

**A Personal Account of the Air Raid 空襲体験談記****Hashimoto Kiyoko 橋本 清子****Nikenya-cho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市二軒屋町**

The time from the Taisho period to the early Showa period was one of significant economic change. My father ran an enamel factory in Tamiya-cho with a workforce of fifty people and had an eventful life as a businessman. When I recall my dead father I have a lot of respect for him. In his later years, before the air raid, he rented out three properties for three families to operate as their own shops. He was a very kind hearted person.

I was a young woman at the time, my father had opened a travel shop selling suitcases in the centre of town. Although people often do it these days, it was difficult to run a small business and compete with the larger stores in the area at that time. During the war years, in the second year of the shop opening, I was instructed to help at a munitions factory as I was only doing household work. The family business was left to my mother.

The “K” Company factory made breathing apparatus for pilots and hundreds of people worked there. Officers had been dispatched to the factory from the army. It was firmly guarded. I worked nightshifts, from six in the evening until the following

morning.

As we approached July 1945 the late night air raid sirens were becoming more frequent than ever. B29s were flying in the sky above Tokushima, each time on reconnaissance. We were evacuated from the factory to a park outside. My teeth chattered in fear, there was no time to think and my colleagues didn't say much. When the B29s left we tried to return to the factory, on this night there were dozens of aircraft and it sounded like rushing water and then the bombing began. Tokushima's 43<sup>rd</sup> Regimental Munitions Factory was attacked. Factory workers and many other people watched silently from the banks of the Yoshino River as the bombed factory became a flaming hell. I thought I was going to be burnt so I entered the shallow water and waited for the B29s to leave while soaked from the waist down. I could count the number of planes even in the darkness. There were many waves of about ten aircraft at a time. Before dawn, fire was rising in the direction of Tokushima, crimson flames rose into the sky illuminating the dark night. All life and nature had become ash. There was no use crying. A cow tied to a farmhouse was aflame and had been reduced to ashes. When we came to Maegawa there were pulleys floating in the river, they had been blown in by the force of the explosion.

Around Sako Bridge, many people had probably fled into the Sako River. There were

dozens of bodies sinking in it.

I walked down the street, I continued without destination, almost sleepwalking through the burnt ruins, when I stopped the road was still warm. In Sako, about one hundred metres from the reservoir parking area, a number of families were being joyfully reunited. My home was nothing but ruins, my heart was filled with sorrow.