

The Great Tokushima Air Raid 徳島大空襲**Nishi Miyo 西 美代****Suketo-honcho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市助任本町**

It was the year 1945 in April, when a bomb was dropped on the school yard of Suketo Elementary School, one bomb dropped in the area of Tomida Elementary School thirty metres away from my house into the porch (*genkan*) of a neighbor of ours. Seven of our neighbors died. That was only two houses away from ours. The broken glass of the door facing the street was scattered inside the house with plaster from the walls and broken pieces of the bomb. Luckily my dad and I were at work during the bombing and not in the house.

The 3rd of July was my 18th birthday. In the early morning hours of the 4th I was woken up by the air raid sirens. When I stepped out of the door I was facing a picture that seemed like the apocalypse. The city was a sea of flames, fleeing people were surrounded by whirling hot winds and the plants were shaking. I was running through a tunnel of burning houses to a rice paddy in front of Tomida Elementary School. I was constantly looking up to the sky to not get hit by one of the incendiary bombs that were coming down.

I got water at a house that escaped being burned and relaxed. After eleven my dad

came back from my older sister's house to find me. I was so happy to see him. He brought rice balls for me to eat until I was full up.

I decided to go to my older sister's house. I walked on the train tracks from Tomida Station and passed the Prefectural Government Office. After I left Tokushima Station I saw an ice making company in flames in Dekijima. I passed Sako Station and went towards the river just before Kuramoto Station, where I got on a boat to cross the river. After that I got on a boat to cross the Yoshino River and then continued to walk to Aizumi. At a farmer's house I got straw sandals and they let me drink water. After that I walked to Gosho in Donari while resting on the way. Luckily I scouted out the area three times before I went shopping on my bicycle. From the fire alarm bell in Hironaga on I headed towards the mountains. There was a passage in the woods of saw tooth oaks on both sides which was very scary so I had to give my last power to rush through as quickly as I could. I was relieved when I saw the light of my sister's house. It was eight at night. Finally, I arrived. My sister said: "I'm so glad you survived" as she shed tears of joy. That was the day after my 18th birthday.

After about two weeks I left my sister's house and went to the family of my dad's younger sister in a place called Nakanosho. The family of three that got burned out of their house lived in a little two story warehouse like building behind the former house.

Twenty people of four households lived there together, it was busy every day. When the air raid alarm rang and I looked outside the window I saw the air fights around the airport on Wadajima. Three villages (Miyagura, Itano, Wadajima) were between Wadajima and our house, but because there were only fields I had a good view from the large glass window in our kitchen. I saw the burning airplanes fall. Because I saw it from far away they didn't seem like they were very high, so it was like watching a movie. These pictures were burned into the back of my retina.

After our house burned and the company I worked at disappeared, I went to stay at the house of the family of a friend in Iya. I was horrified when the B29 bombers flew by and a thunderous roar reverberated in the valley. One day, when I came down from the mountain to go to Iya Station and wait for a train, I heard the radio broadcast of the emperor and knew that the war was over.