

A Testimonial of the Tokushima Air Raid

徳島大空襲にまつわる体験談

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On July 4th of the twentieth year of Showa (1945), the time of the early morning Tokushima Air Raid, I was assigned as a member of the Special Attack Unit for the Tokushima Navy Air Corps. On that early morning of July 4th, the air raid warning went out, I headed toward the first-rank elevated machine-gun position on the airfield. Both with my eyes and a telescope, I saw the fire bombings over Tokushima City carried out by B29s (Since it was a highly magnified telescope used by the Naval Anti-Aircraft Division, I was able to see quite well).

Due to the firebombs being dropped on Tokushima City, white smoke steadily rose up over a considerable extent and height. As though it were broad daylight, the sky steadily became pinker, then from an orange colour to a bright red within the flames. I could see clearly that only Shiroyama was pitch-black. As the bombs fell on Tokushima, which was concealed within the white smoke, the smoke spread out horizontally and like many strands of thread, the bombs fell shining and glittering with alternating colours of gold, silver, red, pink, and white. The bombs were dropping continuously over and over again.

It was an unspeakable sight.

The air raid ended at the break of dawn and I soon rushed out of the Air Corps. My family of six lived in Takajo-machi 3-chome. I don't remember exactly how I got there, but I somehow came to the neighbourhood of Shinmachi Elementary School.

After all was said and done, a great heat and typhoon-like winds swirled about within the flames. At the gate of Shinmachi Elementary School, a man dressed in the national uniform was leaning against a semi-large concrete water tank used for fire-fighting. With his head hanging down he said to me, "Water, please give me water." I didn't see any water though, nor people and there was nothing I could do. After walking a bit more, I saw the black body of a person (I couldn't tell if they were male or female) lying on the road with the right side of their body facing up and they were positioned as though they had been running. Continuing on, I went through the area around the foothills of Iga-cho and faced in the direction of Takajo-machi, but since I wasn't able to see on the main street due to the smoke, flames and hot winds, I wasn't able to pass through. I had given up on finding my family. On the way to finding my brother in Dekijiima, I couldn't remember the place at all and it seemed like I ran into places with bodies laying about many times, but I had no choice but to overlook it all.

I came to the railroad crossing at Dekijima, but I couldn't find anyone and the intense

heat of the typhoon-esque winds were here too. Electrical lines were hanging down and the walkway widened, but there was no place to stand. The brick prison fence stretched toward Maegawa Bridge and there was a long line of bicycles continuing along the ditch by the fence. I gave up on my brother too, since his house was obscured by smoke. That was the kind of scene it was just after the air raid.

Later, I heard from my mother that my grandmother's (eighty years old) whereabouts were unknown. My mother, big sister, and three little brothers had all escaped into a large drainage ditch underneath a short bridge between Akita-machi 3-chome and 4-chome. I heard that they drank the water in the ditch and used it to cool their bodies and protect them from the heat. I also heard that my little sister (an elementary school student) evacuated on her own to the shrine in Higashi-Tomida.