

Tokushima Air Raid Experiences 徳島空襲体験談**Kujime Miyoko 久次米 美代子****Naka Shimada-cho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市中島田町**Fire Drills:

Two months before the air raid, when the sun went down, veterans gave us the orders, men practiced spraying water on burning houses and women and children relayed the buckets. A rope was strung from a willow tree, by the Tamiya River, and a telegraph pole. Four bottomless barrels hung from it. There was a portrait of Roosevelt on the front them and one of Churchill on the back, it was a kind of target practice, men discharged the water and if the target was hit everyone clapped.

Air Raid:

July 3rd, after one or two rounds of fire bombs it was brighter than midday as the incendiaries set the city ablaze.

My mother had a condition which made it impossible to see in low light (nyctalopia), the elder of my younger sisters was in the first grade of elementary school, and my youngest sister was barely crawling. I put my two sisters in the pram and pulled my mother by the hand, we joined everyone else that was fleeing and ran to the dry riverbed of the Yoshino River. The soldier stationed near to the elementary school had been the

first to flee, that was a surprise. B29s can fly around at an ultra-low altitude, they approached and we lay face down, finally the air raid alarm ceased and dawn came.

When we arrived home, the house, the family business and sawmill were burnt down. My father, who had stayed behind to fight the fires was safe apart from suffering minor head injuries. My brother and grandfather had also fled and made it back. My grandfather, who was very old fashioned, had an eight-foot cotton loin cloth (*fundoshi*) with him, he had turned it into a waistband (*obi*) which he slung around my brother so that they did not become separated. My father was the one who remained to fight the fire, however as the incendiaries started to fall like hail water had no effect. He used soil from the rice paddy to put out four or five bombs but after that it was helpless, the willow tree by the Tamiya River caught fire, and there was nothing that could be done but watch the house burn.

We gathered some roasted broad beans from the burnt house, we were pleased to find food at all, but they stank of gunpowder so we could not eat them. The pickled daikon radish (*konko* in the local dialect) were half burnt we all ate around those bits.

Although this is a story I heard later, in the heart of town the storehouses were safe and many people had escaped. Although the storehouses and everything around them were ablaze, the water inside them didn't evaporate. The nail in the wall, writhing in

agony, seems to have disappeared.

Request:

In retrospect, when people in the countryside see the fall of fire bombs they think "It's beautiful, like rare fireworks." Children born in the post-war years see the drama of war as "cool". Wrong. In war you can lose your entire family indiscriminately overnight, please do not forget what it is like to lose a unique life.