

A-bomb survivors studied

World: Health effects of bomb examined.

By Noaki Schwartz

Associated Press

TORRANCE — More than 60 years after an atomic bomb leveled Hiroshima during World War II, Kaz Suyeishi can still hear the cries of the kindergartners huddled outside her house looking for their mothers.

The terrified 5- and 6-year-olds were being comforted by their teacher, her own face burned and bloated from the blast. The next day they were all dead from the mysterious new bomb, said Suyeishi.

As parts of the world appear to be lurching once again toward nuclear armament, Suyeishi says she is disappointed. Now 80 and living in Torrance, Suyeishi has spent her life speaking out against what she terms "nothing but misery, stupidity."

"I don't say who started the war, who dropped the bomb," said Suyeishi, president of the American Society of Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-bomb Survivors. "It should never happen again."

Suyeishi, one of the estimated 300,000 people who survived the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is part of a long-term study on the health affects of the



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Kaz Suyeishi, president of the American Society of Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-Bomb survivors, speaks during a news conference at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Torrance.

bomb blasts. This weekend, about 150 survivors will submit to health exams by a team of physicians from the Hiroshima Prefectural Medical Association at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Torrance.

The checkups have taken place every two years since 1977 in California, which has the largest number of bomb survivors living in the United States. Studies have shown that a high percentage of the survivors suffer from thyroid problems, colon and stomach cancer, leukemia, cataracts and anemia.

The humanitarian mission also aims to bring attention to

the damage caused by weapons of mass destruction.

Suyeishi described the day the bomb was dropped as "the most beautiful day" with a blue sky that held a single silver airplane which looked to her like an angel. Then there was a white spot and a hot flash, she said.

"One second before it was heaven," she said. "One second after, it was hell."

The bomb had bleached the sides of buildings and walls, leaving only what appeared to be shadows of the people who had moments earlier stood there. Many of those who were still alive were burned beyond recognition with skin hanging off them.

Suyeishi jumped under the eaves of a neighbor's house, which fell on top of her and broke her tailbone. The injury confined her to bed.

At least 140,000 people were killed by the Hiroshima bomb on Aug. 6, 1945, and the immediate death toll at Nagasaki three days later was estimated at 60,000 to 80,000. Survivors were subjected to both sympathy and prejudice by their fellow Japanese, who feared that partnering with a survivor would produce deformed children.

"The scar is in here," Suyeishi said, gesturing toward her heart. "This scar never disappears until we die."