

# A Destroyer Of Worlds

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## Documentary Film: 'In My Lifetime'

By

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Robert Frye at home in Millerton. *Photo by Marsden Epworth*

Among the movies at FilmColumbia's annual festival, Oct. 19-23 in Chatham, NY, is Robert Frye's sobering "In My Lifetime."

This part-time resident of Millerton presents a disturbing history of nuclear weapons and the grim prospects for life on earth if nuclear weapons are not dismantled and their production halted. Entirely.

The early minutes include a clip of Robert Oppenheimer, the American physicist who headed the Manhattan project in Los Alamos where the first atomic bomb was built, "The Gadget," an odd, bulky, inexpert round of metal nailed and chained and taped together.

Watching the first bomb exploded in the Nevada desert on July 16, 1945, Oppenheimer said later, "There floated through my mind a line from the Bhagavad Gita . . . 'Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.'"

The Atomic bombs dropped in Japan just weeks later killed 140,000 people in Hiroshima, 70,000 in Nagasaki. And the consequences are made clear with sequences drawn from 100 hours of archival footage. Frye shows us young, sober children, dying slowly of radiation sickness, turning obediently for the camera

to show how they were losing their hair. In one piece of what looks like a newsreel, the voice-over claims in that first attack, there was “nothing standing to hinder a full view of the city.”

One elderly Japanese man tells us only those at a distance saw a mushroom cloud. People closer saw “a pillar of fire.”

In 2008, Frye, and his wife, Diane Love, executive producer on the project, went to Nagasaki to film the Peace Memorial Ceremony for this documentary: bells, silence, prayers for the dead and a song from the Sunflower Choir, all Hibakusha, “explosion-affected people.” These survivors of the two bombings, shunned and sometimes feared their whole lives, are mostly women, mostly elderly, and a few younger women, too, for those in the womb surviving the attacks are also members of Hibakusha.

“Please don’t make any more of us,” they sang.

In interviews, Frye, a longtime producer for network television news, follows the politics of arming and disarming nuclear weapons over the last six decades and the efforts by international figures along with ordinary people around the globe to end the making and stockpiling of a weapon that, some tell us in this film, is a totally irrational response to ordinary warfare.

Frye, journalist and filmmaker, now 71, says it is his generation’s obligation to talk about nuclear weapons, to make clear the unspeakable damage they have wrought and their potential to end life entirely on this planet.

“I believe people can do something about this,” he tells me during an interview in Millerton. “My role here is to stir people’s imagination. And as the only country to have used nuclear weapons, we are obliged to act.

“It’s about responsibility, it’s about what this country stands for and what this country means to the world.”

*“In My Lifetime,” directed by Robert Frye, will be screened Oct. 22 at 3 p.m. in Morris Memorial on Park Row in Chatham, NY.*

For information and tickets, go to the attractive but confusing website, [www.FilmColumbia.festivalgenius.com](http://www.FilmColumbia.festivalgenius.com), or call 800-838-3006.

Frye will be present to answer questions about the film after the screening.