. We believe that nuclear threat can never be truly eradicated without first coming to terms with Hiroshima.

The atomic bomb was used in the late stages of a long and dehumanizing war, and our enemies likely would have used it against us. "America was not morally unique—just technologically exceptional," historian Barton Bernstein has observed. Nuclear weapons pose a problem for everyone, but because America got there first our relationship to the bomb has been particularly painful. Our choice today is between perpetuating a mind-set that allows another Hiroshima—or creating one that prevents that outcome and enhances human life.

Hiroshima is not just an event of the past but a source of vital insight for the future. Yet few Americans know the full story of either the decision to use the bomb or its human effects. This is partly due to misleading official statements and government secrecy. But the most compelling reason for the failure to confront Hiroshima is our disinclination to do so—a collective form of psychic numbing.

From the moment the American public learned of the use of the bomb and caught glimpses of its devastating power, we have been struggling with what to do with that knowledge and those images. There was

an almost immediate awareness that the weapon represented a new totality of destruction from which no one was safe. "Seldom, if ever, has a war ended leaving the victors with such a sense of uncertainty and fear," radio commentator Edward R. Murrow observed, "with such a realization that the future is obscure and that survival is not assured."

But very quickly, there was an impulse of a different kind, what we perceive as a "wrong turning," an effort on the part of officials to justify the use of the bomb on ethical grounds, to hide its grotesque effects on people, and to deny the weapon's revolutionary significance. "This is the story of a pride that begot blindness," Lewis Mumford observed in 1948. It represented an inability to confront the full truth of Hiroshima, an insufficient recognition in our policies and our attitudes that nothing was the same after Hiroshima—that human survival was now at issue. The wrong turning reflected, and contributed to, Cold War fears, leading to a fateful embrace of nuclear weapons and an arms race with the Soviet Union that drained America, economically and psychologically, for decades.

Hidden from the beginning, Hiroshima quickly disappeared into the depths of American awareness. As early as 1946, the writer Mary McCarthy was calling Hiroshima "a hole in human history." Thirty years later, physicist Ralph Lapp, who worked on the atomic bomb, asked, "If the memory of things is to deter, where is that memory? Hiroshima has been taken out of the American conscience, eviscerated, extirpated." Whatever our avoidance and numbing, Americans remain haunted by the atomic bombings, all the more so because they remain obscure, distant, and mysterious, and because they were our doing.

What is remarkable is that the terms of the Hiroshima debate have changed so little since August 1945.

From the start, Americans were not shown the human effects of the bomb. This reinforced the psychological resistance to taking in the horror of Hiroshima. Nearly fifty years later, the same impulses were at play in the Smithsonian dispute. Curators, under pressure, removed from the exhibit nearly every photograph of dead or badly injured Japanese civilians. There remains today a reluctance to face squarely what America did, or excuse it, perhaps even wish it away.

That there was no alternative to dropping atomic bombs on two Japanese cities remains an article of faith. For years opinion polls consistently

found public support for the use of the bomb by better than two-to-one margins. Those who present arguments to the contrary are often denounced as "revisionists" or accused of "revising history"—as if history is something static and new facts and interpretations are necessarily wrong, even unpatriotic. A congressman critical of the original plans for the Smithsonian exhibit condemned museum officials, explaining, "Their job is to tell history, not rewrite it." *What history? Whose version of history?*

Significantly, a recent Gallup poll (announced in March 1995) suggests, if not a change of heart, at least a reopening of the issue in the minds of many Americans. While 44 percent of those surveyed said they "would have dropped the atomic bomb" on Hiroshima, 49 percent would have "tried some other way" to force the Japanese to surrender. It seems clear that Americans are much more uncomfortable about what happened at Hiroshima than generally assumed.

In this book we examine the psychological and ethical impact of the Hiroshima bomb on Americans, and our struggles with and against what we call the "official narrative." A narrative is a story, a series of events told in a way that renders them coherent and thereby conveys some form of meaning. What the Hiroshima narrative conveys is the justification, even wisdom, of our use of the atomic bomb to save lives and end the war.

Struggles with the Hiroshima narrative have to do with a sense of meaning in a nuclear age, with our vision of America and our sense of ourselves. The poet Richard Hugo has observed: "The world never learns. History has a way of making the past palatable, the dead/a dream. . . ." Yet Hiroshima casts a shadow on every aspect of our personal and collective existence.

Most books about the atomic bomb and Hiroshima climax on August 6, 1945. Our book begins there, with Truman's announcement of the invention of the bomb and its use against Japan, which set the tone for the official narrative that followed.

Just three weeks earlier America had successfully tested an atomic device at the Trinity site in New Mexico. On July 26, the U.S. and Great Britain issued the Potsdam Declaration, demanding that Japan surrender unconditionally at once or else face swift and certain ruin by unidentified means. Two days later, the Japanese rejected the ultimatum, and President

Truman ordered the bomb used against the enemy as soon as possible. At fifteen minutes past eight on the morning of August 6 (Hiroshima time), one American plane dropped one bomb on one Japanese city, killing 100,000 people immediately, and fatally injuring at least 50,000 others. In his announcement, Truman began the process of justifying the bombing and shielding Americans both from the human effects of the bomb and its implications for the future.

From that beginning, we look at the "wrong turning" in the years immediately following the use of the bomb against Japan. Instead of viewing Hiroshima as an ethical crisis and a harbinger of danger, Americans became entranced by the bomb, drawn to its destructive power. We also reveal, from personal interviews and considerable original research, what could be called the Hiroshima cover-up—the suppression of evidence (including articles, photographs, and film footage) that showed the human consequences of the Hiroshima bomb.

Only after exploring America's early response to Hiroshima do we, in Part II, examine Truman's decision to use the bomb. This reverses the chronology, but in that way we are able to mirror how Americans actually experienced Hiroshima—first, what they were told, and then what really happened. We undertake not just historical analysis (based on the latest evidence) but a psychological study of the decision process, and especially of Harry Truman within that process. Carrying the story forward again, we then study Truman's defense of the Hiroshima decision in the many years that followed. We believe that no such evaluation of Truman and Hiroshima has been attempted before, and that a surprising portrait emerges.

In Part III, we examine how Americans have struggled with Truman's decision, and the Hiroshima narrative, ever since. This includes American presidents, journalists and historians, scientists, war veterans and peace activists. The nearly half century of struggle with the Hiroshima narrative culminated in the fierce controversy surrounding the Smithsonian exhibit, which we explore in detail.

Then, in our concluding section, we examine how the psychological sequence of the use of the bomb, and America's response to it, left its mark on all that followed. We consider the grave, and little recognized, costs of Hiroshima: nuclear entrapment, moral inversion, national self-betrayal, en-

during patterns of secrecy and numbing, deep cultural confusions, and the fear of futurelessness.

But our conviction, finally, is that we need not be permanently bound to that legacy. By confronting it, and exploring what it has done to living in the late twentieth century, we embark on a path of renewal.

PART I

EXPLAINING HIROSHIMA— THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

for the movie our search for existential meaning has become?
 The gathering-together-of-the-folk-on-the-beach, a millennial
 hootenanny of ludic glee. . . .
 the wild blue yonder, the sweet bye-and-bye,
 heaven and hell rolled into one brazenly illumed limbo,
 the collective Purgatorio of America's Century . . .
 the numinous, the sacred—an eternal Las Vegas of the soul. . . .

CHAPTER 8

LATE-TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEATH

—AND RENEWAL

After Hiroshima, it has been difficult to separate individual death from a vast, collective "death event." We still struggle with a foreground of impending personal death but do so against an intrusive background, of vague but menacing impersonal annihilation. And the world consists increasingly of people who have come to consciousness after Hiroshima and have therefore known only that state. The writer Scott Russell Sanders, for example, born in October 1945, tells us: "My birth sign was the mushroom cloud."

By the 1960s, Americans were living a nuclear "double life": aware that any moment each of us and everything around us could be suddenly annihilated, yet at the same time proceeding with our everyday, nitty-gritty lives and conducting "business as usual." But to understand how that inner division came about we need to go back to Hiroshima itself. In receiving the message of the revolutionary destruction of that city, Americans and others throughout the world found that, once and for all, their relationship to death, and therefore to life, had changed. As early as 1946, the psychoanalyst Edward Glover declared that Hiroshima and Nagasaki had rendered actual the most extreme fantasies of world destruction en-

countered in the insane or in the nightmares of ordinary people. In that way, "the capacity so painfully acquired by normal men to distinguish between sleep, delusion, hallucination and the objective reality of waking life has for the first time in human history been seriously weakened." And later Norman Mailer was to write of being "doomed to die as a cipher in some vast statistical operation"; and with "death being causeless, life was causeless as well . . ."

Both observations suggest that, after Hiroshima, the individual self is threatened with being overwhelmed by, or dissolved into, the larger absurd death event. Our own observation is that the self has been pressed toward an inner division that resembles "doubling"—the formation of two conjoined but relatively autonomous selves, each constructed around a way of anticipating death. We all go through life with both a *measured self* and an *apocalyptic self*. The measured self deals with everyday living, seeks a certain balance between life and death, seeks the culmination of a meaningful life in a "good death." Whatever the historical confusions and threats, the measured self seeks to make its way through the life cycle and to contribute to the work of the world. But breaking out of that mode is the "apocalyptic self," the self preoccupied with the nuclear end, haunted by images of mass killing and dying, and haunted by death in general. The agenda of the apocalyptic self, however addressed, is that of the death event.

The apocalyptic self can readily enter into a fundamentalist scenario, in which a vision of the end of the world is seen as a prelude to new spiritual achievement (such as the Second Coming of Jesus)—so that even nuclear threat can be subsumed to an immortality system. But the apocalyptic self can be quite secular, can, for example, be associated with imagining the nuclear end (Hiroshima is invaluable here) as a means of combating it—the kind of psychological process seized upon by antinuclear movements.

The apocalyptic self has grave dangers. It may press toward totalistic behavior—toward destroying or killing—in order to head off a perceived death event. Expressions of the apocalyptic self invite extremes of ethnic passion and even genocide. The designated victims (as in Bosnia or Rwanda) may have nothing directly to do with Hiroshima or nuclear weapons, but energies of unlimited destruction that were set loose have much to do with psychological patterns of post-Hiroshima apocalypticism.

Yet an element of the apocalyptic self is both necessary and inevitable

if one is to imagine our world with any degree of authenticity—to connect the self with the technological apocalypse we human beings may perpetrate. No one, after Hiroshima, is ever completely free from terrifying images of a death that is absurd and unacceptable. Nor is anyone—and this includes the most extreme of fundamentalists—free from a need for a measured self to deal with ordinary life experience and with some anticipation of one's individual death.

It would seem that each of us maintains both a measured and an apocalyptic self, and that we switch back and forth between them according to need and inclination. All of us, in highly varied ways, seek some balance between the two selves, a balance that enables us to cope with both everyday life and a shadow of total death.

Death in the late twentieth century, then, is no less confused than life. Individual death is still very much an issue, even when the apocalyptic self seems to predominate. Christian fundamentalists, for example, remain highly concerned about being "raptured up" and thereby escaping death as individual people. But fundamentalist movements—ethnic, nationalistic, or religious—tend increasingly to provide the immortality systems so hungered for in our age. The great task of this millennial transition is to find modes of larger human continuity—symbolic immortality—that, instead of invoking literalized apocalyptic fantasy, emphasize genuine possibilities for enhancing human life.

RENEWAL

Indeed it may be our very troubled relationship to death—our inveterate concern with its meaning for us—that can call forth our resilience. We can respond to our death anxiety by thrashing about uselessly or even destructively, but we are also capable of re-creating elements of self for coping with our age.

The Freudian revolution emerged from late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century confusions and contradictions, largely sexual but also concerned with the broader area of living and dying in the face of extraordinary historical change. Erik Erikson's work on identity extended that revolution and spoke to the radical historical dislocations prior to and in connection with World War II, dislocations that again had to do with how and where one lived and died. Hiroshima forced us to look much further into absurd death in connection with imagery of extinction—with the

death event—and into ways of being that might serve us in our benighted but by no means doomed era.

For example, when a Christian theologian calls for a nonfundamentalist “retrieval of the apocalyptic tradition,” he is asking for an expression of apocalyptic imagination appropriate to our plight. That kind of imagination can help us to reconstruct our distinctions between individual death and a larger death event. We can do that in our post-Hiroshima world only by confronting both.

For individual death, one requires new versions of ancient wisdom, in recognizing that the matter cannot be avoided. As Chris Offut puts it, “No one surfed the river Styx.” And concerning the larger death event, we need to explore what our own growing awareness of the mortality of the planet is. Deepening that recognition could contribute to powerful constructive energies. Western philosophy has long realized that we must imagine our own death in order to live more fully. After Hiroshima, however, our further task is to imagine the end of the world in order to take steps to maintain human existence.

We can then break with the atrocity-producing situation created by the nuclear megamachine even prior to Hiroshima. We can return to human agency in controlling our lethal technology. And we can “disenthrall ourselves” from the nuclear deity and from the Hiroshima narrative that has so long shielded and promoted that deity. We can come to recognize the extent to which that Hiroshima narrative has blunted our senses and subverted our moral imagination. For achieving that disenthralment, nothing is more powerful than images of the actual Hiroshima experience, of what the bomb did there to fellow human beings.

The effort must extend indefinitely into the future. But if we keep Hiroshima before us, it can be rediscovered by each generation in ways that contribute to nuclear disenthralment. In the process, we can experience—as Harold Bloom said of our contemplation of *Frankenstein's* monster—“added consciousness” and “a heightened realization of the self.”

Relevant here are present-day capacities for the “protean self” and the “species self.” The first represents a reconstruction of that which has been shattered, a putting together of odd elements of self in ways appropriate to contemporary threats and possibilities. The second, the species self, draws upon an oddly hopeful aspect of post-Hiroshima destructive technology. Because all human beings on the earth could be wiped out more or less

simultaneously, we are forced to recognize our *shared fate* as fellow members of a single species in trouble. While retaining important parts of existing identity elements (family, religious, occupational, national), these can be subsumed to a sense of being part of humankind.

In these pages, we have explored what Hiroshima means—and has done—to America. After fifty years, Hiroshima still has enormous salience for us. Since the end of the Cold War, our awareness of nuclear threat has diminished, but the weapons continue to endanger us in myriad ways, and the Hiroshima raw nerve remains.

Recent events have produced new worries about proliferation. Just as fear of a “Korean bomb” began to subside came a report that Iran may be able to build the weapon within five years. The odds that terrorists may obtain a bomb have dramatically increased, largely because of the breakup of the Soviet Union and subsequent loss of control over nuclear materials. In America, deteriorating conditions at aging nuclear-weapons facilities, such as Hanford and Oak Ridge, have not only exacerbated the nuclear-waste crisis but also raised fears about possible leakage of plutonium, the release of radioactive contaminants into the atmosphere, or an accidental chain reaction leading to an explosion.

Nuclear arsenals, meanwhile, remain very much in place. Although the U.S. and Russia have agreed to scrap thousands of outmoded warheads, each will retain nine thousand of the newest and most accurate variety even after the next round of arms cuts. Russia remains disturbingly unstable, and in America there are constant calls for spending more on what one high Pentagon official has called “future nuclear weapons missions.” With the end of the superpower confrontation, the Hiroshima model for use may be more relevant than ever, for now a nation with the bomb may be more tempted to use it against an enemy without one.

Ian Clark has observed that “anyone who would seek to deny the legitimacy of nuclear weapons must first of all burst open the moral cocoon in which they have been nurtured since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” Confronting the Hiroshima decision would be an important step in properly stigmatizing the weapons. When we admit that the weapons cannot be used, then we can discuss whether they can be eliminated, or reduced to a minimal number, perhaps fewer than one hundred, that would no longer threaten global destruction. This is an idea that is in the air, as the support

of a number of respected military leaders suggests. Far fewer nuclear weapons in the world would reduce environmental degradation, limit proliferation, and curb the chances that terrorists might assemble a weapon.

The responsibility, and the blame, is by no means all ours. Soviet leaders in particular have much to answer for in this area, as in many others. But as George Kennan once observed, we must remember that it was we Americans "who first produced and tested" the bomb, "we who were the first to raise its destructiveness to a new level with the hydrogen bomb . . . and we alone, so help us God, who have used the weapon in anger against others, and against tens of thousands of helpless noncombatants at that." He added:

I know that reasons were offered for some of these things. I know that others might have taken this sort of lead had we not done so. But let us not, in the face of this record, so lose ourselves in self-righteousness and hypocrisy as to forget the measure of our own complicity in creating the situation we face today.

Confronting Hiroshima can be a powerful source of renewal. It can enable us to emerge from nuclear entrapment and rediscover our imaginative capacities on behalf of human good. We can overcome our moral inversion and cease to justify weapons or actions of mass killing. We can condemn and then step back from acts of desecration and recognize what Camus called a "philosophy of limits." In that way we can also take steps to cease betraying ourselves, cease harming and deceiving our own people. We can also free our society from its apocalyptic concealment, and in the process enlarge our vision. We can break out of our long-standing numbing in the vitalizing endeavor of learning, or relearning, to feel. And we can divest ourselves of a debilitating sense of futurelessness and once more feel bonded to past and future generations.

We return to Hiroshima, then, to confront our own dark truths—but also to awaken in ourselves our many-sided moral and psychological alternatives for living and dying, and for enhancing the human project.

CODA

Our book is about America but it emanates from Hiroshima. So we must revisit that city as we reach the book's end. In the memory of Hiroshima survivors reside special truths that exist nowhere else. Their narrative is one of actuality, of consequences.

Hijiyama Hill overlooks the city. It has a haunted feeling, for many of the victims of the atomic bombing escaped to this hill on August 6, 1945, only to die of their injuries. A survivor, a history professor, later told one of us about climbing Hijiyama on that day and looking back at the city. "I saw that Hiroshima had disappeared," he said. "I was shocked by the sight. . . . What I felt then and still feel now I just can't explain with words. . . . But Hiroshima didn't exist—that was mainly what I saw—Hiroshima just didn't exist."

Today, one observes from Hijiyama a thriving, rebuilt city. Yet, from that vantage point, it is still easy to imagine the old Hiroshima, for the topography has not changed. Six branches of the Ota River still snake through the city, and hills surround Hiroshima on nearly every side. These are the hills that provided the "focusing effect" that turned the force of the first atomic blast back on the city.

Looking down from Hijiyama one finds Hiroshima in the bottom of a natural bowl formed by the hills. A visitor cannot fail to envision a weapon of mass destruction exploding in a bright flash high overhead. That image of a flash over the very center of a city is hard to erase, as one imagines it enveloping the entire area and all its people.

Another Hiroshima truth can be found in the Peace Park. It is not one of the more prominent symbols, such as the A-bomb Dome (the crumbling remains of a building mostly destroyed in 1945). Rather, it rests under a plain mound of earth, covered with grass, about ten feet high and fifty feet across.

Inside this hollow mound, a visitor encounters an eerie collection of porcelain canisters sitting on a series of shelves. There are about one thousand cans in all, and each holds the ashes of a victim of the atomic bomb—