

**They are falling here! ここへ落ちるぞ****Seo Masami 瀬尾 正己****Yoshinogawa-shi, Kamojima-cho 吉野川市鴨島町**

If I remember correctly, it was just before nine o'clock in the morning on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1945. As usual, we were assembled in the western part of the regimental headquarters in front of the iron hall (*tesshin dojo*), facing southwards. Encryption training was about to begin. "Eyes right! As you were, we, the sergeant and thirty-five members of the regiment have assembled here, Finished!" as I received the reports. When I raised my right hand to salute, I saw planes dropping three objects that like breath mints in the sky above Ishii-cho. As the planes flew towards us the objects became bigger.

"It's a bomb! It's going to land here!" I cried, "Everyone flee to the south of the barracks!" and we ran in a southerly direction. I crouched at the eastern exit of the second squadron. I plugged my ears with my thumbs and covered my eyes with my fingers.

About one minute had passed since I first saw those three breath mints in the sky. There was a blunt sound and then "do, su, n~" three sounds on impact. The ground shook. The blast blew out the windows of the barracks and I was blown to the side, there was a lot of shaking and rattling. Iron debris was flying everywhere.

Then we went on foot to the iron hall. The bomb had fallen just ten metres from where we had been stood side-by-side. There was a large crater, eight metres deep and six metres in diameter. It had landed exactly at the gate of the barracks (*emon*). I picked up a soldier's combat cap (*sentoubou*) near the trench around the iron hall. As I held it in my hand I noticed it was filled with human hair and flesh.

We gathered the dead and the injured. Fifteen casualties were lined up at the west entrance of the central hospital (at that time it was the army hospital). The wounded also went to the hospital. Those soldiers killed by the blast looked like they were sleeping. These soldiers had been guarding the gate. They had heard me shout "Escape!" but they were on duty, there was nothing they could do.

Later, a probationary officer was confirmed dead, a high ranking officer from my squadron who had been on guard duty. He was found in the waiting room, sat in a chair with his right foot outstretched. It seems he had been putting his boots on while trying to escape. He was admitted to the military hospital and his wife was summoned to care for him but he died three days later from septicemia.

After that I remember going to pay my respects at his home. He left behind a young son, about nursery school age. I think he had a model airplane hanging from the ceiling of his tatami room. "If I become big I will get revenge!" he said. Even though I don't

remember his face, his voice still remains in my ears. The officer's body was cremated at the crematory in Kawauchi and his remains were handed over three days later.

In any case, that bomb, the breath mint, and the three sounds it made which became increasingly louder (“*poro~, poro~, poro~*”). I had seen this kind of thing a lot while on encryption training in Osaka. Fortunately my experience helped. It is unfortunate that the regiment was assembled at the gate as the bomb fell. We couldn't have dreamed that something like that would happen but it became the reality.

There is a 291 page book that lists the history of the Tokushima Air Raid. Apparently, this plane had flown from Kochi along the Yoshino River to Minawa-son, Tsuji-machi, Sako, Tomioka-machi, Kuwano and then out over Kii Channel. At 11am damage was reported at the regimental headquarters, warehouses, iron hall, army hospitals, Sako 16-chome and Kuramoto Station and the police station. But I didn't dream it. It is just a difference of opinion. I am sure it was 9 o'clock in the morning. If I hadn't spotted those breath mints in the sky we also would have been sacrificed. This is a twist of fate. Since there was the Great Tokushima Air Raid on July 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> I realised it must be enemy planes flying towards our barracks. The incident on July 24<sup>th</sup> was on a smaller scale but still unexpected. It is also fate that sixty five years later I have been able to tell my story of that day.

“They are bombs, they will land here!” this call saved the life of thirty-five encryption soldiers.