

## Recollections of the Tokushima Air Raid War Damage

### 徳島大空襲の戦禍追憶

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Following on from the honourable defeat (*gyokusai*) at the Battle of Iwojima, the extent of US air raids expanded from Tokyo to the rest of the country and the Battle of Okinawa began. It seemed that a decisive mainland invasion was imminent. I was a first grade student at the former Tokushima engineering college and I was aware that Japan's defeat was approaching, despite news of brilliant military gains we lamented over the ever changing situation. At that time, people were receiving very limited information about the war due to censorship. The truth is we were completely ignorant of what was going on. By July 1945 Japan had lost control of the sea and air superiority, I strongly felt that the war was coming to its conclusion.

All able bodied men were drafted into the army to the extent that mostly women and children remained living at home, the whole town felt ill at ease. The B29 air raid on Tokushima occurred on the night of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, the whole city was ablaze and citizens ran around this way and that trying to escape the flames. The US forces launched an indiscriminate attack on Tokushima, a city of hundreds of thousands of people.

Tragically, many civilians became victims of the war. Bombings occurred from 1945 onwards, property was bombed in Tsuda, Okinosu, Akita-machi etc. and a lot of people suffered. The army hospital was hit on July 22<sup>nd</sup> just before the end of the war. It was only a matter of time before the city was targeted by a large air raid.

From what I remember of the night of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, hundreds of huge B29 bombers came unexpectedly. My household consisted of my parents and younger sister (my older brother, a student, had been mobilised and sent to Kobe). We were having a relaxed supper (*yuuge*) as a family under the dim light of our covered light bulbs. A short while later, at around 10pm, a warning alarm sounded. However, on this night, the roar of the planes in the darkness seemed unusually loud. We could sense the danger of a mass bombing from the loud sounds. We dived into the front yard air raid shelter as a family. At that moment, a large number of incendiary bombs fell, the sound was deafening, there was a sea of flames and all of the wooden structures caught fire simultaneously, it was no use trying to fight the fires. All of the houses in Koura-cho 8-chome (what is now Sako Yonban-cho) were devastated by fire. Many of the townspeople, including children, were running around in panic, the oil bombs had ignited their clothes and they were trying to put out the flames or lying on the ground, it was very difficult to extinguish. Because of this dangerous situation my father weighed up our family's

options and told us to leave the shelter “Evacuate to Daikoku Bridge over the Sako River!” Then the roar of planes was heard overhead and bombs continued to fall and explode. I was trembling with fear, I thought that the heavens had shook the earth. Then, disaster struck, my most precious and affectionate mother received a direct hit. It was a terrible tragedy to lose a member of my immediate family. She was extremely unlucky to be struck down by an assassin’s bomb. It was terribly sad. Although she had collapsed in front of the family, there was nothing we could do for her, my mother did not move again. Recalling these tragic events of the war has moved me to tears... When I saw the charred bodies covered with corrugated iron in the yard of Seisui Temple I was astonished.

War is a devastating tragedy, as human beings we should strive for world peace for all time, the end.