

Minutes of the Second ABCC/RERF History Forum

Speaker: Mr. Toraji Miyagawa, former Chief, General Affairs Section, Secretariat, RERF

Moderator: Mr. Takanobu Teramoto, Executive Director

Date: 15:00-16:10, December 13 (Fri.), 2013

Place: Videoconference: Auditorium in Hiroshima laboratory and Conference Room 4 in Nagasaki laboratory

(Honorifics omitted; parenthetical statements represent complementary information for clarification purposes)

Teramoto: Thank you for participating in the second session of the ABCC/RERF History Forum series today. In the first session, we had an opportunity to listen to Mr. Okamoto of the Nagasaki Laboratory. In this second session, we are hoping that Mr. Miyagawa, who worked at the Hiroshima Laboratory, could tell us about his experiences and stories, especially before and after the Life Span Study (LSS) was launched in 1958.

First, I will share with you the purpose of this History Forum series. ABCC/RERF has engaged in conducting studies for 66 years, and the LSS has been globally recognized as the gold standard of studies on radiation risks. Since it is important to keep records of what ABCC/RERF has achieved, the Historical Management Committee has been launched to record its organizational history and also a history of the science of radiation risks. At a Committee meeting held before this Forum today, among other issues, we discussed the ideal way to preserve and disclose historical materials. While the Committee deals with such issues, it is important for all current RERF management and employees to learn about the history of ABCC/RERF. For this reason, we have created opportunities where we are able to listen to experiences and stories from former ABCC/RERF employees and learn more about the ABCC times.

I would like to introduce our speaker, Mr. Toraji Miyagawa. He joined ABCC in 1949 and worked in the Printing Office for five years. He then worked at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum for about one year. In May 1955, he returned to ABCC in the Division of Nonmedical Records and Coding (presently the Master File Section), Statistics, as a Group Leader. Later he became Unit Supervisor, then Assistant Section Chief, and finally Section Chief.

In 1975, after ABCC was reorganized into RERF, he assumed the position of Chief, General Affairs Section, Secretariat. In 1989, he retired from RERF. After working as an Adjunct Specialist, he worked at RERF for seven years as the Manager of the MHW (Ministry of Health and Welfare)-funded project to launch the Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims. He is currently the President of the RERF Hiroshima OB/OG-Kai (Retirees Club).

As a starter, we would like to hear how you joined ABCC.

Miyagawa: After the war, I worked for the Occupation troops until I lost my job there around 1947. Then, I was introduced to ABCC by a second-generation Japanese American, who was working at ABCC as an interpreter. I visited ABCC (which was located in Ujina at that time) in July 1949. They hired me immediately and put me in charge of printing work. I was the

only employee in charge of printing work, using one early duplicator (blue printing machine), which was called a “ditto machine.” My job was making the requested numbers of copies of documents handed in by a secretary of each department. ABCC decided to launch a new Printing Office, and accordingly a foreign staff member and I went to look at potential properties. We finally decided on a former barracks site in Hiro, Kure City for the Printing Office.

To start the Printing Office, four to five people, including photographers, were hired, and two offset machines and a large paper-cutting machine were purchased. In the Office, there was also a large-sized duplicator, called a “photostat machine,” which made photographic copies directly on paper. Printing orders from each Department at the Hiroshima Laboratory were communicated to the Printing Office in Hiro. Requested numbers of copies were made, and finished copies were delivered back to each Department.

When I made my visit to ABCC in Ujina in July 1949, several Department Chiefs and people in similar positions were out of the office. That was because they were at Hijiyama to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for ABCC’s new facilities at Hijiyama site. From around 1950, the relocation from Ujina to Hijiyama started. Accordingly, the Printing Office in Hiro was transferred to an empty building at the Ujina site, which was virtually the launch of a full-fledged Printing Office.

When the Printing Office finally settled in Hijiyama, there was a total of about 10 employees, including four to five illustrators, two people in charge of making prints, one responsible for the “photostat machine,” one in charge of plate-making, and one assistant.

Teramoto: What was it like to work for the Peace Memorial Museum for a year (after you resigned from ABCC once)? Was the Museum established by the City of Hiroshima?

Miyagawa: At that time, the Museum was located in a one-story building next to a community hall in the neighborhood of the entrance of the Gokoku Shrine. The Museum was about the same size as the RERF Auditorium. Dr. Nagaoka, the first Director of the Museum, collected A-bomb artifacts, such as roof tiles, rocks, bottles and other things from all over the city. In the Museum, such artifacts were exhibited with handwritten notes indicating where they had been A-bombed and other information. I was helping Dr. Nagaoka with this Museum project.

Teramoto: You returned to ABCC in the Division of the Nonmedical Records and Coding as a Group Leader. What did you do exactly?

Miyagawa: ABCC hired about 40 people, most of them females, to launch a mortality study. I held study sessions in the Auditorium to teach them the alphabet, the Hepburn system of Roman characters, and how to put words in alphabetical order as a tool for organizing materials.

Teramoto: In 1955, the Francis Recommendations were issued, which called for the launch of the current LSS. Had a mortality study, based on death certificates, already been underway by then?

Miyagawa: That is correct. A two-shift system was implemented to complete the mortality study in a short period of time, and it continued until around January 1960. The hours of the day shift were from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays. Those of the night shift were from 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. from Tuesdays to Fridays and from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

Teramoto: What did you do exactly for the mortality study?

Miyagawa: We duplicated the content of death certificates borrowed from the city hall and checked them against the master files to code the necessary data. Death certificates issued right after the war were far poorer than the current ones in terms of quality of format. At that time, doctors wrote diagnoses and symptoms at their discretion on a tiny piece of coarse paper like a baggage tag. Despite such quality, I believe, the death certificates were at least able to provide information on deaths and to allow us to code the causes of death. The scope of the early mortality study dated back to as early as 1945.

Teramoto: I believe that the Francis Recommendations, issued in the fall of 1955, stated that although the mortality study had already been launched, it had not been systematic enough. As a result of the Recommendations, was the mortality study revised to become a study where a structured cohort could be followed up and their death certificates collected?

Miyagawa: That is correct. At the beginning of 1956, it was decided to develop a consolidated questionnaire, since there were already a few kinds of questionnaires, including the RQ (Radiation Questionnaire) and the MQ (Migration Questionnaire). Based on requests from each Department, I drafted a new questionnaire, which, when completed around March, was the new MSQ (Master Sample Questionnaire). At that time, I worked night shifts as the Group Leader, and my job was only giving employees instructions at the beginning of the shift. After that, I had nothing else to do and therefore spent time working on the design of the MSQ in the Printing Office, where no one was there at night.

Teramoto: Were there some differences between the day shift and the night shift in terms of job description and the number of employees?

Miyagawa: In addition to the night shift, I came in for the day shift, because I needed to get a grip on the progress of work made during the day shift in order to give instructions to the night shift employees. Although there were fewer employees for the day shift, many of them were more experienced and reviewed the work done by the night shift the night before. I communicated such review results to the night shift employees.

Teramoto: After working night shifts, how did employees go down the hill of Hijiyama in the pitch-dark?

Miyagawa: Those who headed back home in the same direction gathered as a group to go down Hijiyama, in the direction of the police box at the bottom of Hijiyama or towards Danbara. Some went down with guards, janitors or others who left work around 10:00 p.m. Occasionally, some got a ride in an official car available to those who were engaged in autopsies at ABCC.

Teramoto: I heard that ABCC was criticized by some local communities in Hiroshima. Did you feel such frictions as an employee of ABCC?

Miyagawa: I personally never had a chance to contact study subjects. Field investigators carried out their jobs using the MSQ, and there were certain areas where it was very difficult. Experienced experts were assigned to those areas. I heard that some field investigators had frightening experiences when visiting some study subjects, and that some study subjects rejected their cooperation in very strong language. Protest groups came to the top of Hijiyama

on August 6, and once we took the precaution of taking the day off as scheduled.

Teramoto: In 1975, when ABCC was reorganized into RERF, a Japan-US cooperative research organization, were there any changes?

Miyagawa: I did not notice any changes. Regarding the organization-wide approval process, in the ABCC times, a relevant Department Chief simply approved a matter and then the results were shared with those who were concerned. In the RERF times, however, the process became more complicated, requiring submission of a *kiansho*, an approval request form, for each matter. When I prepared my first *kiansho*, I was at a loss because I did not know a thing about it.

In ABCC, when people approved something, they signed their names instead of using their seal. Therefore, we only used our seals when we received our salaries once a month.

RERF started to use a new pay scale, but our salaries were not changed since they were decided based on the amount we had received in the ABCC times.

The working hours were from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. However, employees of the Secretariat sometimes stayed past 5:00 p.m. because the MHW occasionally called in after 4:30 p.m.

Teramoto: When ABCC, which was solely operated by the U.S., was reorganized into RERF, jointly operated by Japan and the U.S., did society value that change?

Miyagawa: I believe so.

Teramoto: As a member of the Historical Material Management Committee, you have been involved in the deliberation on issues such as how to preserve historical materials and how to make them accessible to the public. I would like to hear from you about the preservation of historical records from the ABCC times.

Miyagawa: Around 1949, there was the Central File Section, consisting of three to four staff members. Delivery people used to visit each Department twice a day to pick up files to be stored at the Central File Section. They classified the collected files according to their content and then color-coded them for storage, using labels of more than ten different colors. When ABCC relocated to Hijiyama, the Central File Section dissolved. Those files were apparently returned to each Department, because I saw some documents with the stamp of "Central File" among other documents at the Department of Epidemiology and Statistics. I imagine that each Department Chief judged the necessity of the preservation for the returned files. I was once instructed by a Department Chief to destroy part of the returned documents. I witnessed that those documents were delivered by truck to the disposal facilities, located in the western part of Hiroshima Prefecture, to be destroyed there.

Teramoto: After retirement, you engaged in the preservation of records related to the A-bombing for the project to launch the Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims.

Miyagawa: At that time, there were seven or eight sub-committees for the project to consider the ideal way to preserve A-bomb-related records. We visited hospitals where medical records of A-bomb survivors were stored.

Teramoto: Last, we would like you to comment as the President of the ABCC/RERF

OB/OG-Kai (Retirees Club).

Miyagawa: We held the 27th annual meeting of the OB/OG-Kai this year. The number of attendees has been on the decline year by year, so I would like to ask all of you to join the OB/OG-Kai when you retire from RERF.

Mr. Miyagawa's talk was followed by questions and answers, as follows:

Question: There have been contactors since the ABCC times, and there has been a highly unique system to invite study participants to take health examinations biannually. The late-Dr. James Neel was deeply impressed by this system. Do you have any remarks about that?

Miyagawa: There were five to six local offices in the city, and contactors paid a visit by bicycle to study subjects living around each local office. At the time when you did not see many bicycles on the street, ABCC purchased about 100 bicycles. Also, we picked up study participants by Jeep to take health examinations at ABCC. I would attribute part of the success of the study to the money invested. I heard that some contactors, who had been policemen, military police or the like before, almost forced study participants to cooperate in the study. When those who violated ABCC's policy were identified, they were dismissed immediately by authority of a Department Chief, which showed the very severe aspect of working at ABCC at that time.

Teramoto: Mr. Miyagawa, thank you very much for your valuable stories. Please take good care of yourself. We would like to ask for your continuous support in the area of historical material management. [Applause]

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