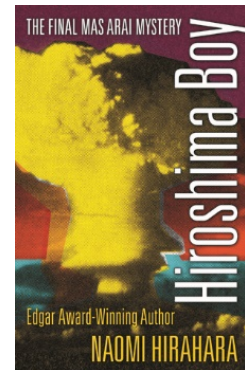


MARCH BLOG

Naomi Hirahara – *Hiroshima Boy*

I found this book enlightening as well as entertaining, also much less gruesome than most mysteries. I also recommend this book.

Hiroshima Boy is an unusual mystery/crime novel. The main character is Mas Arai, a Japanese American who is in his 80s. While there is a murder to be solved, the crime and search for the perpetrator seem a smaller part of the story than the reaction of Mas Arai to current life in Japan generally and the Hiroshima area specifically. Mr. Arai was born in the US of Japanese parents, but lived for 17 years in Hiroshima, including the day the atomic bomb fell and destroyed the city. Earlier books by Ms. Hirahara have Mas solving murders while working as a gardener in Los Angeles. They describe how the group of Japanese Americans who live in Los Angeles deal with the dominant culture and maintain their own network of people who often help each other. But they can also hurt each other. Ms. Hirahara wrote that this will be the last book starring her character Mas Arai, who is in his mid-80s by the time of this book.



Mas Arai returns to Hiroshima to deliver the ashes of his good friend to his friend's sister. On the visit he finds the body of a 14-year-old boy in the bay of an island near the city. He doesn't want to get involved, but somehow does get drawn into the case. He struggles with returning to a Japanese society that he doesn't feel a part of. And the people treat him as an outsider, not Japanese. He also feels not fully American, so is an outsider to both places.

In this book there is a murder, but not the multiple crimes from a serial killer that you find in many recent crime/mystery books. No spattered blood dripping from the pages. *Hiroshima Boy* doesn't use body count to hold the reader's attention. Even people who prefer bloody tales may enjoy reading about Mas Arai's adventures in Japan and with the Japanese.

Doug Gordon