

**There is Nothing More Horrible than War**

戦争ほどみじめなものはない

**Gotoda Tomiko** 後藤田 富美子**Kami Suketo-cho, Tokushima-shi** 徳島市上助任町

On June 23<sup>rd</sup> of my second year in girl's school (what is now the second grade of junior high school), I returned to our house in Nakayashiki (Tomidabashi 2-chome), Akita-machi, to look at the ruins of the bombing. The two-story building was slanted towards the entrance area and the four or five houses around ours were completely wrecked. The civil defence unit was cleaning up the rubble with a lot of people. When I ran to Tomida Elementary School (a citizen's school at the time) where the injured were taken, neither my mum nor my little brothers or my sister or any of my relatives could be found.

If they were not there it meant they were at the Amida Buddha Temple at Tomidahama. When I arrived I found bodies wrapped up in cloth or straw mat like things lined up on the ground in an area about the size of a thirty mat tatami room (30 x ca. 6 tatami mats). Between the bodies walked a monk reading out sutras.

I lifted every single cloth or mat to look for my family but they weren't there. The monk said "You can look and check again". I was actually a coward, but that time I was

able to calmly look one more time at all the dead bodies with their torn off arms and legs in search for my family. But they weren't among them. I rushed to the nearby Wakahayashi Hospital where more injured people were treated. They had a list of names out. When I saw my mum's name on the list of the severely injured, I froze. The nurse told me "This way", but I couldn't move. Only after she asked me to come again, was I able to move. We arrived in front of the hospital room and my mum shouted "Tomiko" with a healthy voice. I can't put it to words how relieved I was. My two year old little sister was also seriously injured lying on the bed and had bandages wrapped around her head. (My two little brothers had comparably light injuries and had received treatment at the clinic in the post office. They went to the Iya-valley before the Tokushima Great Air Raid.)

On the afternoon of July 3<sup>rd</sup> someone said "Although there are air raid alarms every day you have to at least practice walking", but my mum was hurting so much she couldn't even get up. That night the Great Air Raid happened.

I woke up from my mum screaming "Tomiko, Tomiko" and I saw her holding my sister standing in the hall, so I jumped up. As I was about to take my sister from my mum I remembered the bag with our valuables and said "Oh, the bag!", and wanted to head back to get it. But my mum yelled "Forget about that now!", so I took my sister

and we ran to the bomb shelter. The pillars of our house were already burning. I think we were both barefoot but I can't recall clearly.

“It's dangerous in here, too”, called a voice and everybody left the shelter. The people of the civil defence unit were pouring buckets of water on us. I was pushing my mum through the streets which were brightly ablaze on both sides. We crossed the Ryogoku Bridge and then spent the night in the river by the north coast of the Shinmachi River. In the morning a plane from an aircraft carrier flew very low and fired multiple rounds of machine gun fire.

From there we escaped to the main building of the Shinmachi Elementary School (it might have been the nursery). The way there is completely wiped out of my memory. In the classrooms were piles of burnt black corpses.

A military physician came to treat the wounded there. He also sat down in front of me and my little sister I held in my arms. He looked at her head and tried to cut off a piece of her skin that was 3cm in length and 5mm thick. I immediately shook off his hand and yelled “Stop it, please!” The doctor let go and just lifted the piece of skin and disinfected it. My sister was crying bitterly. For about half a year after that my sister started screaming and crying and covered her head while lying on the ground every time she heard the sound of an airplane.

Our grandma came there from Osaka to help us. With her we went to my dad's hometown in the Iya-valley. My grandma told me she knew a great doctor in the area. So I went to Sadamitsu or Anabuki and went to see the doctor who gave me medicine. There was no place for me to stay so I had to stay the night in the waiting room of the station and wait for the first the train. It was summer in the beginning of July but nevertheless the night was really cold. Suddenly my dad appeared in a uniform and gave me a blanket "What!?! Dad!?" I thought and when I opened my eyes it was just a dream. My dad departed for the front a few days before we were bombed.

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