

**Evidence of War Damage 戦災の跡****Fujii Takaya 藤井 孝也****Tori-machi, Tokushima-shi 徳島市通町**

On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945, my father came home from work late in the evening – he had been digging an air raid shelter in the eastern part of Moto-machi, an area that had already been evacuated. A neighbour had told my father that B29s were to attack Tokushima that night. The man ran a bicycle shop in the area and had been deployed to the Matsushige Air Division in line with wartime policy and so his information was considered to be trustworthy.

We ate dinner quickly as my mother and aunt had to take my sister and niece to stay with relatives in Kitajima. A neighbour who had been transferred to the area from Kochi Prefecture was also invited, along with his wife and two young children. Meanwhile, the four of us that remained at home sealed the vents of the storehouse with red clay and closed the double entrance doors.

We had not yet buried the urn containing the remains of my brother who had been killed in the war. We were hurriedly putting pots and kettles in the pond while listening to the radio to keep track of enemy aircraft. Part of the sky to the north had been turned red by an incendiary attack, it seemed to be coming from the direction of Himeji.

“I wonder if Tokushima will be alright tonight!?” I thought to myself and I began to prepare for any eventuality. I was lying down on the tatami mat floor and wrapping gaiters (*geetoru*) around my legs and wondering about the day I would attend Hiroshima Teacher’s College, where I had enrolled in April.

As soon as news came through on the radio that B29s were heading north over Cape Muroto we could hear the roar of the airplanes overhead, “Oh! How awful!”, and we hurried out of the house. As the incendiary bombs fell we could see people clearly. The atmosphere at the time of the evacuation was chaotic. My father, brother-in-law, sister and I encouraged each other and we took refuge on the riverbank by Shinmachi Bridge. Our neighbour had experienced an air raid in Okayama on June 29<sup>th</sup> and advised us that it was best to escape to the river. Silhouettes were moving over the bridges towards the river. The evacuation took about thirty minutes, roaring flames enveloped the area from the moment the incendiary bombs hit. I could feel the heat from the opposite side of the river. We sat with pillows (*zabuton*) covering our heads and splashed water over each other to avoid being hurt by the fire bombs. I stared at the ground and prayed and prayed to my fallen brother to protect us.

According to the United States Strategic Bombing Survey the bombing mission took place from 1:24am to 3:19am on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1945. After the bombing had stopped dawn

came and we got out of the river.

Our bodies were cold so we kept warm in the ruins. Brightness increased as the sun rose but smoke blocked our vision. When I looked towards Tokushima Station I could see several surviving storehouses with their thick, fireproof walls. I was happy to see that some of them remained.

As I approached I saw that the roof was smoking and had to extinguish it with water from the pond. On the first floor of the storehouse were articles of the deceased from Burma, “Officer’s Effects”, which had been damaged by fire. Fortunately my brother’s luggage label remained and, even now, I keep the artefact at an altar to remember him.

From where I lived we could clearly see the train coming from Sako to Tokushima Station and then on to Nikenya as all of the buildings in the area had been destroyed. This is an indication of the extent of war damage.