PL-3-06 Kaeko Omori (Abstract only)

Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma: After Losing My Husband

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Abstract

My husband worked for 18 years as a subcontractor of Tokyo Electric Company. His job consisted of maintaining and cleaning power plants. One day, he was told that he had only 3 more months to live because of advanced lung cancer. We were shocked by that report and had him diagnosed again. But the result was malignant pleural mesothelioma, a condition even worse than lung cancer that was caused, we were told, by exposure to asbestos, a material we until then knew nothing about.

My husband had medical treatment for pleural effusion at first. Later, our doctor suggested an operation and we accepted that. However, after the operation, his condition failed to improve. He sometimes said that he wanted to commit suicide by jumping out a window. Two months later, on March 26th, 1998 my husband died of pneumonia.

I applied for workers' accident compensation insurance but the company did not accept it. Then I asked the Tokyo Occupational Safety and Health Center for assistance with the application. Even though Dr. Yasunosuke Suzuki at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in the US helped us, it took two years to get my application approved.

After that, I requested that the Tokyo Electric Company improve working conditions by having workers use masks for protection, but my request was not accepted. My husband was not told about asbestos by the company, was not supplied any masks, fell sick as a result and died, and yet the company did not offer even an apology.

My husband and I had planned to travel around Japan after his retirement but our dream failed to come true. I don't think my husband died. He was killed by the company and by the Government. So, I would like to tell about my experience to help reduce the number of asbestos victims around the world. Also, I hope that we victims can support each other through our organization.