

**Memories of the Tokushima Air Raids 徳島大空襲の思い出****Konishi Hisako 小西 久子****Kamihachiman-cho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市上八万町**

Three months had passed since my parents and I returned to our hometown of Tokushima following the Osaka air raid on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Thanks to my uncle we were able to rent a house in Akita-machi, we were finally settled and I had been able to get work at a munitions factory.

At that time I was eighteen years old, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, before noon, the siren went off "Air Raid Alarm Official Announcement". At that time it was usual, I assumed the planes would be heading to the Hanshin region (Osaka and Kobe), there was a great sound and "boom" ("dokan") and the earth shook. "Oh!" I lay down on the spot. There was the sound of breaking glass. Debris scattered everywhere. I noticed there was blood flowing from my head. Broken glass had struck my left arm. I pulled it out myself and wrapped my wound with a handkerchief. The factory manager took me to Tomida Elementary School. Soon many more wounded people came. My arm was disinfected and bandaged. I don't know how many hours I waited there but my father and mother didn't come. I was anxious and couldn't bear to wait around so I ran to my house. There was no house. The entire neighbourhood was gone. I wondered if it had been directly hit

but I was too stunned to move. The situation was not good. I had to find my parents in a hurry but my father was nowhere to be seen. I became more and more anxious. Finally, I found out that my injured uncle had been taken to Tomida Elementary School. My mother had helped evacuate the children. There was no sign of my father. I asked the fire brigade to help me dig through the rubble of my broken home. I helped in desperation. As I dug I thought to myself “Dad, come home soon!” My father was there. He had received a direct hit. His face and legs were gone but I knew it was my father. I didn’t cry. My mind was blank. He was taken to the morgue on a stretcher. They placed my father in a coffin but there were no clothes or blankets to dress the dead. There was merely a towel to cover the face, my father had no face. I cried for the first time. I cried out loud. I couldn’t stand. I was crying all night. I couldn’t do anything but cry. At least my mother was there, so I was not alone. There were people who had lost their parents, some people who had lost children. In my uncle’s house, Mr. A, a fifteen year old boy, had been launched by the blast and died from the impact. Those hateful, hateful B29s (*nikui, nikui* B29). I pulled myself together, we held a memorial service for my father and Mr A with my aunt and relatives in Kamihachiman. My mother took responsibility for my uncle’s house and affairs. I looked after him. The injured had to report to the hospital every two or three days. It was decided that my uncle would go to

Furukawa Hospital. I helped him to the hospital, I walked to and from Kamihachiman. I wore the women's work trousers (*monpe*) that were popular at that time, a cotton hood and a bag over my shoulder. Now that I think about it, I think that I worked really hard.

At dawn on July 4<sup>th</sup> the air raid warning sounded and the incendiary bombs fell simultaneously. I put my uncle in a two-wheeled cart (*daihachiguruma*) and ran desperately, along with my aunt. It was fairly safe until we reached the Sonose River. Then incendiary bombs fell and people were ordered to stay at the Sonose River. We had no choice so we went to the river bank. The town was a sea of fire. Many had fled and the riverbanks were full of people. Now the planes were coming from aircraft carriers. We took my uncle down and placed him under the cart. The children were in shock and crying. Under the cart were three adults and the children, motionless. Until that point I had been determined. I hugged my father's memorial tablets (*ihai*) tightly, I thought I was going to the same place as him. "Father, protect aunt and uncle" I said. I don't know how long it was but eventually the aircrafts returned to the aircraft carrier. I could hear people moaning and cheering. I looked in the direction of the town and it was glowing red. There were a large number of people on the riverbank going here and there in confusion. Finally, I put my uncle back in the two-wheeled cart carried a child in my arms. Where would we go home to?

I thought “It’s fine, I am a lucky woman”. The Suketo area was also burnt out. Later, we built a small shack from the ruins.

The town became burnt ruins. I had to walk through the smouldering ruins every day. The aircrafts often returned from the carriers, since there was nowhere left to hide we just lay down on our stomachs. You could hide in the shadows, amongst the burning stone. I cried as I walked.

It is unpleasant to even to think about that time. Sixty-five years have passed and I am now eighty-two years old. I am impressed that I have lived such a long life. Now when I think of that time it is like a dream. We have everyday luxuries. We are living happily these days. Now nobody talks about what happened but sometimes I cry to myself. We should absolutely not have another war. I do not want the young people of today, my children and grandchildren, to experience that hardship and misery. I pray sincerely that the war is never repeated.