

David Petersen and Mandy Conti Authors Canada and Australia



David and Mandy today; David and Mandy in mid-1990s in Nagasaki; Book, "Survivors: The A-bombed Trees of Hiroshima"

Dr. David Petersen is originally from Canada. He has a degree in Psychology from the University of Calgary, a degree in Theater Studies from the University of Malta, a certificate of language instruction, and the highest level on the national Japanese Language Proficiency Test. He has published over two dozen books and articles, and has worked as a translator for the last 20 years.

Mandy Conti is originally from Australia. She has a degree in Environmental Science and a postgraduate teaching certificate from Griffith University, as well as a certificate of language instruction from the University of West Florida. She has taught English as a second language (ESL) internationally for more than 25 years, and her photographs have been enjoyed by thousands through davmandycollection.com and various social media sites.

David and Mandy met and got married in Japan. They lived in Hiroshima for four years and Nagasaki for one year. They co-authored "Survivors: The A-bombed Trees of Hiroshima" and "Prayers in Stone: Nagasaki's A-bomb Heritage Sites."

Website: www.davmandycollection.com
Twitter: [www.twitter.com/Digital_Decor](https://twitter.com/Digital_Decor)
Instagram: www.instagram.com/davmandy_collection
Books: www.lang-arts.com/books



How did you first discover the hibaku-jumoku? What inspired your regular "tree hunts" during your time in Hiroshima and eventually to writing the book, Survivors: The A-bombed Trees of Hiroshima?

I don't remember the first time that we encountered one of the trees, but I do know that the timing was significant. Mandy had just been through a cancer scare, and found their tenacity in the face of incredible adversity both inspiring and life affirming. They were also of interest to her because of her background in the field of environmental science. In my case, I enjoyed the challenge of piecing together whatever disparate information we could gather about them from a variety of Japanese sources, and then using my background in translation to introduce them to an English-speaking audience. This plus our shared love for photography made the "tree hunt" a natural fit for us, and an enjoyable weekend pursuit for our four years in Hiroshima.



Grove of A-bombed camphors near Chinzei Park, Nagasaki



Grove of A-bombed camphors in front of Nagasaki Nishi High School



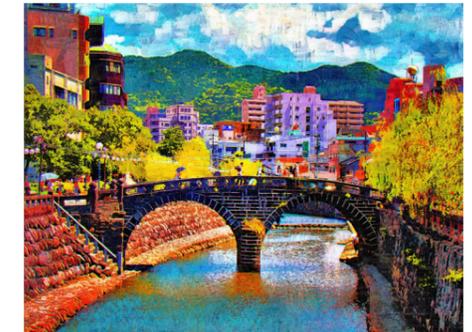
A-bombed white pine, Nagasaki



Crow on an A-bombed willow near the Children's Museum in Hiroshima



A-bombed camphor in Senda Park, Hiroshima



Artistic rendering of downtown Nagasaki, not far from the intended hypocenter



Artistic rendering of the A-bomb Dome at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park

What do hibaku-jumoku and your connection with Hiroshima mean for you?

Poised Janus-like as living witnesses to the worst chapter in our collective history, both the trees and the city itself attest to one simple but profound truth: Life Goes On. There will be scars and loss certainly, but life goes on, even in the face of the most unimaginable tragedy. The apparent fragility of the trees masks an adaptability capable of overcoming almost anything, a lesson that the world needs to hear, no more so than during the current pandemic.

There are now 98 GLH global partners in 36 countries. What could the presence of second-generation hibaku-jumoku saplings mean in different corners of the world?

Only Japan can relate first-hand to the horrors of atomic war, but there is no guarantee that this will remain so indefinitely. To be in the presence of a second-generation tree is to reflect on the darkness of the past, and to cultivate such a tree is to cultivate hope and determination that its horrific legacy will not be repeated. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that trees differ in their significance from culture to culture, and I would expect this to colour their impact in unexpected ways.

Besides GLH's current activities, do you think there is anything else that can be done for the hibaku-jumoku for a nuclear-free world and reverence of nature around the world?

I would like to see your project expanded to include the rich heritage of a-bombed trees and memorial sites in Nagasaki. This would seem to be a natural extension for your incredible efforts and would offer a host of new opportunities and perspectives to share with the rest of the world. The stories behind dozens of the Nagasaki trees are included in our latest book, mentioned below.

We understand you are hopefully working on an English language book about the hibaku-jumoku of Nagasaki? Please tell us a bit more about this, and when we can hope to see it published.

We spent a memorable year in Nagasaki gathering as much information as we could on the trees, monuments, and architectural sites, a process that culminated in the release of "Prayers in Stone: Nagasaki's A-bomb Heritage Sites," now in its second edition. In a departure from "Survivors The A-bombed Trees of Hiroshima," "Prayers" is organized as a guidebook for anyone interested in a pilgrimage to an a-bombed city, rather than strictly as a compendium of trees. But in keeping with the previous book, we took the opportunity to include original translations of A-bombed literature, in this case primarily by witnesses to the tragedy in Nagasaki.