

## Experiencing the Great Tokushima Air Raid

### 徳島大空襲を体験して

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In 1945 I was in the sixth grade of public school and we were sent home from school when the warning alarm was sounded. I was going from Uchimachi to Kamiya-cho over the Kensaki Bridge and through the Eagle Gate (*Washi no Mon*) by the cannon displayed in Tokushima Park. I think it took twenty minutes for children's legs to walk to Tokushima-honcho 3-chome. I wore a white blouse which had been dyed khaki and women's work trousers (*monpe*) my mother had hand-sewn. I had a schoolbag made from *obi* material (an *obi* is a sash used to tie a kimono) and my air raid defence hood. I also had a tag displaying my name, address and blood type.

Bombs were dropped on Sumiyoshi and Akita-machi during the day and I purposely went to look at the damage. When night came on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> the air raid sirens sounded but nothing happened, until, on the night of July 3<sup>rd</sup> and into the early morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> the Great Tokushima Air Raid was carried out, almost sixty-five years ago. At that time my father was a stationed at a school as a member of the volunteer

Uchimachi Civil Defence Unit (*keibodan*). Memories of the fearful experiences my mother, three siblings and I went through have faded gradually over the years.

When the air raid alarm came our family entered the air raid shelter that my father had dug at the back of the house, I was waiting for the all clear. I kind of thought that night would be like the previous nights. I don't remember what time it was but there was suddenly a huge "*pari~ pari~*" sound, when I looked outside I saw incendiary bombs had hit the roof of the house and it had started burning. We decided that my mother would take my older sister by the hand and my four-year old sister on her back while I would be responsible for my two-year old brother. We put our luggage in a close at hand pram and headed in the direction of Fukushima Bridge.

There were feudal period pine trees along the riverbank and a wooden boat anchored in the Fukushima River. We immediately hid in the bottom of it and waited for the air raid to finish. I don't know how long we waited but dawn came and the sun was hazy due to the clouds of smoke, I remember there being a slight breeze.

People in the area gathered in the square and we were relieved to see that each other were safe. A friend of my mother was frantic because she couldn't find one of her daughters but eventually she returned unharmed. From the few details I can remember,

although two people were unaccounted for and there were many seriously injured it did not seem that anyone in Uchimachi had been directly hit by the bombs.

My father also returned in the morning and my family were relieved that he was unharmed. The old mansion house of the Hachisuka clan's chief retainer had not been burnt down so we could ask to use the well but the Nakasu ice company had been burnt down. A neighbour who had been working brought us some strips of sashimi and rice balls from the emergency food distribution point. I will never forget how good it tasted.

My house was burnt down without a trace, the bag that I had left in the air raid shelter was half burnt, I still have the school report that was inside to this day. I spent the next two days in another air raid shelter before being evacuated by train from Sako Station to my aunt's house in Kamojima on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

The number of people who remember that time is decreasing and even I can remember little from back then – That is why I submitted my memories to this collection.