

Densho Digital Repository
Naoko Wake Collection of Oral Histories of US Survivors of the Atomic Bombs Collection
Title: Paul Satoh Interview
Narrator: Paul Satoh
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
Location: East Lansing, Michigan
Date: August 23, 2015
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-9-17

[Mr. Satoh's son Gordon Satoh was present at the interview, and when he speaks, he is denoted as GS]

<Begin Segment 17>

NW: Um, speaking of connections, um . . . do you know that there are more than one groups of survivors in the U.S. who get together and organize themselves so that they can be better recognized?

PS: Hm.

NW: They first came together in the late 1960s, in California, and then that was in Los Angeles and they had a branch in San Francisco early in the 1970s and they became a survivor's group. And then there are some, you know, splits later on so. But . . .

PS: What did they do?

NW: Well so, actually one of the things that they did in the 1970s, but also in the early part of the 1980s is to um, demand recognition by the U.S. government.

PS: Ahhh.

NW: Because there are people who were born in the States or Hawai'i and they were in Hiroshima for family reasons, right?

PS: Yeah.

NW: And then they happened to be affected by the bomb.

PS: Yeah. The citizens were. Yeah.

NW: And then of course you came back. So they—they realized that, well, it's good to be recognized by the Japanese government, but we are American citizens and just like the people you read a book about.

PS: Yeah, they were reading some of these people. This is the 70th year of the anniversaries for that. And there are many newspapers and the uh—like NHK International. They had an interview with a lady who has . . .

NW: Kazu Suyeishi, maybe.

PS: Yes. Yes.

NW: And she is one of the leaders of those organizations that still exist today.

PS: Oh, is that right? Yeah.

NW: But you obviously didn't have any contact or connections with any . . . ?

PS: Because I was already . . . well first of all, I—it's kind of interesting because the—most of the people that I see are the peace activists. Very much peace activists. They—they are . . .

NW: You mean survivors themselves?

PS: Survivors themselves. I have never heard a word saying hey, you know, Japan has to be—worried about the safety of—the security of the Japan itself. Although, world peace is important. But instead, they were—we have to achieve the world peace. The peace forever. And uh, no nuclear . . . I think it's very naive in that sense. I do not belong to any organization so does not mean I could invite anybody [?], but the more I started thinking about what's happened, as I mentioned to you in my brief comments, uh, 2009 I went to Japan in April. You know, that was the day that North Korea shot the long-range missile across Japan and went into the Pacific Ocean.

GS: So nervous about them being over there at the time.

PS: Yeah. Yeah. And they—

NW: Yeah. That's very understandable.

PS: Every . . . Yeah, every ten minutes or so, the NHK says well, the new—the North Korean missile just passing over the Niigata prefecture. So then, passing over the uh, [?] cities. And then, well, their whole thing, the Japanese people—my classmates too, they not really think that was a big issue. And they—he thought—was laughing about it. Well I hope that they—they probably will not hit us, but, uh . . . I do not underestimate that. Because if we can work with people who are logical and normal group of people then that's fine, but then, these people are not really that normal. Because they—their goal is to kill you. And if you . . . if the Jewish people think about the same way—about the Iran. If the Iranians said the—the ultimate goal in life is to kill Jews—Jewish people, why do they have to say, well, let's have peace with them? And that, I think, is the thing I still have, kind of—I started getting that feeling more—much more intense now. Uh, the—because North Korea and Iran and they—even Pakistan has a nuclear bomb.

NW: Mm. So maybe you can tell me a little more, in detail, about why you describe yourself as a hiding or hidden survivor? You said earlier that you feel as though many survivors, including survivors here are peace activists, and I—I don't think it's true. And there are lots of people who are not peace activists who are also survivors. But, regardless of that—

PS: Well I have to know about that, you know?

NW: Yeah, but why—why do you—why—where does it come from that you are a hidden survivor?

PS: Yeah . . . well first of all . . . really . . . the thing is, being Japanese personality-wise. Um, my, telling other people I was there and I was exposed to the nuclear bomb . . . probably not give them much information, and uh, if they have the information, uh, what can they do about it? So uh, my family knows. My few good friends know about it. Oh, that will be fine. But uh, then, I will not publicize myself as the victims and do [something] about it, in public, uh the organized fashions. And, that's probably the reason why I was—I wasn't really hiding myself. But then, I never volunteered the information to other people.

NW: Mhm. So you were not even aware of those existing organizations?

PS: No, I don't know that—that those people.

NW: Mhm.

<End Segment 17> - Copyright © 2015 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.