

## Memories of Fear of the Tokushima Air Raid

### 徳島空襲の恐怖の思い出

Takagi Kiyoko 高木 喜代子

**Minami Nikenya-cho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市南二軒屋町**

As we entered 1945, during the Greater East Asia War, the term “honourable death” (*gyokusai* – to give one’s life rather than surrender) was being used and the air raids against Japan became more violent by the day. The air raid siren sounded every night from June onwards. There was no chance to change clothes and every night lasted as long as the days. Then, in an air raid by US forces which lasted from before midnight on July 3<sup>rd</sup> until the early hours of July 4<sup>th</sup>, Tokushima city was mostly burnt ruins.

My father said, “Shikoku is a rural area so we won’t have any problems” and remained calm, we did not evacuate. My uncle came to my father’s house with bicycle and cart. We were told to bring as little as possible and our uncle took the clothes that we didn’t wear often such as my grandfather and father’s “morning” wear.

In June, bombs fell on Akita-machi. I had thought that Tokushima could be in danger as it faces the Pacific Ocean. That night it finally became a reality. The siren sounded for some time, I cannot forget that eerie sound (“*zuddon*”) even now. When looking out from the air-raid shelter, which was dug in the garden, towards Tokushima Station the

night sky was dyed red. People in the neighbourhood began to escape up the mountain to Konpira shrine as my house was located in a little narrow street off the main road. I thought I might not be able to escape quickly enough. People nearby said to me “Hurry or you will be caught in the smoke!” As I had prepared an emergency rucksack with a change of clothes I hurriedly put it on my back. Takajo-machi was a little way from the centre of the city but as the threat of an air raid increased, our grandfather told the family “If we are separated from each other go to Myojin Shrine. Go to the shrine of the local god.” Our family left the house on these instructions.

Unlike Tokushima today, all of the houses were made of wood. It sounded like heavy rainfall and the sky was dyed red. As I ran I thought that I might die. I became separated from my family. I sat by alone on the river banks in Myojin-cho, I put my feet in the water and stared up at the low flying aircrafts that were glowing red. When dawn came I went up Myojin Shrine. I found my family safe and uninjured. I was relieved. The American planes had also gone. I looked back to my home and all around was burnt. All that could be seen from my house to Tokushima Station was charred earth. I stood there, stunned, but I was too sad to shed tears. We were left with only the clothes on our backs. We walked to the house where my father was born, at Minami Inoue-mura in Myodo-gun. We could smell the smouldering ruins and telephone poles in the city. The

outer wall of the Marushin Department Store remained standing alone. I was just grateful that my whole family was safe. I walked with my head down, staring at the red thong of the *geta* (traditional footwear) on my feet. I get a pain in my chest when I think about it even now.

The miserably days of war were long, long ago. Many do not know what people experienced. Now we live in a peaceful society, we can buy any kinds of extravagant food we want. I think our children and grandchildren should know this. Even if people cannot fully understand, it is important to talk about it. War should be avoided at all costs – I believe that very strongly even though I am more than eighty years old.