

## Excerpt from Interview with Winton Solberg

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Do you remember the day that you heard the news about the atomic bomb? And what your reaction to that was?

Solberg: I'm not sure I have a clear memory of the day that it happened.

DePue: When you heard about that later on, did you have a problem with the Americans doing that?

Solberg: It's a hard question to answer in retrospect. In thinking about that question, I have to give some background. At the end of the war, the Army had a point system. If you had a lot of points, based on how much time you had spent in combat or in Germany, you could be discharged from the Army. If you had a medium number of points, you would stay on in the Army of occupation. I was in that category. If you had a lesser number of points, you'd be sent from Europe to the Asian theater. So, as a soldier, I think I knew that the casualties out in Asia could be very, very large. I don't remember having a vivid or strong opinion one way or another. The bomb had to be dropped. This was just totally unethical. I think those thoughts came later, not so much during the time itself. as best I can recall.

DePue: Can I ask what your thoughts later, especially as an historian?

Solberg: I went to Nagasaki. I taught in Japan back in 1982. And I went to Hiroshima. Of course, it really comes down to the fact, I suppose, that if I were Truman, would I have said, "We have to drop it." Or would I have not have said that. Certainly being at Nagasaki and seeing what it did and reading about it and knowing the aftermath and all that, one feels that it should never have been dropped, should never have been made. On the other hand, if you're an American soldier, if you're the leader of Americans, how many American lives do you think you want to risk? I guess I haven't totally made up my mind. I haven't had to, and therefore, I avoid taking a firm stance on that.