

4/25/2016

Opinion Editorial

When I read the March 24th article (see links) in the New Mexican entitled Los Alamos team visits Japan to gain perspective on atomic bombings, my first reaction was anger. Anger that the Los Alamos “team” can spend tens of thousands of dollars to travel to Japan to find out how the Japanese feel about us bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki 71 years ago, but can’t even mention the 1945 atomic blast at the Trinity site, or how our own New Mexico “downwinders” feel about that fateful event.

Judith Stauber, director of the Los Alamos Historical Museum, states “New Mexico residents don’t hear a lot about the Japanese perspective”. She, along with the museum registrar and a 16 year old high school student were traveling this April throughout Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They happily blogged about sampling Japan’s yummy foods, lovely scenery, cultures and customs, complete with photo ops to send back home, while ostensibly conducting research for a new exhibit that will explore connections created through World War II and the Manhattan Project. A noble endeavor indeed.

Perhaps when her group returns, Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, of which Tina Cordova is the co-founder, will welcome them with open arms to New Mexican towns such as Tularosa, San Antonio, Carrizozo, and Mescalero country to learn of the locals’ perspective on Trinity bomb’s harmful effects on their lives and communities. 71 years later. To quote Tina “We were unwilling, unknowing, and uncompensated participants in the world’s largest science experiment”. Basically, guinea pigs at the hands of our own Federal government, who in 1945 dropped the first nuclear bomb on this planet in the middle of a human population numbering nearly 50,000 at the time...and then walked away.

Bo Jacobs, a researcher at the Hiroshima Peace Institute, states in one of the articles that the history of atomic energy is told very differently in Japan; instead of a proud celebration of technology and nuclear science, it is a story understood through “people who were killed, who lost family members, who were injured”. The innovation of the bomb is expressed only in “its human toll”. The Japanese are only statistics in the US story of innovation and military science. He goes on to state that “the differences between the US and Japanese narratives of the attack – they couldn’t be more different.” 71 years later.

But I beg to differ; the nuclear bomb survivors living in and around the Tularosa basin feel much the same way the Japanese survivors do. We know, because we have talked with Japanese survivors and journalists ourselves. We know, because compared to the rest of the United States, the higher morbidity and mortality statistics in many counties surrounding the Trinity site bear out the facts of 71 years of toxic exposure affecting generations. If the Los Alamos historical group wishes to discover the facts for themselves, I would welcome them to begin their real research right here at home, where they will find the local’s stories to be eerily similar to the Japanese stories; the one main difference is when Trinity was detonated at ground zero, it didn’t kill people outright as did Fat Man and Little Boy. But the lingering death and destruction aftereffects are all very much the same. 71 years later.

New Mexico's "downwinders" have been written out of the history books, including Los Alamos National Laboratory's museums and carefully crafted stories of the Manhattan Project. As a physician advocate and active member of Physicians for Social Responsibility, I am angry because a grievous wrong has yet to be righted. The people of New Mexico, the United States, and indeed the world including Japan, deserve the full truth. We demand equal time. And that time is now. 71 years later.

Dr. Maureen Merritt, DO, CMO, LCDR (ret.) United States Public Health Service
Advocate, federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA)
Advocate, federal Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA)
Member, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)
Founder, New Mexico Alliance for Nuclear Worker Advocates (NMANWA)
Core member, Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium (TBDC)

Email: abovepar33@gmail.com

Articles about Los Alamos Historical Museum Japan Initiative
Compiled 4/25/16

3/24/16 SFNM¹ *Los Alamos team visits Japan to gain perspective on atomic Bombings*, by Rebecca Moss

http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/los-alamos-team-visits-japan-to-gain-perspective-on-atomic/article_f735c739-4239-5d4b-bafb-0dff2ed34081.html

3/29/16 LADP² *Los Alamos Historical Museum Japan Initiative Underway*³

<http://www.ladaily.com/content/los-alamos-historical-museum-japan-initiative-underway>

4/2/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Museum Delegation Meets With Officials at U.S. Embassy in Tokyo*

<http://www.ladaily.com/content/los-alamos-historical-museum-delegation-meets-officials-us-embassy-tokyo>

4/3/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Society Team Visits Kyoto*

<http://www.ladaily.com/content/los-alamos-historical-society-team-visits-kyoto>

4/4/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Museum Team Meets Monica Bethe in*

Kyoto

<http://www.ladailypost.com/content/los-alamos-historical-museum-team-meets-monica-bethe-kyoto>

4/4/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Museum Team Travel to Hiroshima
to Meet With Colleagues on Partnership*

<http://www.ladailypost.com/content/los-alamos-historical-museum-team-travel-hiroshima-meet-colleagues-partnership>

4/7/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Museum Team Tours Hiroshima Peace
Memorial Museum*

<http://www.ladailypost.com/content/los-alamos-historical-museum-team-tours-hiroshima-peace-memorial-museum>

4/9/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Society Team Meets Counterparts at
Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum*

<http://www.ladailypost.com/content/los-alamos-historical-society-team-meets-counterparts-nagasaki-atomic-bomb-museum>

4/12/16 LADP *Los Alamos Historical Society Team's Last day in Japan*

<http://www.ladailypost.com/content/los-alamos-historical-society-teams-last-day-japan>