

Experiences of the Great Tokushima Air Raid 徳島大空襲を体験して**Shigeru Yukio 繁 行雄****Myojin-cho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市明神町**

The Great Tokushima Air Raid occurred on the night of July 3rd, 1945, lasting until the early morning hours of the 4th and turned most of Tokushima City to scorched earth in one night. I will write about what happened at the time, I was 14 years old, when central Sako 9-chome, 13-banchi (today in the area of Sako 5-bancho, 10) was bombed.

On July 3rd at around midnight the air-raid sirens went off, we evacuated to the bomb shelter in the backyard, but because the alarm was lifted for all areas we went back into the house. Shortly after going back to bed flare bombs were dropped and suddenly the area had gotten really bright. When I left the house through the entranceway (*genkan*) a thundering noise was accompanied by flames in the eastern sky (probably around Tokushima station). We panicked and again evacuated into the bomb shelter in the backyard. At the time the first alarm sounded I had my backpack, but this time aside from my sister we were all empty-handed.

I heard a loud hissing sound and immediately the fire bombs started raining down. We hurried out of the bomb shelter and saw the house next door cut right in half with flames bursting out of the building. (I think they were oil fire bombs with four wings).

My family (my mother, elder sister, two younger sisters and me) felt the impending danger and couldn't escape through the front so we had to break the fence in the back and fled to a rice field in the area of Yaso-cho. The sight we experienced from the evacuation shelter (today in Tokushima-shi, south Yaso-cho 1-chome, in the rice fields fifty metres east of the Nissei factory) was a sea of flames south of the Yaso River. I experienced the rattling sound when the roof tiles fell from the burning houses or the rumbling when the houses broke down right in front of me, but oddly enough it wasn't fear but pure amazement that struck me in that moment.

I was watching the B29 bombers circling above us while they dropped their incendiary bombs (phosphorus fire bombs in a hexagon shape). When they dropped their bombs momentarily a bright light was released and while giving off sparks they turned into bright columns (I don't know how many) heading downwards. One came heading towards our evacuation shelter but luckily stopped around fifty metres in front of us. Fortunately enough it fell into a rice field and didn't cause any damage.

When it started getting bright my father came looking for us and checked if we were all okay. He was relieved to find us without injuries.

My dad put a cabinet next to a well and poured water over it, took the Buddhist mortuary tablets and the family register and evacuated, but because of the immense heat

the cabinet burned leaving no traces.

When we returned to the burned ruins of our house I looked east and I could see Mt. Shiroyama. It wasn't visible from our house before but only little remained of the concrete buildings and the white warehouses that had blocked the view. Only burned land was left.

I pray for the happiness of the souls of everyone who got hit by a fire bomb, who lost their place of refuge and died by fire, those who put too much trust in their bomb shelters and died of suffocation, to everyone who fell victim to the atrocities of war.

It was a four hour long nightmare that I would never want to experience again.